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# Gangsterism in South Africa

By

Angeline Mveng, Carys Bailey, Chloe Meyer, Leánne Schooling, Luan Blaauw, Melissa Gouws,
Shama Ranchhod, and Tara Duarte

**An Overview of Gangsterism in South Africa: History, Development, Impact, and Intervention**

Gangsterism is a global phenomenon that has a significant impact on gang members, communities, and the broader functioning of society. Despite efforts to combat gangsterism in South Africa, gang membership and gang activity are on the rise. In order to address the problem of gangsterism, it is necessary to integrate youths who are at risk of joining gangs into society. Most research on gangsterism has been conducted from a criminological or theological perspective and concentrated mostly on the criminal component of gangsterism. As a result, existing research and interventions have not addressed the underlying socioeconomic and psychological causes of gangsterism within the South African context. To develop successful interventions, it is therefore imperative to explore and critically engage with several aspects of gangsterism in South Africa including its history, development, impact on gang members and communities as well as existing laws, policies, and interventions.

**Definitions of Gangsterism**

Definitions of gangs differ across cities due to the influence that local values and traditions, political considerations and media pressures, etc. have on law enforcement authorities (Spergel, 1990). According to Yearwood and Hayes (2000), the definition of a gang also differs depending on who is constructing the definition as well as the reason for its construction.

Gangsterism, in the context and history of South Africa, is seen as the "culture of violence" as stated by MacMaster (2007). Gangsterism can further be defined as groups that are formed with the aim of instilling fear in others using violence or by carrying out criminal activities (Hlatshwayo, 2018). Hlatshwayo (2018) adds that in carrying out a violent or criminal act, the gang member gains respect from other gang members and community members.

A gang can further be defined as a group or organisation that consists of three or more members. These members, referred to as 'gangsters', move together or act in unity for criminal purposes, often behaving violently and illegally. Characteristics of gangs include their identifiable names and symbols as well as distinctive ideologies, rituals, dress codes, and various forms of symbolic communication; which all contribute to members sharing a common identity that is unique to the gang (Nel, 2017; Yearwood & Hayes, 2000). Gangs are highly structured and organized in order to maintain discipline and control amongst members. Gang leaders dominate

power and control; they allocate specific roles and responsibilities to less powerful members as well as determine the gang's activities (Spergel, 1990). Territory is another factor that is integral to the character of gangs, whereby such groups often identify or claim control over a specific territory within a community (Petrus, 2015).

Social Identity Theory (SIT) can be used to explain gang identities and their affiliations (Matusitz & Repass, 2009). SIT explains that when a group has a positive group identity, individuals are more likely to have a positive sense of self-identity (1978 as cited in Matusitz & Repass, 2009). This theory was created to show that individuals tend to make comparisons between themselves and others, find new meaning in their current identities and develop more favourable perceptions of themselves. SIT thus explains how individuals seek out gang membership in order to heighten their level of self-esteem. This is then supported by Kaplan (1975 as cited in Matusitz & Repass, 2009) who states that in circumstances where social support from family or schools is not available, individuals improve their self-attitudes by joining gangs and adopting gang behaviour. It is further stated that youths who may be marginalised and who are desperate for a positive social identity and affiliation, will leave their cultural and ethnic group in turn for one which may provide a satisfactory social identity (Matusitz & Repass, 2009).

Hagedorn (2005) argues that gangs need to be researched in order to better understand the experiences of marginalization by those individuals who belong to them. Hagedorn (2005) further explains that these individuals resist the marginalisation they face in society, by strengthening their cultural identities through adopting the religious beliefs, nationalism, and even hip-hop culture that belongs to gangs. The marginalisation and urbanisation that has taken place worldwide have resulted in the formation of gangs with the initial purpose of survival in Latin America, Africa, and Asia specifically (Hagedorn, 2005).

**Types of Gangsterism**

In relation to gangsterism, criminal gangs are discussed. According to Roloff (2014), generally a criminal gang is defined by membership of at least three, a common identity, an identifying name and the engagement in illegal activity. There is not defined types of gangsterism, rather gangs are defined by characteristics such as degree of organisation, location, the ethnicity of members, and type of gang activity. Certain gang types are articulated in gang typology such as *crew* and *clique* (Roloff, 2014).

The degree of organisation is divided into loosely organised gangs and organised crime gangs. Loosely organised gangs include groups such as scavenger gangs, youth gangs or delinquency gangs, neighbourhood-based gangs, clans, *crews*, and *cliques*. These gangs are recognised for involvement in petty crime (Du Toit, 2014). They are informal, relatively small and unorganised (Roloff, 2014). Organised crime gangs include corporate gangs and territorial gangs. They are recognised for characteristics such as hierarchies among members, involvement in the drug trade, and organisation into networks. Organised gangs as described by Hlatshwayo (2018) are larger in size and have proven to cause more problems than street gangs due to these gangs recruiting youth to sell drugs.

Locations of gangs are typically the street or prison. Street gangs operate in a localised territory and are mostly organised and managed (Roloff, 2014). Street gangs have become more organised and have morphed into what is known as street syndicates. Howell (2012 as cited in Petrus, 2015), explains that the selling of drugs may occur in street gangs due to the likelihood that gang members use drugs, thus suggesting that street gangs may become both consumers as well as distributors of drugs. Prison gangs are confined to correctional facilities and are organized in a military-like structure, this gives them the power and ability to control the lives of other prisoners as well as the correctional services staff and management (Nel, 2017). Prison gangs have begun to operate on the street; this hybrid is referred to as a prison street gang.

The ethnicity of members can refer to specific ethnicities such as Black, Coloured, Asian, and Latino. However, gangs can also be labelled according to the nationality of its members.

More broadly gangs can be defined according to the gang's activities or acts committed, for example one subtype which exists is drug gangs. Howell (2012 as cited in Petrus, 2015) states that drug gangs are small, cohesive groups with a strong leadership structure that function by selling drugs. These gangs also have a wider range of territory and activity and are known to cause many problems in the communities they operate in (Hlatshwayo, 2018; Petrus, 2015).

**International History and Prevalence of Gangsterism**

A report of the first active gangs in Western society was made by Luke Pike, a respected reporter of British crime (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). His reports were specifically on the existing gangs in England during the 17th century. While gangsterism was and still is prevalent in other

countries, the history and prevalence of gangsterism in the United States of America, Central America, and Japan will be discussed.

**The United States of America**

The emergence of street gangs in the United States occurred after the American Revolution in New York during 1783 (Yearwood & Hayes, 2000). According to Howell and Griffiths (2018), these gangs emerged due to the occurrence of extensive immigration and urban overcrowding. Yearwood and Hayes (2000) add that the members of these gangs were immigrants living in low-income communities. Research shows that gangs were present in at least 179 different cities through 1980 and by 1982, it was estimated that there were 97 940 gang members in 2285 gangs within 286 different cities (Yearwood & Hayes, 2000). The emergence of gang activity in four regions in the United States of America will be discussed in detail, namely the Northeast, Midwest, West, and South.

**The Northeast region.** According to Howell and Griffiths (2018), the major entry port through which immigrants entered the United States was New York City's, Ellis Island. The development of street gangs in New York specifically occurred in three separate phases (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). The first phase of gang growth included the social disorganisation in run-down neighbourhoods, the formation of greengrocery stores and the involvement of politicians with street gangs. The second phase included the escalation of immigration and the organisation of serious gangs which occurred in 1820. From 1890 to 1930, there was an increase in immigrants from China, Poland, Austria and Italy, which resulted in a lack of sufficient homes in New York. This resulted in the worsening of the already run-down neighbourhoods and an increase in gang numbers. The third phase of gang growth took place during the period of the 1930s and 1940s with the arrival of large groups of Latino and Black individuals. By the 1950s, the first Black gangs appeared and there was the development of three-way riots between Italian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans. However, in the modern-day North-eastern region, New York is not the epicentre of gang activity, as compared to the early 1900s, and gang activity is more prominent in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Connecticut. It is further mentioned that the most prominent gangs in the modern-day North-eastern regions include Crip, Latin King, Neta and United Blood Nation.

**The Midwest region.** There were two phases within which gang growth took place in Chicago (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). In the first phase, during the 1860s, the first street gangs in

Chicago developed among white immigrants; these gangs had their clubrooms in the basement of saloons. The second phase of gang growth in Chicago saw the formation of Black and Mexican gangs in the 1920s and 1950s, respectively. This occurred after the migration of 200 000 Black residents to Chicago, Black gangs formed to confront the White gangs that terrorized the African American communities (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). According to Cureton (2009 as cited in Howell & Griffiths, 2018), there were three major Black gangs that formed during the late 1950s and early 1960s; the Devil's Disciples, P-Stones and Vice Lords, who were often in gang wars. It was further added that these Black gangs became so prominent in the communities that they ended up becoming a threat to their own communities, and in the process becoming a member of one of the gangs was the safest option for individuals in the community (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). However, modern-day Midwest gangs, Latino gangs, Black gangs, and Caucasian gangs have formed alliances with the People and the Folk, which are still prevalent in Chicago.

**The West region.** The first appearance of gang like groups in the West region took place in the 1890s. The first phase of gang growth in Los Angeles involved the formation of Mexican gangs, established in barrios, which were originally formed to ensure the protection and maintenance of Mexican traditions. According to Vigil and Long (1990 as cited in Howell & Griffiths, 2018), factors such as isolation and stigmatization that immigrants experienced contributed to the growth of gangs in Los Angeles. During the second phase, Mexican immigrations accelerated. There were two historical events that showed the prejudice and racism against Mexicans, namely the Sleepy Lagoon murder and the zoot suits riots. In the third phase of gang growth, there was the formation of Black social street clubs which protected the Black youth against White violence which was directed at the Black community. African American gangs, therefore, became well established by the 1960s. Furthermore, in the 1960s, two prominent gangs – the Crips and Bloods – were engaged in blood feuds due to fighting for territory. This phase also saw the growth of Mexican Gangs in Los Angeles. However, in the modern-day Western gangs, there are four prominent gang groups including street gangs (Crips, Bloods, and the Mexican American 18th Street gang), prison gangs, transnational gangs (Salvadorian Mara Salvatrucha gang) and Asian-American gangs (Asian Boyz).

**The South region.** Gang activity in the southern regions of the United States emerged later than the other regions. During the 1970s, gangs formed as a result of immigrants being dispersed through the South region and due to the lack of a large city centre, it became easy to join and create

gangs (Howell & Griffiths, 2018). At the end of the 1970s, only six cities in the southern region reported gang activity, however, before the end of the 20th century, the prevalence of gang activity in the South matched the gang activity of the other regions.

**Central America: Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras**

The formation and growth of gangs grew rapidly and transformed from small loosely organized groups to well-established global gang networks, which originated in the United States of America (van der Borgh, 2019). The civil war left a society traumatized and one where gangs were able to thrive in due to social exclusion, violence, and economic marginalization (Roumie, 2017). In Central America, gangs are referred to using the slang words 'mara' and 'pandilla', which are used interchangeably for 'youth gang' (Roumie, 2017). There are two prominent gangs in Central America, namely Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and Mara Dieciocho, also known as the 18th Street gang (Mara 18/ Barro18/ M-18), both of which originated in Los Angeles (Yearwood & Hayes, 2000).

After the civil war, Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras received more than 90% of the deportations from the United States (Rodgers & Jensen, 2008). Many of the individuals who were deported were members of the MS-13 or 18th Street gangs. These gang members grew up in the United States but were unable to obtain residency or citizenship and due to being socially excluded they joined gangs for inclusivity. Many of the individuals who were deported struggled with reintegrating into the community, as they were financially dependent on their families and were seen as strangers in their homeland (Roumie, 2017). These deportees thus created networks that would offer them support and security. They continued their gang behaviour and activity and thus formed 'cliqas' (Farah & Babineau, 2017). Cliqas, according to Farah and Babineau (2017), are neighbourhood structures that gangs are divided into. Each cliqa is responsible for its economic needs as well as payments that are made to the central leadership. In addition, each cliqa has an affiliation with either the MS-13 or 18th Street gangs (Rodgers & Jensen, 2008).

The MS-13 and 18th Street gangs were rivals who each had control of a specific neighbourhood (Roumie, 2017). These gangs in the Northern Triangle have evolved separately according to their country's political factors and conditions (Farah & Babineau, 2017).

According to Farah and Babineau (2017), MS-13 is quickly becoming a massive threat to El Salvador and Honduras. In Guatemala however, the gang is dangerous, but has fewer capabilities and less influence than in the other two states of the Northern Triangle (Farah &

Babineau, 2017). The Central American gangs play a big role in drug trafficking (Rogers & Jensen, 2008) with MS-13 specifically involved in Mexican drug cartels (Farah & Babineau, 2017). In addition, in 2015, El Salvador, known as the murder capital of the world (Roumie, 2017), had the highest rates of homicide globally due to the violence between the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs (Howell & Griffiths, 2018).

**Japan**

The Yakuza, according to Johnson (1990), is known as organized criminal gangs in Japan. Johnson (1990) explains that Yakuza predecessors emerged mid-Edo (Tokugawa) period (1603-1868) from two social classifications; the Bakuto, also known as the gamblers, and the Tekiya, the street traders who sold illicit and stolen goods such as drugs and pharmaceuticals.

The term 'yakuza' was initially used among gambling to express the uselessness of something, but the term was later used to describe the gangsters themselves, which then branded them as useless in the Japanese society (Higgins, 2014). Higgins (2014) adds that the Yakuza therefore do not use the term, and rather refer to themselves as 'ninkyo-dantai' (those who are chivalrous) or 'gokudo' (those who will go all the way).

After the Tokugawa period ended in 1868, individuals who were former soldiers of feudal lords or samurai, became unemployed and therefore engaged in acts that aided in their survival (Higgins, 2014; Johnson, 1990). They engaged in illegal gambling, prostitution, extortion, and stimulant-drug trafficking. In the 1920s to 1930s, Japanese gangs served as contractors for the American military who were not aware of their background (Johnson, 1990). However, after World War II, the Yakuza rose to power under the leadership of Yoshio Kodama, who was a spy for the American Intelligence (Higgins, 2014). Kodama was a war criminal who was released from prison by Americans due to his connections in the criminal underworld and his ability to suppress certain threats perceived by the American Occupational Forces (Gragert, 1997).

Between 1950 and 1964, the Japanese economy recovered, which resulted in the Yakuza profiting from labour at seaports such as gambling, illicit drugs, and prostitution (Johnson, 1990). Johnson (1990) also mentions the seven Yakuza families, namely Yamaguchi, Honda, Sumiyoshi, Inagawa, Kokusai, Kyokutou and Matsuba; these families involved smaller groups into nation-wide organisations who were in conflict with each other. Later, in 1972, Kodama was responsible for arranging an alliance and thus helping to end the feud between the Yamaguchi-gumi and the Inagawa, which were two of the most influential yakuza organisations (Gragert, 1997).

Johnson (1990) states that during primitive times, criminals were marked with tattoos as punishment and that the tattoos then became a symbol of the resistance to political dictatorship and manliness. The Yakuza have carried on the customs of tattoos from the shoulder to the knee and they are therefore easily identifiable by their full body-body tattoos as well as their missing fingertips (Higgins, 2014; Johnson, 1990).

A recruit gains admission to the Yakuza by sponsorship and admission is symbolized by a ritual whereby the recruit pledges their loyalty by drinking out of the same cup as the leader of the gang (Johnson, 1990). Once this pledge has been taken, the recruit is taught basic criminal techniques and has to undergo a test before becoming a member of the gang (Johnson, 1990).

### International History and Prevalence of Gangsterism in Africa

The following section will review the international history and prevalence of gangsterism across Africa as discussed in the literature.

### Gangsterism in Nigeria

Nigeria, the most populated country in Africa, is continuously growing in population size and as a result has caused an exponential rise in the youth population (Matuaitz & Repass, 2009). Consequently, Nigeria's formal sector cannot accommodate the high rate of job demands, which has created the problem of youth unemployment; it is estimated that young people contribute between 40 to 75 percent of the total unemployed population in Nigeria. These high rates of unemployment have had profound social consequences, as many of the youth are compelled to join gangs and acquire criminal-like behaviours in order to ensure economic survival (Venatus & Agnes, 2010). Nigeria is described as "the hub of African organized crimes" and in 2004, Nigerian gangs grossed an earning of over $400 million through illegal operations including money laundering, fraud, drug dealing, and sex trafficking (Matuaitz & Repass, 2009).

**University gangs.** The origin of gangsterism in Nigeria, can be traced back to the establishment of the first tertiary institution, The University of Ibadan (Kingston, 2011). In 1952, a group of students formed an association, named the 'Pyrates Confraternity', more commonly known as the 'Sea Dogs'. Initially, the Sea Dogs provided useful services across the university campus until the 1970's. Thereafter university gangs degenerated into violent and secret organisations who formed as a resistance movement against the corrupt culture of universities made toward students from poor social backgrounds (Kingston, 2011; Matuaitz & Repass, 2009).

Research conducted by Salaam (2011), shows that students joined university gangs predominantly to overcome the economic hardships they faced in society. Today, thirty different student gangs exist across Nigerian universities with gang membership estimated at over twenty thousand students. Some of the well-known student gangs include 'The Pirates', 'Black Scorpions', 'Black Berets', 'Vikings', and 'The Amazons', a female organized gang. University gangs are known for their violent crimes, rape, and acts of murder; often assaulting members of student unions and university staff (Matuaitz & Repass, 2009). Between 1993 and 2003, university gangs were responsible for two hundred murders across university campuses (Kingston, 2011).

**Street gangs.** After Nigeria's political changes in 1999, young males living on the outskirts of urban areas in Northern regions of Nigeria, associated together and formed the 'Yan Daba' gang (Salaam, 2011). The term 'Yan Daba' is translated to mean 'area boys' or 'macho boys' and these members are aggressive in nature and assert their dominance through fear and violence (Matuaitz & Repass, 2009). The Yan Daba uphold teachings of the *Sharia* (Islamic law) and act against colonial and western, anti-Islamic political movements; this can be seen in their acts of destroying and burning down many of the Christian churches in Nigeria (Salaam, 2011). Many locals consider the Yan Daba as revolutionaries for upholding and spreading Muslim beliefs and traditions. Ironically, Yan Daba members earn income through engaging in criminal activities ranging from pickpocketing and petty thief to the controlling of prostitution and working as bodyguards for corrupt politicians (Matuaitz & Repass, 2009).

**Gangsterism in Kenya**

**Ethnic gangs.** The rise of ethnic and politically based gangs became prominent in neighbourhoods across Mathare, Nairobi's second-largest slum during the 1990s. Towards the end of the 1980s, the 'Munguki' gang was formed by a group of Kikuyu (Banthu ethnic group) males as a means to protect their farmlands over disputes with the government and the Maasai (van Stapele, 2015). Their name, Munguki, is understood to mean 'we are the public'; this term represented their political and religious ideologies, which resisted colonialism and the economic injustices they faced as a marginalized society (Kagwanja, 2003). During the elections of 1992 and 1997, the Kenyan government sought ethnic cleansing of the Kikuyu tribes as they favoured the opposition party. As a result, violent ethnic clashes arose between governmental forces and the Munguki (Anderson, 2002).

Thereafter, the size and popularity of the Munguki expanded across Mathare, as they were able to successfully protect members of their community, during the clashes. The economic success of Munguki grew from their protection services; community members seeking security had to pay a monthly fee to the gang. It was estimated that by the mid 1990's, between 1.2 to 2 million people in the slums of Mathare hired the Munguki and their earnings equated to approximately $57 000 a month (van Stapele, 2015). By 1998, the Munguki overtook control of the taxi industry and transport routes across Nairobi; this caused competition against the Taliban gangs (Anderson, 2002). Furthermore, the different political, religious, and ethnic ties between the Taliban gangs and Munguki, further fuelled their rivalry and hatred for one another (Kagwanja, 2003). This led to the gangs' violent and deadly public confrontations with each other. The number of people killed, as a result of these fights, ultimately alerted the attention of the media and governing bodies (van Stapele, 2015). The government and police forces became involved in hunting down members of the Munguki. Between 2002 and 2008, over eight thousand young males living in the slums were systematically killed by Kenya's police force. Unfortunately, many of those individuals killed, had no affiliation with the Munguki (van Stapele, 2016). These unlawful killings highlight how rife political and ethical tensions are in Kenya, which still exist today. The rule of the Munguki was ended by the joint forces of the police and the Taliban gangs during the 2008 violent elections. The Taliban gang overtook and have continued to dominate their power in Mathare ever since (van Stapele, 2015).

**Working gangs.** Long before the rise of these political and ethnic motivated gangs, local Mathare males established working gangs as a means of job provision in order to earn an income. Historically, positions of power and strong-economic statuses belonged to the women of Mathare. Women were the family's breadwinners as they possessed ownership over most local shops; men were therefore only able to access jobs through women. These gender roles went against the ideal notions of urban masculinity; men wanted to assert their manhood and dominance and therefore joined the working gangs as a means of becoming financially independent. The gangs became involved in lucrative activities that secured economic gain, such as brewing alcohol and the selling of drugs and stolen items. Working gangs still currently exist in Mathare and two of the most well-known groups include the 'One Touch' gang, who distil and distribute alcohol and the 'Ruff Skwad', who earn their money through drug deals (van Stapele, 2015).

**National History and Prevalence of Gangsterism Across South Africa**

Gangsterism in South Africa is rooted in a culture of violence and bound up in its history of injustice caused by the apartheid system (Hlatshwayo, 2018). South African gangs established as a form of resistance in the colonial and apartheid context, acting against the repression of non-white people (Petrus & Kinnes, 2018). The presence of prison and mining gangs in Johannesburg arose predominantly due to the boom of the mining industry. Additionally, the effect of the Group Areas Act saw the rise in street gangs across the Western Cape and Johannesburg regions.

**Gangsterism in Gauteng**

**Prison gangs.** The Ninevites were the first documented South African gang, established between 1880 and 1890. The gang consisted of Zulu robbers who committed acts of crime and violence, gaining control over the mines of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Their leader, Mzuzephi Mathebula, better known as Nongoloza, created a highly structured organisation within the Ninevites that mirrored the layout of the military. He appointed himself as King and assigned specialized positions to his senior advisors, who formed his 'government' and were given titles such as 'Lords', 'Governors', and 'Generals'. The rest of the members formed his 'criminal army' and were ranked according to their social standing within the gang, from 'colonels' downwards to the lowest rank of 'soldiers'. In addition to this, Nongoloza created a social purpose for the Ninevites; to rebel and fight against the governmental laws of apartheid, that served to oppress the lives of black people. This further instilled cohesion amongst the members of his criminal organisation, whereby specific rituals, codes, and practices were uniquely established and practiced amongst gang members.

Nongoloza was first incarcerated in 1900 and was sentenced to seven years in a Pretoria prison. His imprisonment was a significant event that further grew his status and position of power; he used the prison system to develop criminal networks from inside the prison and was able to maintain control over the activities of the Ninevites (van Onselen, 1985). From the 1800s until the 1960s, South African correctional centres worked in conjunction with the mining industry; offenders who broke the 'pass laws' of apartheid, were sentenced to hard labour in the mines. This resulted in the ongoing movement of men entering and leaving the prison system. Additionally, inmates were not separated by their crimes committed; Nongoloza used both of these factors in favour of growing his gang (Nel, 2017). He preyed on and manipulated vulnerable inmates who

were sent to work in the mines; these inmates further recruited mineworkers and served as the connection to the outside world. By 1912, there was an estimate of 1000 Ninevite gang members across South Africa, which branched into the mines across the North West, Kimberley, and KwaZulu Natal (van Onselen, 1985).

Nongoloza is regarded as "the father" of modern gangs. His legacy has had long-lasting implications on gangsterism in South Africa; his ideas regarding the structural organisation and activity of gangs, particularly in prisons, are still seen today. All of the notorious number gangs (26's, 27's & 28's), trace their origins back to Nongoloza (Nel, 2017).

**Mining Gangs: The Isitshozi and the Marashea.** By 1912, the Ninevites were no longer able to maintain their presence on the mines as their success was dependent on their leader, Nongoloza, who ended his involvement in gangsterism (van Onselen, 1985). However, the Ninevites continued to operate successfully within the prisons and the Isitshozi gang took control over the mining industry. The establishment of Isitshozi arose during the period that the Ninevites ruled; migrants from Pondoland formed an independent, duplicate organisation in the mining compounds, as they were excluded from joining the Zulu-based Ninevites. The initial Isitshozi gang members stole from white-owned farms along the Rand, that were located near the mines; many of the Isitshozi were caught and arrested during police raids of the mining compounds. Whilst in prison, they recruited inmates to join the Isitshozi's and learned behaviours from hardened criminals.

Their structural organisation mirrored the military set up of the Ninevites, however, leaders were not involved in criminal acts; this ensured their protection from police investigations and enabled their ability to control activities on the mines. Homosexuality was common amongst mineworkers; the Isitshozi, unsuccessfully, tried to control these sexual activities within the compounds, by recruiting younger males to act as 'wives' to senior members. They generated their wealth through ongoing house robberies, assault, and departmental store burglaries. The Isitshozi, became known for demonstrating their power through brutality and violence, especially towards mine workers from different ethnic backgrounds whom they attacked and murdered. Due to the hostility of the Isitshozi gang, all Mpondo migrants were excluded from working in the mines (Breckenridge, 1990). Members of the Isitshozi were forcibly removed from the compounds and by the start of the 1940's dominance and control over the South African mines had changed once again.

The Marashea (also known as the Russians) were the most well-known and longest standing gang in South Africa, who were actively present from the 1930s until the mid-1990s. The Marashea was formed as a defensive association by groups of Basotho men, in the hostile environment of the mining compounds. They were inspired by the fierceness and success of the Russian fighters in World War II and named themselves thereafter. Membership of the Marashea was primarily open to all Basotho men, however, people from different ethnic backgrounds could join, on the condition that they could speak Sesotho. The Marashea was an adult, male-dominated organisation, which was unlike most of the other urban gangs formed by youth, under the age of twenty.

Two of the primary functions that contributed to the economic success of the Marashea included the protection of Basotho men from ethnic conflicts between mining gangs and their fight against the racial injustices towards black populations in apartheid South Africa. In addition to this, the Marashea maintained their economic status, power, and dominance through the control of migrant women. The beliefs and behaviours of the Marashea stemmed from the structural systems and cultural upbringings that belonged to the Basotho society. A brief outline of these allows for a deeper understanding of the gang activities carried out by the Marashea.

From a young age, Basotho males were required to learn how to fight in order to create their African 'warrior identities' which demonstrated their masculinities. The Basotho culture of violence and fighting demonstrated their bravery, which ultimately asserted their dominance over other men and women. Their battle experience, therefore, proved to be a valuable asset; the Marashea were able to use their violence as protection, particularly against their rivals. In the mining compounds, rivalries formed along with ethnic divisions, which caused animosity between the Marashea and their counterparts: the Zulu's, Xhosa's, and the Batswana groups. The Marashea's use of axes, swords (and firearms, later on) made them even more deadly and feared. As a result of their bloody attacks and criminal activities in the mines, rural and urban settlements, they came into contact with the police. Many policemen were assaulted during these fights and were found with their bodies mutilated.

Furthermore, the patriarchal society of the Basotho, exploited the rights of women and regarded them as property. This can be seen in the gender and power relations between men and women of the Marashea. Their economic survival depended on the control of women and their sexual activities. As a result, mineworkers would either join the gang or spend their wages within

the Marashea, solely for access to these women. Even though women were fully integrated into the Marashea society, they had little power or freedom of movement. Women joined the Marashea either voluntarily as a means of protection, or involuntary as they were abducted from competing gangs surrounding the mines. Such women were treated cruelly, abused and forced into prostitution, until they became incorporated as a part of the Marashea society.

Over time, with the changes occurring in the South African legislation, politics and economy, shifts occurred in the organisation of the Marashea. Unemployment rates grew, as the exhaustion of gold mines occurred across the Johannesburg region and the *Aliens Control Act 3 of 1963*, made it illegal for Basotho men to work in sectors other than mining or agriculture. As a result, one of the most noticeable changes amongst the Marashea gangs was the shift towards money-making; formative groups developed out of the need for physical safety, rather than financial security. This resulted in the Marashea gangs becoming involved in more violent conflicts, killings, and assassinations as this was their only means of obtaining a reliable source of income.

Throughout their fifty years of existence, the Marashea spread far and wide across the country. By the 1950's the Marashea had established in the platinum mines of Rustenburg, North West as well as in the Free State. As a result, multiple and independent sub-groups developed over time; differences in leadership, composition, and size existed across the sub-gangs, however their heritage and Basotho ethnicity formed their link of belonging to the Marashea. Due to the loosely associated affiliation of the Marashea, interactions differed across sub-gangs in order for self-preservation. This was most noticeable during the 1980's-1990's period of up roaring political violence; some of the gangs clashed with ANC members, whereas others fought alongside them. However, the Marashea initiated fights with those who were in opposition to them, as their sole purpose of formation was for the protection of their members.

**Street gangs in Sophiatown.** The development of street gangs became present during the late 1940s in Johannesburg. The political economy of Witwatersrand was starting to recover from World War II however, rates of unemployment were still high. Simultaneously, the Isitshozi gang was forcibly removed from the mines and they spread amongst the youth of urban African communities along the Witwatersrand (Breckenridge, 1990). As a result, approximately twenty thousand African teenagers were unable to secure a job or attend schooling. Sophiatown, a suburb between the mining Reef and white suburbs of Johannesburg, became the crime centre of the

1950's. The area was absent of governmental control and its social fluidity allowed for the poor to live amongst the rich, thus attracting activities of gangsterism (Gready, 1990).

'Tsotsi' gangs (South African term for male urban youth criminals) became prominent in Sophiatown (Le Roux, 2004). 'Tsotsi' gangs were self-formed groups, generally made up of young urban black males, between the ages of eleven and twenty. Such gangs consisted of twelve to thirty members and operated under a leader, whereby they attempted to control specific territories, conducted illegal activities, fought against local 'tsotsi' gangs, and defied local authority (Le Roux, 2004). They also developed their own language referred to as 'Tsotsitaal', a mix of English and Afrikaans; Tsotsitaal was influenced by the coloured residents and their culture in Sophiatown (Hurst, 2009). During the fifties, Tsotsi gangs provided individuals with feelings of belonging and were symbolized as the African aristocracy of society. They were both admired and feared; they represented resistance to white supremacy but did so through violence and inhumane activities (Kynoch, 1998). As the township's conditions worsened, tsotsis committed more robberies, crime, and violence; many tsotsis worked in the day, however, they grew their wealth through gang activities, which occurred during the night and on weekends (Lodge, 1981).

Four of the biggest tsotsi gangs in Sophiatown were the Gestapo's, the Berliners, the Americans, and the Vultures. The Gestapo's were formed by a group of boxers who competed against each other, to determine who was the strongest fighter in the gang. Their main efforts were to defend their women and territory against attacks from the Berliners, their biggest rivals. The Berliners focused more on committing small scale crimes to earn money and were always armed with guns and rifles. They played a big role in the historical 1949 riots of Sophiatown. The Vultures were a large youth gang, with up to three hundred members, and were led by Don Materra. Initially, they made their profits through protection schemes and were hired by rich schoolchildren to safeguard them against bullies. Their primary focus was territorial protection. Lastly, the Americans, were the most well-known and feared of the tsotsi gangs. Their leader, George Mbwaleni, better known as 'Kort Boy', a notorious mobster, trained his gang to commit larger-scale crimes. The Americans were easily recognized by their smart dress code and their expensive clothes, flashing their wealth to those they came into contact with (Lodge, 1981).

In 1950, The Group Areas Act was established in order to create residential segregation between races and the removal of townships in urban settings. Due to the location of Sophiatown, in central Johannesburg, the government forcibly removed all its residents and destroyed their

homes and properties in the process (Gready, 1990). The resistance from the residents and tsotsi gangs was not strong enough and by the end of the fifties Sophiatown collapsed, causing the community to resettle in Soweto and Meadowlands.

**Gangsterism in The Western Cape**

Occurrences of gangsterism in the Western Cape have been prolific, particularly amongst communities in the Cape Flats. The emergence of the Western Cape gangs can be traced back to the rural crisis of the 1930s and 1940s, during the time of World War II (Jensen, 2014). Thousands of residents relocated from the farming areas to the urban fringes of the City of Cape Town, in search of employment. District Six became populated with 'plaas jappies' (farm boys); a derogatory and stereotypical term given to coloured men that gave rise to abstracted figures of the 'skollie' (a scavenger or petty criminal). Globe was one of the first inner-city gangs formed in District Six, to confront skollies. However, the poor socio-economic conditions in the area caused Globe members to turn to criminal activities, ultimately becoming a problem in their own right (MacMaster, 2007).

The second phase of gangs bred a decade later, as a result of the Group Areas Act, forcibly removing individuals from the 'white communities' to the Cape Flats (Jensen, 2014). Apartheid's structural violence in the form of socio-economic issues, overcrowding, unemployment, and inequality, facilitated the rise of gangsterism and violence in the Cape Flats. Communities in the Cape Flats that were, and still are, plagued by gangsterism include Mitchell's Plain, Atlantis, Manenberg, Steenberg, Lavender Hill and Hanover Park (Petrus & Kinnes, 2018). Racial disparities ensured that residents of these areas were socially excluded from the formal economy, leaving many vulnerable to poverty and feelings of powerlessness. Gangs, therefore, acted as a means of gaining economic as well as social power (Du Toit, 2014). During the 1970s and 1980's the street gangs present amongst the Cape Flats were predominantly operated by shebeen owners, selling stolen goods. The Terrible Pipekillers and the Sexy Boys were the biggest rival gangs during this period. The mid-1980s to 1990s saw the rise of the Asbestos Boys and New York; the New Yorkers were territorial over Heideveld and developed in order to protect their community against harassment from smaller gangs (Jensen, 2014).

By the 1990s, gangs had grown and evolved into sophisticated crime organisations that were primarily involved in drug dealings, prostitution, and money laundering. The Group Areas Act of 1950 forcibly relocated communities (Du Toit, 2014). Communities were exposed to a

culture of violence and powerlessness which created a foundation for gangsterism, and the arrangement of communities resulted in community-based gangs operating in territories such as the Cape Flats region. Due to the introduction of firearms in the 90s and a large number of gangs in the Cape Flats region, the competition was high and sparked many dangerous gang wars (Petrus & Kinnes, 2018). A deadly gang fight sparked in the early 90s between the Asbestos Boys and the New Yorkers; the majority of the Asbestos Boys were killed, which ended their reign and gangsterism activities (Jensen, 2014). The Americans have since overtaken their position and are still in power today, functioning as a super gang. They are now in competition with another super gang, the Hard Livings. The street gangs of the apartheid era were unstructured; youths were initially involved in "rough and ready street gangs"; however, they have now evolved into organised crime gangs and street syndicates (Du Toit, 2014, p. 2).

Street gangs are now empires that hold power over operations such as: "drug running, extortion, money laundering, robbery and prostitution rings" (Kinnes, 2008, as cited in Du Toit, 2014, p. 2). Today, these gangs are characterised by an organised structure such as the hierarchy of rank among the members and the subordinate gangs who are allegiant to the superordinate gang. Therefore, both super gangs have smaller gangs that affiliate and function below them (Du Toit, 2014; Petrus & Kinnes, 2018). Petersen (2019) refers to the splinter gangs which operate under the major gangs such as the Americans and the Hard Livings, as delinquent youth. In South Africa, youth delinquency results in what can be labelled delinquency or youth gangs. Roloff (2014) refers to these gangs as 'crews' and 'cliques'. These may be confused with informal groups but are involved in criminal activity (Roloff, 2014). These gangs are a result of factors such as poverty and unemployment, which account for youth violence in South Africa (Du Toit, 2014). Du Toit (2014) reported that the membership of Western Cape gangs in 2014, was estimated between eighty to one hundred thousand; these gangs account for approximately 70% of the crime rate across the province. Furthermore, statistics show that the Western Cape accounted for 83% of gang-related murders across South Africa between 2017 and 2018 (Western Cape Government, 2019).

In addition to the street gangs, there is also the influence of the Numbers Gang, who operate primarily in the Western Cape prisons, particularly in Pollsmoor Prison (Nel, 2017). The prison gangs existing in South African correctional facilities operate as a network of gangs each fulfilling a particular agenda specific to the prison environment (Roloff, 2014). According to Tenpas (2017)

prison gangs are rife as they are believed to be a means to successfully navigate and survive South African prisons.

## The Most Prolific Gangs in South Africa

Police sources from the anti-gang unit suggest that in Cape Town there are at least 30 major gangs (Petersen, 2019). The three most prolific gangs in South Africa are the Number Gangs, the Americans, and the Hard Livings.

### The Numbers Gang

The Numbers Gang was founded by two men fighting against inhumane mining conditions in the late 1800s (Tenpas, 2017). It has since become a criminal organisation. The Numbers Gang is divided into a tier of three gangs which are known as the 26s, 27s, and 28s. The Numbers Gang are notorious in South Africa, operating as prison gangs. According to Tenpas (2017) the Numbers Gang are the most infamous gang in South Africa. The 26s, 27s, and 28s are known for their violent crime and strong allegiance. They operate from within Pollsmoor Prison, but it is believed that the Numbers Gang are present in a number of South African correctional facilities. These gangs are known to be large, as affiliation to a Numbers Gang is believed to be the only solution to survive prison (Tenpas, 2017). Each gang or faction has a specific role and agenda within the prison. The 26s are the lowest level of the tier and their operations include theft and obtaining goods from outside the prison to be smuggled in. The 27s are the mid-level of the tier and their operations are mostly violence and managing recruits. Lastly, the 28s are at the top level of the tier and lead the entire Numbers gang' they are violent sexual offenders who are known to sexually abuse gang recruits (Tenpas, 2017). The gang has no significant economic involvement such as involvement in the drug trade since it is confined to prisons. It is however highly structured and organised, operating as a network (Roloff, 2014).

### The Americans and the Hard Livings

The two super gangs operating in the Western Cape of South Africa are the Americans and the Hard Livings. Both are larger gangs operating with smaller gangs who are allegiant to them and both are involved in the drug trade. These street gangs are formally organised and are known to be highly violent (Roloff, 2014).

The Americans are a highly organised street gang or street syndicate, operating largely in the Cape Flats in the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town. According to Tenpas (2017) the gang is a direct consequence of Apartheid; the gang name itself references the segregation in the United States of America which gang members related to, due to the segregation enforced in South Africa. The members pay tribute to the USA by wearing the colours red, white, and blue and tattoo markings reading U.S.A. (Tenpas, 2017). Allegiance is stern and members are required to take an oath. The gang is the largest in Cape Town and controls the methamphetamine drug trade (Tenpas, 2017).

The Hard Livings is an organised street gang based in Manenberg, Cape Town. The gang is the second largest gang in Cape Town after the Americans (Tenpas, 2017). According to Tenpas (2017) twin brothers Rashied and Rashaad Staggie founded the gang in 1971. The gang is active in the drug trade and is known to engage in international criminal activity. The Hard Livings are also allied with international gangs (Tenpas, 2017).

According to Petersen (2019) smaller splinter gangs exist but are usually associated with one of the major gangs such as the Americans and the Hard Livings. Delinquent youths are recruited as runners and foot soldiers for the bigger gang (Petersen, 2019). Delinquent or youth gangs are likened to 'crews' and 'cliques' and are predominant in the townships of the Western Cape (Roloff, 2014). They are generally small with informal and unorganised operations and are found to operate in localised territories. They have also been found to operate in and around school settings (Roloff, 2014).

**Motivations for Gangsterism**

Gangs form for similar reasons as any other group, as they offer their members something he or she may need or desire (Carlie, 2002; Goldstein, 2002; Owen & Greeff, 2015). Research has found that common factors motivating gang involvement include status and respect, friendship, belonging, protection, and monetary gain (Owen & Greeff, 2015). Similarly, gangsterism within a South African context has evolved through the offering of status, esteem, protection, acceptance, sense of belonging as well as financial and material reward. It must be noted that motivations underlying gang formation and gang membership are inextricably linked. A gang may form as a consequence of economic deprivation, fear and lack of security, low self-esteem, broken homes, and an undesirable status. This results in individuals joining gangs for what they offer, namely

access to resources, protection, safety and status as well as an improved sense of self and belonging (Carlie, 2002).

## Access to Resources

Resource acquisition has been discussed across the literature as a strong motivator for gang membership. The choice to join a gang is based on the perception that gang membership is an easy and immediate means to access essential financial and material resources for those who find themselves in economically deprived environments. These areas are burdened with corruption, inequality, unemployment, low wages, and poor educational systems (Durairaja et al., 2019; Owen & Greeff, 2015; Wegner et al., 2016). Consequently, those seeking financial and material gain see gang membership as an alternative means to secure resources and satisfy desires (Owen & Greeff, 2015).

Previous research has indicated that gangs offer its members financial resources in the form of money, in exchange for performing gang-related activities such as the selling of illicit substances or partaking in illegal activity such as robbery. The material resources offered range from clothing to drugs (Owen & Greeff, 2015; Wegner et al., 2016). This is particularly attractive since the sale of illicit drugs and weapons, vehicle thefts, human trafficking and robberies result in a significant amount of money for often uneducated, unskilled, and unemployed individuals who do not have the opportunity to provide for themselves otherwise (Govender, 2015; MacMaster, 2007). Additionally, gangs serve as a major source of drug distribution in many societies including South Africa, leading to youth and individuals being drawn to gangs as a means to access drugs and alcohol. Gangs offer either drugs and alcohol as a material reward or money earned from carrying out the aforementioned gang-related activities, which can be used to buy drugs for personal use (Durairaja et al., 2019; Owen & Greeff, 2015; Wegner et al., 2016).

Therefore, people join and remain in gangs to sustain the benefits that come with resource gain such as exiting poverty, wealth and securing better life opportunities for themselves and their families (Durairaja et al., 2019).

## Protection, Safety and Status

Gangs offer its members protection, safety and status which is another common motivator for gang membership, especially for those who find themselves in hostile and volatile environments.

Research has shown that individuals are drawn to gangs based on the belief that holding the title 'gangster' means being invincible, untouchable and someone to be feared (Owen & Greeff, 2015; Wegner et al., 2016). The corresponding ideal is that holding such a powerful and domineering status within society will eliminate any potential harm towards themselves or their family.  Moreover, gang affiliation is seen as a way to earn respect among fellow gang members and the community at large, contributing to their social status which provides members with a sense of control over volatile environments (Wegner et al., 2016). Findings from a study conducted by Owen and Greeff (2015) suggest that this strength and invincibility is a mere perception and not a true reflection of a gang member's reality, since they are still at risk of danger imposed by rival gangs operating within the wider community. However, safety still serves as a powerful pulling force into gang life as gang affiliation for many means of protection from victimisation, neighbourhood crime, and other gangs (Carlie 2002; Owen & Greeff, 2015; Wegner et al., 2016). Additionally, it means survival and serves as a common protective factor for those who reside in violent and dangerous communities (Owen & Greeff, 2015).

Abusive or neglectful home environments have also proved to be a substantial reason for why people choose to join a gang. Carlie (2002) suggests that if a person finds themself in a conducive family and stable home, they may have the security they need and need not seek this elsewhere. On the contrary, if an individual associates home life with fear as a consequence of abuse or neglect, he or she may be left to find alternate means to satisfy their security needs (Carlie, 2002). Entering gang life then becomes enticing, as it offers safety in the form of a gang's notoriously dangerous reputation and also protection in numbers.

**Sense of Self and Belonging**

Youths are often in search of acceptance, belonging, esteem and loyalty, due to the fact that identity formation is an important developmental process which happens during the adolescent phase (Erikson, 1968; Owen & Greeff, 2015). However, these needs are sometimes unattainable due to dysfunctional communal and familial environments (Owen & Greeff, 2015).

Carlie (2002) suggests that poor self-image and subsequent low self-esteem in youth are typically the results of detrimental school experiences, such as failure and underachievement. Across research, failure in a particular aspect of life, has shown to be a strong motivator in gang life. For instance, Dukes et al., (1997) found that youth who find fulfilment in scholastic achievement and future success tend to avoid gang membership through engaging in prosocial

activities and making healthy friendships, while those who lose interest in schooling opportunities as a consequence of underachievement, seek other means to develop a meaningful self-concept to satisfy esteem needs.

Moreover, those who belong to dysfunctional families may feel displaced and seek alternate means to feel that they belong, are loved, and accepted as being a part of a family is usually associated with a sense of belonging. Additionally, group membership is key to human social existence, and since a gang offers deprived youth a pseudo-family or an extension to the traditional family, they may choose to belong to a gang for social connection, a sense of family and acceptance (Carlie, 2002; Petersen, 2019).

### Internal and External Factors Associated with Gangsterism

Internal factors such as personality, are inner determinants of behaviour sometimes referred to as psychological or individual factors, which provide explanations for human behaviour (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). These factors provide insight into the dispositions and characteristics of gang members who behave criminally. In contrast, external factors such as social structures, are those influences that do not occur within the individual and provide a deeper understanding of the situational factors that attribute to the gangsterism phenomenon.

However, it is important to note that internal factors can be influenced by external factors such as the environment, social support and life stressors. Studies have investigated the contributions of both genetic and environmental factors to disposition and psychological outcomes. Examples of these studies include adoption studies that allow researchers to investigate nature versus nurture and their relative contributions (Roth & Finley, 1998). According to Roth and Finley (1998) characteristics of the environment may interact with a genetic predisposition to either accentuate or attenuate particular outcomes. It is evident that disposition is a result of both personal or genetic factors as well as situational or environmental factors. This is referred to as the "genotype-environment interaction" (Cadoret, 1982, p. 235). Additionally, Alleyne and Wood (2010) refer to the interactional theory which states that the individual and their corresponding social structures engage in a reciprocal relationship. This suggests that individual factors and social structures interact and influence each other, which can either exacerbate or reduce outcomes such as gang membership. For example, Eagen and Beadman (2011) state that criminogenic environments and dysfunctional settings are hindering factors where antisocial influences exist

and resilience is needed as a moderator, confirming the impact of environmental and social conditions on gang affiliation.

Thus, when discussing the internal factors associated with gangsterism and criminality it is important to note that the dispositions and characteristics may be an outcome of not only personal factors, but existing psychosocial conditions and other external factors.

**Internal factors**

Personality, attitudes, traits, beliefs, individual risk, and protective factors as well as motivation are identified as internal factors. These are discussed in relation to gangsterism, delinquency and criminal behaviour.

**Personality.**

***Erik Eriksons' (1963) theory of psychosocial development.*** The theory offers insight into personality development. Erikson suggests that personality develops through eight stages throughout the human lifespan (Hitchcock, 2001). According to the epigenetic principle, the ego develops through the eight stages and at each stage, there is a balancing interaction between the two extreme poles, resulting in adaptive functioning. However, if a stage cannot be resolved it results in maladjustment and crisis. The fifth stage is known as identity versus role confusion; it occurs in adolescence between the ages of 12-18 and the outcome is either identity resolution or identity crisis (Hitchcock, 2001). Eriksons' explanation of adolescent behaviour at this stage resembles a description of gang behaviour without referring directly to the term gang; it includes behaviours such as over-identifying with cliques and being "clannish and cruel" (Hitchcock, 2001, p. 6). A lost adolescent who experiences role confusion and moratorium has a higher risk for maladjustment and gang involvement. The reciprocal of role repudiation or confusion is fidelity; an adolescent who attains the ego strength of fidelity has developed a sense of self and is likely to be resilient to social issues (Hitchcock, 2001). This adolescent is at a lower risk for gang involvement. Eriksons' theory does not predict gang involvement rather it provides insight into the characteristics of gang members (Hitchcock, 2001).

***Costa and McCraes' Five-Factor model of personality.*** The model indicates human variation and can be used to predict behaviour (Egan & Beadman, 2011). The five-factor model of personality (FFM) is prominent in research on adult personality development. The five personality dimensions include openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and

neuroticism (John et al., 1994). The five dimensions exist on a spectrum with opposite poles where an individual can appear on the lower or higher end. These traits produce different personality outcomes. According to John et al. (1994) extraversion and agreeableness have to do with interpersonal relations. Conscientiousness describes the behaviour towards tasks and impulse control. Neuroticism describes emotional stability or instability, and openness refers to intellect and openness to experience. John et al. (1994) study on the big five personality dimensions in adolescence aimed to uncover personality dimensions involved in juvenile delinquency; one of the specific delinquencies mentioned, is gang fighting in adolescence. The study found that low agreeableness and low conscientiousness are negatively associated with juvenile delinquency (John et al., 1994). These personality traits are associated with antisocial and criminal behaviour (Egan & Beadman, 2011).

**Traits.**

Traits or characteristics other than the big five personality dimensions are sometimes referred to as psychological factors. Alleyne and Wood (2010) refer to the psychological factors which are associated with gang membership and criminal activity. These include low self-esteem, impulsivity, risk-seeking and lack of remorse or guilt towards their criminal behaviour (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). These characteristics are common among gang members. A psychological profile of antisocial youth is described as: "unempathetic, egocentric, impersonal and manipulative" (Olweus et al., 1986 & Robins, 1966, as cited in John et al., 1994, p. 162). This profile includes traits that are associated with antisocial or criminal behaviour such as gangsterism and provides a general profile of a possible gang member. Where these traits are extreme or pathological, they are associated with antisocial personality which, according to Eagan and Beadman (2011) is a strong indicator of gang involvement.

***Antisocial behaviour and personality.*** The association between antisocial personality or behaviour and gangsterism is consistent in criminological literature (Bendixen et al., 2006). The association is prominent as gang membership is consistently found to be a predictor of antisocial behaviour (Bendixen et al., 2006). Bendixen et al. (2006) state that adolescent gang members are more involved in antisocial behaviour than their non-gang member peers. Examples of these behaviours include "theft, vandalism, drug sales and drug use" (Bendixen et al., 2006, p. 86). These deviant and disruptive behaviours are seen as antisocial. Additionally, Owen and Greef

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(2015) state that antisocial beliefs is an individual risk factor predisposing an individual to gang involvement. Both antisocial behaviour and beliefs are thus associated with criminal behaviour such as gangsterism.

Egan and Beadman (2011) state that higher neuroticism, lower agreeableness, and lower conscientiousness predict antisocial and criminal behaviour. Higher neuroticism indicates emotional instability, lower agreeableness indicates antagonism and lower conscientiousness indicates a lack of direction (John et al., 1994). Whereas reciprocals of these are moderators against antisocial and criminal behaviour (Egan & Beadman, 2011).

A study conducted by Egan and Beadman (2011) in a male prison, found that antisocial personality is a strong indicator of gang involvement. Antisocial personality is an externalising psychopathology and is associated with low agreeableness, low conscientiousness, and high extraversion, similarly, to delinquency (John et al., 1994). Additionally, psychological factors such as negative emotional responses, low self-control and high impulsivity are associated with gangsterism (Durairaja et al., 2019). These psychological constructs such as impulsivity and low self-control are associated with antisocial personality and offending or criminal behaviour (Egan & Beadman, 2011). These traits and behaviours are seen as unfavourable in society. As a response to being socially excluded and isolated, those with antisocial personalities connect to antisocial peers who may share the same values. Research suggests that those with antisocial personalities seek out gang membership as a means to connect with those similar to themselves (Egan & Beadman, 2011). The gang environment praises antisocial behaviour rather than rejecting it. This fosters further disruptive and deviant behaviour.

According to Bendixen et al. (2006) the selection model suggests that gangs recruit those who are delinquent or with a propensity for delinquency, whereas the social facilitation model suggests that gang involvement and gang socialisation foster delinquency as a result of gang membership. Lastly the enhancement model suggests that both selection and social facilitation contribute to the strong association between gangsterism and antisocial or delinquent behaviour (Bendixen et al., 2006). The three models offer insight into what is termed the "gang-delinquency association" (Bendixen et al., 2006, p. 86).

**Risk factors and protective factors.** Owen and Greeff (2015) state that a continuum between risk factors and protective factors exists; if there is a lack of a risk factor it is consequently

a protective factor. Those with higher risk factors are more likely to be involved in gangsterism where those with lower risk factors have protective factors inhibiting gang involvement.

The presence of risk factors may predispose an individual to gang involvement. Alleyne and Wood (2010) refer to individual factors that are associated with gangsterism, these factors include age and gender. Youth between the ages of 12-18 are at high risk for gang involvement and gender composition of gangs is predominantly male, thus young males are at high risk for gang involvement. Exiting mental health issues is an additional individual factor that may heighten the risk of gang involvement (Alleyne & Wood, 2010). Individual risk factors also include life stressors and violent victimisation as the individuals' exposure to life stressors and violent victimisation are predisposing factors for gang involvement (Owen & Greeff, 2015). Owen and Greeff (2015) discuss individual risk factors associated with gangsterism, these include violent behaviour, substance use and delinquency. The risk factors can accentuate an individuals' risk for involvement with gangsterism, therefore they are predisposing risk factors. Owen and Greeff (2015) state that an individuals' risk of joining a gang is heightened if more risk factors are applicable to the individual. Fewer risk factors indicate higher protection to refrain from gang involvement.

A lack of protective factors such as ambition, responsibility, morals, and resilience may accentuate an individuals' vulnerability to involvement in gangs. Conversely according to Owen and Greeff (2015) when these personal factors are present, they discourage gang involvement. For example, resilient individuals are likely to overcome challenging social conditions and resist gang involvement. Additionally, according to Owen and Greeff (2015) individuals who respect others, hold family values, and have a sense of identity are discouraged from gang involvement.

Unfortunately, youth who have little protection against their exposure to violence, drugs and gangsterism in their communities are at risk. Alleyne and Wood (2010) state that individuals who have weaker bonds with prosocial environments and networks are more likely to turn to gangsterism. In some South African communities limited access to resources such as prosocial education and prosocial support systems limit protective factors, leaving youth vulnerable to involvement in gangs.

**Motivations.** Motivation is an internal process that drives and directs behaviour. According to Reiss (2012) two theories, namely dualistic theory, and multifaceted theory each offer explanations for the motivations of behaviour.

*Dualistic theory.* Dualism divides motivations into intrinsic-extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is defined as the act of engaging in an activity for its own sake or for personal reasons and without any form of reward. Extrinsic motivation is defined by acting for a particular purpose such as achieving a reward (Reiss, 2012). Where intrinsic motivations are associated with psychological needs, extrinsic motivations are associated with survival needs (Reiss, 2012). This is often related to mind-body dualism; intrinsic motivations are said to fulfil the minds' needs or ego motives and extrinsic motivation is said to be related to the body's' needs (Deci, 1975 as cited in Reiss, 2012). The theory is critiqued as it is believed that motivations cannot be defined by only two categories.

*Multifaceted theory.* This theory recognises a number of distinct motives and suggests that motives cannot be reduced as only intrinsic-extrinsic (Reiss, 2012). The theory suggests that there are fundamental motives of human nature or human needs. The theory recognises a number of motives such as curiosity, belonging, fear, acceptance, status, and power (Reiss, 2012). The theory accounts for the diversity of human needs and is praised for acknowledging that human motives are not divided into two macro-categories (Reiss, 2012). According to Reiss (2012) it acknowledges individuality and individual difference in how motives are prioritised.

In relation to gangsterism the motivations are multifaceted, ranging from the fulfilment of human needs to fulfilling desires for rewards. These were discussed as the motivations for gangsterism.

## External Factors

Across literature socio-economic and political factors, as well as dysfunctional social structures including the family, peers and community have been identified as influential factors for gangsterism.

**Socio-economic and political factors.** Socio-economic and political factors are major contributors to the high prevalence of gangs that exist in society today. Throughout the history of gangs, poverty, unemployment, and marginalisation have exacerbated the evolution of gangsterism. According to Chibba and Luiz (2011) studies across the globe have shown that poverty is often linked to inequality and unemployment. Furthermore, policies pertaining to poverty, inequality and unemployment remain problematic in many developing countries, such as South Africa (Chibba & Luiz, 2011).

South Africa's high unemployment and poverty statistics stem from its historical context and the enduring impact that apartheid-era policies have left behind (Chibba & Luiz, 2011; Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014). So much so, that the roots of gang activity in the Cape Flats, the current epicentre of gangsterism in Cape Town, are a consequence of unjust socio-historical factors (Du Toit, 2014). The landmark Group Areas Act of the South African apartheid era, which forcibly removed people from close-knit neighbourhoods rich in culture to the Cape Flats, has been recognised as one of the key attributing factors to the increased prevalence of gangsterism and gang affiliation in this community (Du Toit, 2014; Owen & Greeff; 2015). Owen and Greeff (2015) suggest that prior to the Act much of the youths' delinquent and criminal behaviour could be monitored by caregivers, extended family, and loyal neighbours within the community. However, after the forced removals, the community experienced much disorganisation and disruption. This ultimately broke previous social controls and communal ties, leading to an increase in unsupervised youth. Subsequently, unsupervised youth became and still are drawn to forming or joining street gangs as a means to cope in their impoverished environment characterised by misery, low-cost housing, overcrowding and inadequate access to recreational facilities and quality education (Du Toit, 2014; Owen & Greeff, 2015). Thus, the unfortunate generational cycle of poverty often leads to feelings of failure and rejection, leaving youth vulnerable and in search of power and social recognition found in gangs (Daniels & Adams, 2010).

Moreover, gangs use the misery of these impoverished environments to their advantage, as they know the poor seek out means to access resources that will better their situation, making them vulnerable to exploitation by resident gangs who are perceived as powerful and resourceful (Du Toit, 2014). Gangs use the act of providing, for instance financial support, to assist vulnerable members of the community as a stepping-stone to gain control over the environment (Du Toit, 2014). Bowers (2005) showed that the effect of high unemployment and limited skills puts a gang in a position of desirable economic power creating the impression that gangsterism is an easy way to better life circumstances in the absence of employment, through the social power attributed to monetary gain from performing gang-related activities (Du Toit, 2014).

**Social structures.** The state of social support structures, including the family, peers and the wider community, are another root cause of gang activity in many communities. Those social institutions that do not provide for its people contribute to the formation or joining of gangs (Wood & Alleyne, 2010). This is supported by the theory of cultural transmission, which suggests that in socially disorganised neighbourhoods, gangs often serve as a social support system for its community members (Wood & Allyne, 2010).

*Family.* Literature suggests that gangs often target vulnerable youth from 'economically unstable family backgrounds' (Daniels & Adams, 2010, p.10). Dysfunctional family homes may drive children to the streets, where they fall victim to engaging in criminal activity due to their inability to satisfy important material and emotional needs (MacMaster, 2007). When the instability of familial homes is perceived as unpleasant, marginalised youth find acceptance and support within the structure of a gang. Additionally, children in impoverished communities are often left unsupervised as a result of socio-economic and political factors resulting in caregivers working farther away from home (MacMaster, 2007). These factors explain why gangs fulfil the role of the extended family in providing youth with an alternate familial support structure.

Furthermore, gang riddled communities consist of many single-parent households with little or no extended family living nearby who can offer social support and serve as positive role models for the youth (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014; Owen & Greeff, 2015). The role modelling of substance abuse and criminality by older familial members and being surrounded by those that are or have been in gangs, place youth at risk. Pinnock (1997) suggests that the lack of a positive role model can have a negative impact on youth, particularly those who grow up in poverty-stricken communities. This is so, as growing up without a good model may hinder an individual's ability to navigate life, rendering them vulnerable to gang leaders who tend to recruit youth who are unhappy and struggling in return for "the promise of fraternity and brotherhood" (Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014, p.65). Studies have also shown that many gang members come from homes where fathers have failed in their parental duties through domestic violence, leaving the home or being absent from their children's lives (MacMaster, 2007). This source of neglect has proven to be a key reason for gang involvement.

*Peers.* Close ties and involvement with delinquent, aggressive and anti-social peers or gang members account for a further external risk factor related to gangsterism (Owen & Greeff, 2015). Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory not only provides insight into personality development but

also highlights adolescents' deep concerns of how they appear to others during the identity formation stage. Adolescence is a period of experimentation where youth engage in various behaviours and activities to affirm who they are in relation to societal expectations and peer acceptance (Owen & Greeff, 2015). Consequently, adolescents who find themselves in communities populated with gangs and peers involved in gangsterism, may find it difficult to refrain from entering gang life in fear of rejection. Additionally, an adolescent with poor self-esteem, perhaps due to failure in certain aspects of life, may also succumb to gangsterism as an opportunity to better their life circumstances when observing peers reaping the benefits from gang affiliation and involvement.

*Community*. Another factor affiliated with gang involvement is the presence of violence and danger in the external environment. Du Toit (2014) asserts that in addition to the social power gangs hold over marginalised and vulnerable communities, they also hold 'coercive power' (Du Toit, 2014). Coercive power pertains to the violence and force that gangs exert in the community, leaving community members feeling inferior, powerless, and scared for their lives in a pre-existing environment of violence and crime. Gang affiliation then becomes a viable option for personal safety and security.

## The Impact of Gangsterism in South Africa

Gangs are responsible for a large portion of violent crime, illicit drug trading, illegal weapons trading and human trafficking that occurs in low- and middle- income countries such as South Africa (Higginson et al., 2015). The far-reaching and long-lasting consequences thereof influence not only the lives of gang members, but also impact the communities in which gangs operate and broader functioning of society.

## Impact on Communities

The effects of gang activity on surrounding communities in South Africa can be separated into four categories, namely physical, social, psychological, and economic consequences.

**Physical.** The physical impact of gang activity can include extensive loss or damage to property and loss of lives. Frequent turf wars, which are characterised by gunfights, occur between rival gangs often result in damage to surrounding schools, shops, and homes in the community (Etuk et al., 2016; MacMaster, 2007). Additionally, these turf wars provide gang members with an

opportunity to vandalise, break into and loot surrounding property in order to find valuable goods to sell (Bility, 1999; Etuk et al., 2016).

Turf wars also result in a significant number of gang members being killed (Petrus, 2015). However, members of the surrounding community are often caught in the crossfire of these turf wars or assaulted by gang members, resulting in injury or death (MacMaster, 2007). These deaths happen predominantly in the Western Cape and are said to be increasing in number (Ndeze, 2018). In 2018, there were 87 gang-related murders in the Eastern Cape and 808 in the Western Cape (Ndeze, 2018). This number increased dramatically in 2019 when 1600 people were murdered due to gang-related violence on the Cape Flats within a period of six months (Meyer, 2019). Chronic stress caused by living in these violent communities can also result in chronic health issues and the development of epigenetic chemical imbalances in children that are brought to term in these conditions (Dalmas, 2014; Pinnock, 2016).

Additional lives are also lost through human trafficking (Frankel, 2016). It is estimated that over 500 criminal gangs in South Africa are implicated in sex trafficking, but people may also be trafficked for forced labour or organ harvesting (Gould, 2010; UNESCO, 2007). Adults and children are captured by rural street gangs and sold to organised trafficking gangs in urban areas such as Johannesburg and Cape Town (Frankel, 2016). Trafficking related deaths are common, resulting from murder or negligent conduct by the perpetrator, however, the exact extent to which this occurs is unknown (Kruger & Oosthuizen, 2012).

**Social.** Whilst gang activity can increase social capital for gang members, it can also lead to a loss of social capital for those who are not affiliated with the gang (MacMaster, 2007; Moule et al, 2013). Social capital is lost through reduced social cohesion, the breakdown of family structure and gangs in schools.

Residents of the community are often fearful of being caught in the crossfire of, or becoming victim to gang activity (Howell, 2006). This fear can result in reduced social cohesion by undermining trust, interdependence, and perceptions of cohesiveness within the community (Higginson et al., 2015; Stansfield, 2006). Additionally, the entire community, including those who are not affiliated with gangs, are stigmatised by outsiders and by the media, as a result of the gang activity that takes place in the area (MacMaster, 2007). This can lead to a lack of community pride and consequently, a reduction of residents' investment in the community (Berkman, 2000; MacMaster, 2007). Community members are thus less able to offer each other support in day to

day life and have limited social resources (Berkman, 2000). The effect that a lack of social capital can have on mental health is discussed below.

Gang activity can affect the family structure. Many families are broken apart by the drugs that are supplied by gangs and the frequent deaths that occur at the hands of gangs (Dalmas, 2014; Pinnock, 2016). This can leave children without role models and nurturing relationships that offer safety and can ultimately affect their development (Pinnock, 2016). Because of this, the breakdown of families can result in an increased risk of future violence, gang activity and drug use (Chetty, 2015; Frank, 2006; Scorgie et al., 2017).

The impacts of gangsterism can also permeate into the school environment, where children play out the gang conflicts of their older male family members (Mail & Guardian, 2002). Although the adjustment phase between primary school and high school appears to be the ideal time for new gang members to be recruited, children can start to join gangs from the age of 10 (Bility, 1999). Because the age of joining gangs coincides with school-going age, schools become the primary site of gang activity including violence and drug use (Chetty, 2015; Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). Non-gang affiliated learners and teachers are in jeopardy of gang violence both at school and on their way to and from school (Bility, 1999). This violence can lead to conflict at school, reduced grades, impaired concentration, and learners staying at home to avoid conflict (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014). Similarly, drug usage disrupts class activity, disrupts ambitions to do well and increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency within other learners (Chetty, 2015; Pluddermann et al., 2010). Both drug use and violence cause a significant obstacle to teaching and learning and can lead to school drop-out (Mncube & Madikizela-Madiya, 2014; Townsend et al., 2007).

**Psychological.** Gangsterism has been identified by adolescents who live on the Cape Flats as their primary health and safety concern (Bility, 1999). The violence and substance use that characterises communities affected by gangs can increase the risk of the development of psychological trauma and mental illness within members of the community, including adolescents and adults who are not gang-members (Burns, 2011; Hawton et al., 2013; Ribeiro et al., 2009). This risk is increased by the corrosion of social capital in the community which affects community resilience, resulting in difficulty recovering from or adapting to the aforementioned adverse experiences (Ungar, 2011). Psychological symptoms that are often experienced by these members of the community may include anxiety, depression, lack of self-esteem and motivation, difficulties

controlling temper, social and emotional withdrawal as well as conduct problems (Bility, 1999). Mental illness can subsequently lead to higher mortality rates as a result of reduced life expectancy and suicide; notable community and individual suffering; substantial disability; a considerable loss of both vocational and social effectiveness and functioning; and a burden on already stressed family systems in the community (Burns, 2011). Furthermore, the consequences of mental illness are amplified in low- and middle- income countries like South Africa, and especially within these marginalised communities since there is a lack of mental health resources and care, thus resulting in an even greater burden of disease with transgenerational potential (Atkinson et al., 2014; Horton, 2007; Thornicroft, 2007).

**Economic**. Gangsterism has both a positive and negative impact on the economy. The positive impact of gangsterism is that gang activity supplies economic capital that sustains life in the impoverished communities in which these gangs exist (MacMaster, 2007).

The negative economic impacts of gangsterism stem from the physical, social and psychological impacts that violent, gang-related crime has on surrounding communities and consequently the costs of combating gangsterism. A well-informed estimate of the cost of a gang-related activity on the economy cannot be made since most gang activity is not recorded (Howell, 2006). However, from the known loss of lives, the increased likelihood of children dropping out of school and the greater burden of disease caused by the increased likelihood of community members developing mental illness, there is a noteworthy portion of people who are unable or less able to contribute positively towards the economy. The resulting damage and lives being diverted by criminal activity by gangs cost the country billions of Rands (Higgins, 2014).

Additionally, not only does property damage cost money to repair, stigma and high crime within the communities as a result of gang activity has been linked to decreases in the value of property and investment in the area (Clarke, 2002; Kennewick, 2011; MacMaster, 2007; Yuille, 2015). As a result, the existing poor infrastructure remains undeveloped (Coovadia et al., 2009; Yuille, 2015). This is reflected by the case of Hanover Park in the Western Cape that has few job opportunities, social facilities, or shopping amenities, despite having large areas of vacant and undeveloped space (City of Cape Town, 2015).

Gangs have also been linked to a loss of wildlife and damage to the environment that can negatively affect the economy. The turf wars that characterise communities in which gangs exist are often over the trading of illicit goods including poached items (de Greef, 2019). These items

may include endangered species such as abalone, crayfish, or rhino horn, that were poached illegally by poaching gangs and sold by urban gangs (de Greef, 2019; Goga, 2014; Govender, 2015; Kinnes, 2000). Loss of these endangered species not only has a profound negative impact on the environment but also on tourism which is responsible for generating a significant portion of South Africa's foreign revenue earnings (Ngwakwe & Mkgalong, 2014).

The costs of combating gangsterism in South Africa are enormous. In 2012, South Africa's cost of violence containment was $51.2 billion (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2012). It is estimated that 8.3% of assaults, 12.8% of murders and an overall 10% of violent crime in South Africa can be attributed to gangs (Statistics South Africa, 2016). This would account for a significant portion of South Africa's cost of violence containment. Additionally, according to news reports, Cape Town, alone, spent over R60 million outside of government budget, in an attempt to tackle gang-related crime in areas such as Hanover Park, Delft, and Manenberg (Nyati, 2018). It should also be emphasised that these figures do not take the financial or medical impact of violent crime nor the costs of imprisonment or rehabilitation into account.

**Impact on Gang Members**

There is a constellation of advantageous features tied to gang membership which lend to the alluring perception that gangsterism offers a prosperous life. As previously outlined, gang affiliation reportedly offers security, promotes the expression of gendered selfhood, and facilitates greater access to capital, status and structures of power (Blumstein et al., 1986). Research on motivating forces associated with gangsterism indicates that young men in adolescence or early adulthood, who have experienced significant personal as well as societal neglect, fall prey to the illusion of brotherhood typically associated with organised gangs and often perceive a gang as an alternative family structure. Consequently, prospective members often become involved in gangsterism with limited knowledge of what will be expected of them or how gang activity may negatively influence their lives. Accordingly, the ramifications of gang involvement are often ignored while the positive aspects are placed front and centre.

Despite the limited capacity to conduct systematic research on understanding the lived experiences of gang members, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that participating in gang-related activities has a negative impact on members. Levitt and Venkatesh (2000) suggest that gang association does not directly cause adverse life outcomes but rather serves as a

contributing factor. Having said that, the authors acknowledge that gang involvement greatly increases the risk of criminal involvement and results in issues around steady employment even when accounting for predisposing risk factors. Former gang members experience greater job turnover which can plausibly be linked to societal stigma and are more likely to report having no current source of income. They further contend that gang members are more frequently exposed to extreme violence and have both a higher likelihood of being shot as well as incarcerated than their non-gangster counterparts. Moreover, gang members who come in contact with the criminal justice system face specific dangers within penal institutions if they are convicted. Common experiences among incarcerated gang members include being subjected to violent beatings, sexual abuse and near-fatal acts of retribution carried out by members of rival gangs (Gaes et al., 2002; Lahm, 2008). While the prison environment is fraught with danger, gang members are similarly exposed to injury and suffering beyond the confines of prison walls at the hands of fellow gang members. It would seem contradictory that those in search of personal safety often join gangs because gang traditions are predominantly not geared towards protecting the physical and mental well-being of members. Nel (2017, pp. 59) indicates the personal costs associated with subscribing to said tradition: when the new member invites the recruiter to share his umbrella, it would mean that the gang member is invited into his bed. With this answer, he would not become a member of the 28 gangs, he would become a sex son. A sex son is mixed with the probationers in the silver line of the 28s, and to an outsider he is just like a probationer or a new 28. Moreover, he is also a sex object to the soldiers and the members of the gold line, who have sex with them at night. However, there is no progress up the silver line and the gang's history is not shared with him nor is he a real 28.

Unsafe sexual engagement likely has an impact on gang members both physically and psychologically. Additionally, home tattooing puts gang members at risk of developing serious health complications that can be lifelong. Whilst tattoos are not always considered mandatory, they typically serve as tokens of recognition and signify loyalty (Nel, 2017). Accordingly, gangs are easily distinguishable by the specific tattoos which members display. Having said that, tattooing is a professional form of body modification that requires sufficient knowledge of the methods involved and should strictly be carried out in a sterile environment. When performed incorrectly or in the absence of sterilised equipment, individuals can contract an infection which, in turn, can cause a potentially life-threatening condition called sepsis or result in the transmission of

bloodborne pathogens such as human immunodeficiency virus and/or hepatitis C virus (Bergström & Bodlund, 2015). Given that gang members are routinely tattooed in unlicensed establishments where hygiene standards are largely disregarded, gang members have a higher likelihood of developing the aforementioned health complications.

In addition to physical health consequences, the psychological toll gang association has on individuals is noteworthy. Existing literature indicates that an array of mental health complications is associated with participation in gang-related activities such as reported high levels of anxiety and depressed mood (Gilman et al., 2014). Criminal involvement associated with gangsterism is often thought to incorporate choice, however fear and coercion both play a significant role in pressuring members to commit crimes (Unnever et al., 2004). Nel (2017) describes how prospective members must perform a rite of passage during their initiation which typically involves physically assaulting an officer of the law. Should the recruit fail, he is subjected to a brutal beating delivered by other senior members of the gang. It becomes apparent that subliminal messages which are fed to new recruits at an early stage, project the notion that you either conform or face severe punishment. Many gang members are overtly affected by their exposure to and involvement in acts of extreme violence, however, others may become desensitised and, in turn, only develop latent distress in response to their experiences of trauma which can also have serious mental health consequences.

## South Africa's Failure to Reduce Gangsterism

Despite efforts to combat gangsterism, there has been a significant increase in the reports of gang-related activity since the start of the decade. Moreover, it should be noted that the number of street gangs and the level of organisation within these criminal syndicates has grown considerably, both in gangs operating in the Western Cape and Eastern Cape (Petrus, 2013). This failure to reduce gangsterism in South Africa can predominantly be ascribed to a lack of particular knowledge surrounding gangsterism, the preoccupation with reducing crime and the unidimensional nature of existing interventions.

**Lack of Knowledge Surrounding Gangsterism**

Within the South African context, intervention programmes that strive to reduce gangsterism are routinely unsubstantiated by empirical research and considered reactive rather than effective (van Wyk, 2001). To illustrate the aforementioned, prevention strategies conducted in the Western Cape have included programmes that target at-risk youth however, none of these programmes have actively recruited youth members in their design or implementation (van Wyk & Theron, 2005). Given that a large proportion of the existing research on gangsterism reflects a criminological perspective, no sources that evaluate the success of interventions within South Africa were found. Thus, without a theoretical basis and evidence-based interventions specific to the South African context, existing efforts are not likely to reduce gang membership or activity. Additionally, intervention strategies that do show promise cannot be easily translated to different settings around South Africa (van Wyk & Theron, 2005; Winfree et al., 1996).

**The Preoccupation with Reducing Crime**

Due to their criminological underpinning, existing interventions concentrated predominantly on combating the violence and crime that resulted from gangsterism. This approach failed to reduce gang activity and affiliation due to the absence of effective policing strategies and its disregard for the underlying causes of gangsterism.

Police are not able to address all gang related crimes. Govender (2015) reports that police forces are struggling to combat the ever-rising rate of organised crime because there is a lack of specialised crime units at local police stations. In addition, lower rank members of police departments are not equipped with the knowledge, skills or technological resources specifically pertaining to dealing with gang-related crime. Moreover, the effectiveness of police strategies has been interrupted by police officers and public officials who have been corrupted into protecting gang leaders and members (Kinnes, 2000). According to police gang experts, gangs would have become obsolete years ago if it were not for corruption (Standing, 2005). In the absence of effective policing strategies, gangs are swiftly becoming more organised and aggressive in their ruthless pursuit of power, status, and capital.

By focusing on reducing crime, existing interventions have failed to treat the causes of gangsterism. As previously discussed, there are several root causes of gangsterism in South Africa, including socio-political, cultural, and economic attributes that kept non-white citizens dependent

and disorganised (Salo, 2004). These root causes gave rise to a society in which many of the risk factors of gangsterism are present (MacMaster, 2007). In review, these risk factors include the breakdown of families, social disruption, poor housing, and health services, high levels of violence, poverty, discrimination, poor parenting practices, peer pressure and activities, inadequate education, bunking school, being excluded from or dropping out of school as well as limited work opportunities (Frank, 2006). Many of the root causes and consequently the risk factors of gangsterism collectively exert an influence on vulnerable communities across the country and remain unaddressed in contemporary post-apartheid South African society (MacMaster, 2007). For example, in 2016, only half the number of learners that were initially enrolled for school in grade 1, wrote their matric exams (Pinnock, 2016). Additionally, of those learners who are enrolled in school, most are unable to read, write or compute at the appropriate level for their grades and many are functionally illiterate (Department of Basic Education 2017; Spaull, 2013). Between 3 and 4 million young South Africans are not in training, education, or employment and by 2016, 49% of young South Africans who were between the ages of 15 and 35 were unemployed (Pinnock, 2016). Fewer than 37% of the community members in Mitchells Plain have a job and approximately five million young South Africans are currently living in a household in which no one has formal employment (de Greef, 2019; Pinnock, 2016). In South Africa, 50% of the population is living below the poverty line and many people still live in impoverished communities that do not fulfil basic human needs (Burns, 2011; Pinnock, 2016). Hanover Park, for example, is characterised by an absence of social facilities, amenities, services, and facilities that would lessen the effects of poverty (City of Cape Town, 2015). Furthermore, many families have been disrupted, are characterised by abuse, or have absent fathers, with 60% of all births in the Western Cape being to single mothers (Pinnock, 2016). Levels of violence are high, with one in every six South African children (16.9%) having witnessed some type of violence (Meinck et al., 2016). All of the aforementioned characteristics of contemporary South African society make the risk of gangsterism more likely.

Additionally, by not addressing these root causes, gangsterism is fuelled by what is referred to as the 'gang effect'. This effect describes how the experience of gang activity can in fact increase the likelihood of joining a gang (Gatti et al., 2005). This is because many of the consequences of gang activity, such as school dropout, social and family disruption, violence, limited job opportunities, and peer pressure are also risk factors for others joining gangs (National Crime

Prevention Centre, 2007). In this way, a negative feedback system of unlawful behaviour and social and economic deprivation exacerbates the current climate in South Africa.

**Unidimensional Nature of Existing Interventions**

It quickly becomes apparent that considerable effort has been put into creating and implementing intervention programmes that are specifically geared towards reducing both gang presence across South Africa as well as the various repercussions associated with gang-related activity. It should be noted that while these programmes have good intentions, they have predominantly been conducted in isolation (van Wyk & Theron, 2005). In the absence of collaboration, programmes do not share information with one another which could be utilised to improve upon similar pitfalls experienced. Additionally, adopting an integrated approach could result in more multidimensional, thorough efforts capable of assigning work to separate task forces within one organisation which are specifically committed to addressing different facets of the problem. Finally, by working in isolation, interventions and organisations are unable to integrate resources that could lead to a more effective means of tackling gangsterism.

**Current Policies and Law Programs and Solutions to Combat Gangsterism in South Africa**

Gangsterism is a complex problem which requires a multifaceted approach in order to combat it (South African Government, 2020). That being said, South Africa's unique socio-economic landscape further complicates this issue. To combat gangsterism effectively, lessons need to be learnt from approaches used in other countries, whilst taking the unique South African context into account.

**Current Laws and Programmes Implemented to Combat Gangsterism**

This section lists and discusses the current efforts (laws and policies), implemented by the South African government, to combat gangsterism.

**Laws to combat gangsterism.** There are currently a number of laws in South Africa that specifically targets gangsterism and other organised crime. These laws include the *Financial Intelligence Centre Act of 2001* (FICA) and the *Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998* as well as other laws. The following section will describe and discuss these laws as well as offer critique on its efficacy in combating gangsterism in the South African context.

***The Financial Intelligence Centre Act of 2001.*** According to the *Financial Intelligence Centre Act of 2001 (*FICA), this act aims to ensure that businesses identify the people, trusts and organisations they do business with. By doing so it ensures that anonymous business transactions cannot take place which helps to counteract money laundering, fraud, and corruption.

This act also ensures that the necessary oversight is present in businesses to make sure that the identification and documentation requirements are upheld by companies. Moreover, to ensure that the requirements of this act are followed, steep financial and correctional penalties are in place for those who do not report suspicious business transactions or for those who do not meet the identification and documentation requirements of this act (FICA Act, 2001). This act helps to ensure that criminally obtained money cannot enter the formal economy and also forces businesses to report suspicious individuals which will, in turn, alert authorities to possible criminals.

The way in which this act counteracts gangsterism is twofold. Firstly, it stops money obtained through gangsterism and related activities from entering the formal economy. Secondly, it puts measures in place to report suspicious transactions and individuals, which could lead to the identification and prosecution of individuals involved in gangsterism (FICA Act, 2001).

One criticism of this act and how it is related to gangsterism in South Africa, is that it does not necessarily account for possible intimidation from gangsters, preventing responsible individuals from reporting suspicious individuals and transactions.

***The Prevention of Organised Crime Act 121 of 1998.*** This act assists the criminal justice system in dealing with and prosecuting organised crime and related activities. Included in this act are the requirements of reporting suspicious individuals and transactions as set out by the *Financial Intelligence Centre Act of 2001*.

This act enables authorities to target gangsterism and related activities more effectively, since it not only focuses on the criminal activities of gangsterism but also includes the involvement in criminal gangs as a punishable offence. In the past, gang leaders were able to escape justice because they did not commit gang-related criminal offenses themselves but ordered them to be committed. Thus, with these new provisions, the *Prevention of Organised Crime Act* allows for the criminal justice system to deal with gangsterism more effectively in South Africa.

According to van der Linde (2019), a critique of this act is that even though it does make provision for gang involvement to carry a prison sentence or a fine, these sentences are short and

the fines, small. This means that gang leaders, who order others to carry out gang-related crime, will only face minor punishment.

Furthermore, van der Linde (2019) also states that this law does not make enough provision for the authorities to disrupt the structures and activities of gangs.

***Other laws targeting gangsterism indirectly.*** Other laws that target gang-related activities are the *Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act of 1992* and the *Firearms Control Act of 2000*. These laws focus more on gang-related activity than gangsterism itself.

The *Drugs and Drug Trafficking Act* (1992) prohibits unauthorised persons to possess or deal drugs. Since the selling of illegal drugs is one of the main income-producing activities for gangs, this law enables authorities to combat the illicit drug trade.

One critique of this act is that the prohibition of drugs creates the environment for a black market in drugs to flourish and therefore this law indirectly provides gangs with their largest source of income (Hari, 2015).

The *Firearms Control Act of 2000* prohibits the possession and selling of firearms by unauthorised persons and makes provision for the punishment of individuals who do not adhere to this law. This law aims to reduce the level of gun violence and murder, currently associated with gangsterism in South Africa.

One of the problems with the aforementioned act is that legislation does not necessarily prevent the illegal possession of firearms in South Africa. This is so, as further steps need to be taken to address corruption in the police service and other departments with access to firearms if this law is to have the desired effect. A potential reason for this, is that the sources of illegal firearms used by gang members are occasionally accessed through unethical officials and policemen (de Greef, 2019).

**Policies in place to combat gangsterism.** The following section will list and discuss some of the policies the South African Government has implemented to combat gangsterism.

***Policies of the Department of Community Safety.*** According to the Western Cape Government (2019), the Department of Community Safety offers community watch training, regulation and accreditation. Moreover, this department offers oversight for both the municipal and national police services in its fight against gangs and gang-related activity. Another service provided by the Department of Community Safety is that of the police ombudsman, who aims to

better the relationship between police officers and the community at large (Western Cape Government, 2019). This has the potential to lead to an increase in trust as well as cooperation between the police and community members in the fight against gangsterism.

*The National Crime Prevention Strategy.* This strategy was implemented in 1995 on an ongoing basis. It aimed to bring together the departments of both national and local government as well as civil society to tackle crime in South Africa (Government of South Africa, 2020). One of the reasons for the implementation of this strategy, was an increase in gang violence in South African communities (Government of South Africa, 2020).

A critique could be levelled against this policy as crime rates and specifically gang violence has been on the rise in South Africa (de Greef, 2019). This could also be seen by the necessity of the deployment of the South African Defence Force into townships in July 2019, where the rise in gang violence and murder could no longer be left unchecked (de Greef, 2019).

**The deployment of the South African Defence Force to combat gang violence.** In July 2019, the president of South Africa deployed the South African Defence Force to combat the escalating violence in Cape Town's townships and to address the spike in gang violence within these communities (de Greef, 2019).

However, this intervention has faced several critiques for addressing the symptoms of the problem rather than the causes (de Greef, 2019). Some believe that the violence will continue to escalate as soon as the military deployment is over. This idea seems plausible since the violence seems to stop whilst the military are present but when they leave, violence continues (de Greef, 2019). Thus, the temporary military presence in these communities is not an effective nor viable strategy to stop or reduce gang violence in the long run.

**Solutions to Gangsterism**

A multidimensional approach is suggested to address the complex issue of gangsterism, whereby a range of factors are accounted for. This section explores some possible solutions to combat or reduce gangsterism.

**Address South Africa's inequality.** In South Africa, inequality is high as a result of previous oppressive apartheid policies which limited access to educational and employment opportunities for non-white citizens. This has led to major financial insecurity and poverty in many communities, making turning to crime a viable option for survival (Cele, 2013b). Therefore,

interventions seeking to reduce the impact and prevalence of gangsterism, need to address inequalities and financial insecurity. One way in which this can be achieved, is by providing more employment opportunities, particularly to the youth of South Africa.

*Employment and youth development strategies.* In order to address employment in South Africa, there needs to be a focus on both skill development as well as job creation. Youth development programmes are also an effective strategy to keep at-risk youth, such as those who live in impoverished or violent communities, occupied with skill building and self-development which, in turn, can increase their employability. Joining a gang, when living in vulnerable communities or under impoverished circumstances, is seen as taking a step towards securing financial and safety needs. However, if at-risk youth see themselves as having better prospects through formal education and employment, they will be less inclined or enticed to join a gang (Cele, 2013b). The youth unemployment rate, approximately 60%, in South Africa is extraordinarily high (Trading Economics, 2020). Therefore, there is a need to create more employment opportunities in South Africa. For example, jobs could be created through starting an initiative that hires and develops the skills of the youth, as a means to bridge the gap between elder adults and new technology in the workplace. Another job creation initiative could entail high school students being paid small sums of money for community clean-ups during the holidays. This being said, any form of job creation which provides the youth with the opportunity of developing their skills and work ethic would be invaluable for South Africa, since this would be a step towards reducing the pervasive generational inequalities which still exist today.

*Public involvement to reduce inequality.* According to Kleinfeld (2019), inequality is a greater source of violence than war. One of the reasons for this, is that violence is typically concentrated in lower-income communities, which allows middle- and upper-class citizens to live in more affluent neighbourhoods, with predominantly less violence or crime (Kleinfeld, 2019). Consequently, these citizens are able to turn a blind eye to community violence and typically do not hold the government accountable, while communities riddled with violence are often marginalised, and a perceived lack of power prevents these communities from utilising legitimate ways to hold the government accountable (Kleinfeld, 2019). Kleinfeld (2019) suggests that the solution to such violence, would be to address inequality and corruption within the government. This would mean that those citizens who hold certain privileges, including access to adequate education and resources, need to demand an equal share in these said privileges.

**Fight government and police corruption and brutality.** Kleinfeld (2019) asserts that another solution to fighting gangsterism, would be to address government and police corruption, brutality, and apathy, as these factors are important contributors to gang violence, access to illegal firearms and inequality.

Moreover, South African laws need to be more consistent when sentencing violent crimes. For instance, a charge of murder and a charge of armed robbery, should be on two different playing fields, when it comes to sentencing (George, 2001). Although sentences are affected by circumstances surrounding the crime (e.g. whether it was planned) as well as perpetrator and victim traits (e.g. age and gender) (Glaeser & Sacerdote, 2000), the law is too easily malleable, especially for those with access to money or status. In fact, there are some corrupt officials benefitting from alliances with gangs and their leaders, especially those of organised crime syndicates (George, 2001). Thus, consistency in sentencing, regardless of money, status, or power, has the potential to reduce the influence of corruption within the South African justice system. A more consistent sentencing process will also make other legalities surrounding the crime more efficient, easing overcrowding by those on trial or awaiting sentence (Nel, 2017). In essence, consistent sentencing protocols and better management of law enforcement agents can aid in reducing corruption surrounding arrests and sentencing procedures.

**Legalisation, regulation, and taxation of illegal drugs.** Although a seemingly radical solution, this is also the one that shows the most promise to managing gangsterism. In order to understand why this seemingly counterintuitive strategy could work, one needs to look at the current problems with drug prohibition. According to Nadelmann (2014) and Hari (2015), drug prohibitions provide the perfect circumstance for a lucrative black market in the sale of drugs, which is controlled by gangs, essentially keeping them afloat. Furthermore, the criminalisation and prohibition of drug use cause otherwise innocent people to be sent to prison, where they are surrounded by hardened criminals and their future participation in the formal economy is denied, leading to more criminal activity in the long run (Hari, 2015; Nadelmann, 2014). Moreover, in countries where steps have been taken to decriminalise and regulate drugs, drug-related crime has decreased and public health has improved (Hari, 2015; Nadelmann, 2014).

A large number of public funds could also be made available through taxing and regulating the drug trade which could go towards useful empowerment programmes aimed at counteracting gangsterism and addressing inequalities. Portugal has had great success in diverting funds that

would have otherwise gone to the war on drugs, to programmes that address the drug problem as a social and health problem, rather than a criminal one (Hari, 2015). Another example is that of Colorado, who have raised over a billion dollars in state taxes from legal marijuana sales. These funds are currently being used to provide funding for education, public health, mental health services and youth drug addiction programmes (Rosenbaum, 2019).

Thus, the legalisation, regulation and taxation of drugs may be an effective way to address gang violence and public health issues in South Africa, since the current prohibitionist policies seem to make drug-related problems, such as gang violence, worse (Hari, 2015).

**Development of effective correctional services.** Law enforcement needs to reconsider its approach to punishment as at present incarceration is the main form, where prisoners often endure traumatic experiences due to inadequately sustained and monitored prison facilities (Glaeser & Sacerdote, 2000). Prisoners face many forms of violence including rape by fellow inmates and live in unsanitary and often overcrowded conditions (Hopkins, 2016). However, prison could be a reforming experience, by making it a space for rehabilitating and deterring inmates from participating in illegal activity.

Moreover, the fact that gangs are still able to form inside prisons, is evidence that correctional facilities are not functioning as they should (Nel, 2017). A potential way to avoid gangs growing within prisons would be through spatial organisation, in a way which separates inmates based on their profile as this could prevent weaker inmates from being coerced into joining a prison gang (Nel, 2017). Additionally, better supervision alongside rehabilitation in prisons could assist in the management of monitoring and correcting criminal or violent behaviour as well as gang-related activity (Haney, 2001).

Most programmes that exist to rehabilitate prisoners are either non-government or faith-based organisations, as funding allocated to the Department of Correctional Services for the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners is minimal (Cele, 2013b). However, the non-government and faith-based organisations rely on public funding which is not sufficient to address the need for rehabilitation of those affiliated with gangs. This results in projects that are effective yet short-lived or are unable to have a more significant or wider communal impact (Cele, 2013b). An example of this is 'Operation Ceasefire' which began in 2013 in Hanover Park as a means to reduce the prevalence of gang violence in the area (First Community Resource Centre, 2020). The City of Cape Town withdrew funding from the project, irrespective of it contributing significantly

to the reduction of gang violence, between 2013 and 2018 (Booysen, 2018). The project managed to work with several former gang members assisting them in developing alternatives to resorting to violent altercations and interactions. As a result, the project rehabilitated previous offenders who then sought change for themselves and their community (Cele, 2013a). This being said, a more rehabilitative approach to correctional punishment could aid in the reduction of gangsterism.

**Community involvement as an essential for long-term solutions.** Part of what made 'Operation Ceasefire' an effective strategy towards reducing gang violence in Hanover Park and various areas, was community engagement and the cohesion between outreach workers (Cele, 2013a). Moreover, community member insights are invaluable as they have insight in to what their communities need. That being said, the implementation of strategies without community support is difficult as reducing the prevalence and the impact of gangs is dependent on a shift in community norms. This is so as the more the community perceives gangs and gang violence as normal, the more normalised it becomes (Cele, 2013a). The normalisation of gang violence through community members avoiding certain areas or staying indoors, further exacerbates violent activity in the community. For this reason, 'Operation Ceasefire' worked with community members to reduce the acceptance of gang violence and taught safety strategies to interrupt future gang altercations more swiftly (Cele, 2013a). Thus, any strategy seeking to reduce gang prevalence and its impact, needs to consider and engage with each community according to what they need.

## Organisations that Rehabilitate and Educate Gang Members

This paper is now going to review organisations that help the process of solving gangsterism, through rehabilitating and educating gang members. Rehabilitation is a lengthy intervention that collaborates with various systems to reintegrate the past offender back into society (Haney, 2001). There are no organisations in South Africa that focus on gang members alone, rather these organisations work with any type of offender. This is problematic considering that gangsterism is a serious problem in South African society. However, offender rehabilitation programmes are adjusted according to an individual's circumstances and needs (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). Thus, a person working with a prisoner, who is also a gang member, would adjust rehabilitation methods accordingly.

**What does it mean to rehabilitate and educate gang members?** Organisations who rehabilitate gang members collaborate with other systems in the community, to assist in the success

of the rehabilitation intervention (Cele, 2013). Rehabilitating and educating a gang member can be done through reintegration into society, or through a process called gang desistance. Gang desistance involves linking the offender to social services that will help them attain the needed skills to access, amongst other things, meaningful employment opportunities (i.e. a job that the individual enjoys and allows him or her to contribute to society) as a means to avoid reoffending or re-entering a gang (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). According to Young and Gonzalez (2013), if an ex-offender remains doing less-skilled work after their release, they are likely to reoffend for both socioeconomic and psychological reasons. Socioeconomically, re-joining a gang would give them a chance to earn a better income and a more desirable social position. Psychologically, the gang elevates their sense of self because of the respect earned through their contribution to the group. Thus, to be effective, rehabilitation programmes should address both the socioeconomic and psychological needs of the individual. Moreover, in order for these programmes to be effective, they should go beyond the teaching of professional skills and should also consider teaching social skills, such as conflict resolution, and methods for cognitive and behavioural control, such as anger management (O'Connor & Waddell, 2015).

The gang desistance process also involves the offender making internal or psychological changes (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). This is achieved through the individual addressing internalised scripts of self. Being in a gang necessitates a view of self which is aggressive and violent, therefore, the rehabilitation facilitator works with the client towards adopting a new perspective of self (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). This is an important course of action in order to have meaningful and lasting change post-gang involvement. Additionally, the process requires the facilitator to consistently support as well as connect the offender to other means of social support which will be key in ensuring effective change.

Social support in the form of family or friends is essential to a reformed offender. This is so, as they will need emotional support in order to deal with the challenges they will encounter after leaving prison (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). However, it is imperative that the individual distances themself from the friendships they have formed within the gang. Doing so may lead to feelings of isolation or loneliness, but it would be counterintuitive to remain friends with those still involved in gang activity as keeping ties increases their chances of being victimised by gangs and becoming involved in criminal activity again (Pyrooz et al., 2010). This is why prisoner rehabilitation organisations also tend to work with the families of offenders. Working with the

families helps educate them on the reformation process, so that the ex-offender faces less stigma and exclusion, which otherwise could lead them back to gang life (Young & Gonzalez, 2013).

An effective intervention is one that results in lasting gang desistance through addressing, not only socioeconomic, psychological, and supportive needs, but also safety concerns for the former gang member (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). Safety needs to be considered because there may be rivals, as well as fellow gang members who make rehabilitation more difficult for the ex-gang member through intimidation and threats of violence (Di Placido et al., 2006). This is not always a problem and usually offenders can quietly leave a gang without any violence. However, this depends on the duration of membership and how integrated they were in gang activity (Young & Gonzalez, 2013).

Overall, rehabilitating a gang member is a challenging task (MacMaster, 2007). Thus, effective rehabilitation ultimately needs to consider the individual, what drew them to a gang and what is keeping them away from gang life. That being said, a facilitator can only work with individuals who want to change and usually rely on 'leverage points' to develop a plan well-suited to the person (Young & Gonzalez, 2013). Leverage points refer to areas in a member's life that push or pull them away from gangs. Pull points may be responsibilities such as children, family, or wanting an education and formal employment. Whereas push points are factors within the gang that deter them from joining a gang, such as being victimised by the gang or incarceration. These leverage points can be used by the facilitator to motivate the offender to not revert back to criminal activity or gang life (Young & Gonzalez, 2013).

**Offender rehabilitation organisations in South Africa.** Organisations such as Uthando SA, who raise funds for various community development projects, work to unite different systems such as the tourism industry to aid in the reintegration of gang members into South African society (Uthando SA, 2020). Beauty for Ashes ministry is an example of a prisoner rehabilitation project funded by Uthando. This project is linked to Jubilee Community Church, whose focus has been on accommodating and feeding women leaving prison (Jubilee Community Church, 2020). They first work on assessing prisoners individually, then develop plans to educate and reintegrate them back into society. Moreover, the Beauty for Ashes organisation works with the Department of Correctional Services to teach life skills which are imperative in the rehabilitation process of prisoners (Uthando SA, 2020). Their focus is not gang members, but women who have been incarcerated in Pollsmoor prison (Jubilee Community Church, 2020). They reach out to ex-

offenders who are preparing for their release, and they offer halfway homes to accommodate them. They further support the ex-offender by providing them with educational and employment opportunities (Uthando SA, 2020). This intervention programme links the tourism industry to work alongside a religious community, which further recruits the educational and employment sectors for opportunities, creating a holistic approach to rehabilitation which has proven to be more effective. Furthermore, they consider the accommodation needs of ex-offenders and if an ex-offender were previously involved in a gang, they would provide accommodation away from other gang members. However, a limitation of this organisation is that they limit their support and assistance to women, and according to prisoner statistics gathered by Thulani and Gear (2017), there are fewer women prisoners compared to males. Moreover, not every person they reach out to is involved in a gang which decreases the overall impact this organisation has on rehabilitating gang members.

SaferSpaces is an online networking portal, focused on reducing the risk and impact of violence and crime in South African society. This platform is noteworthy as it works to unite, support, and inform various systems concerned with community safety and crime in the country (SaferSpaces, 2020). A key organisation that SaferSpaces has liaised with is Imbokodo Support for Ex-offenders, located in West Rand, Johannesburg. Their interventions focus on facilitating a behavioural-change programme for women offenders and sees crime as a societal responsibility. Thus, their reintegration programme not only educates offenders but also educates communities about the reintegration process (SaferSpaces, 2020). For Imbokodo, community support makes it less challenging for ex-offenders to get back into prosocial and productive activity, and prevents possible stigma, isolation and re-joining a gang. Similar to Beauty for Ashes, Imbokodo's reach is limited to women and does not aid in reducing the number of men offenders.

Khulisa Social Solutions, a non-profit organisation, seeks to empower and enable the youth as well as communities across South Africa through developing skills and unlocking potential (Khulisa Social Solutions, 2018). Their vision is for a country that is safer, healthier, and more prosperous, with access to opportunities for skills and employment as a means to combat crime involvement. Their mission is to address inequalities and social vulnerabilities using restorative processes and capacity building through key partnerships that can impact communities. Although Khulisa is especially concerned with the South African youth, they do reach out to people of all ages. Besides working to rehabilitate offenders, they also work to empower victims and steer boys

and men away from violence. One of their programmes called 'My path', works on fostering behaviour change through creative personal introspection and development. This is a beneficial aspect of the programme as it addresses the psychological influences leading to gangsterism. Another programme called 'I'm coming out', equips prisoners with a plan of action to help them when faced with challenges they may encounter when re-entering society (Khulisa Social Solutions, 2018). This is a helpful tool as former gang members will be able to anticipate and better handle socially related barriers they may face. Other positive aspects of this programme include its reach to all genders and its interventions implemented nationally, allowing for a more significant and wider overall impact.

Camp Joy is a rehabilitative programme offered in Strandfontein, Cape Town. It is an initiative of the First Community Resource Centre (FCRC) which started in 2009 through the support of the Pentecostal Protestant and WP Baptist Churches. Their programme focuses on the rehabilitation of drug addicts and ridding the community of violence and gangsterism. They offer a six-week programme that helps offenders with their addiction, provides them with support, and develops their interpersonal and job skills. Camp joy also accommodates gang members for a maximum of three months. During that time, they help them mend family relationships, develop their CV's, seek jobs, and become employable. Since broken families are understood to be a factor making youth more vulnerable to gang membership (MacMaster, 2007), mending families is not only an effective strategy to build a healthy support system for the ex-gang member but also a means to prevent their children from following the same path. Thus, Camp Joy offers a broad rehabilitative program that works on personal, interpersonal, and employment skills as well as drug rehabilitation as they consider the use of drugs to be normalised in gang culture.

**Comparison of international rehabilitative programmes.** Since gangsterism is a worldwide phenomenon, there are also international organisations that have adopted comprehensive responses to address gangsterism. Cure Violence is an organisation that deals with gangsterism and is primarily concerned with community violence (Cele, 2013a). From assessing the primary pull points to gangs, such as lack of education and opportunities, this organisation has adopted a comprehensive intervention to intervene in situations that sustain gang membership. The community is also involved throughout the process in order to change those societal norms which normalise and perpetuate gang violence. However, without community support, this initiative would not be as effective as it is.

Moreover, Cure Violence approaches rehabilitating gang members as part of their broader community initiative, which focuses on suppressing, preventing, and reducing violence. The organisation perceives violence as a 'disease' that needs to be detected and interrupted or suppressed. They assess individuals who are at high risk of starting and spreading violence (Cure Violence, 2020). These individuals include gang members and youth who are at-risk of being recruited by gangs (Cele, 2013a). They work with these individuals to rehabilitate and prevent future violence. Cure Violence outreach workers meet at-risk people where they are, by establishing trusting relationships with gang members and engage them by discussing the outcomes of violence. Outreach workers are specially trained, so that they can assist with behaviour changing skills such as conflict management. Furthermore, they work with gang members as their clients, assisting them with skill building, employment, and drug addiction (Cure Violence, 2020).

The difference between most South African rehabilitative organisations and the Cure Violence approach, is the involvement of the community. Efforts to effectively change the lives of former gang members need to involve more than sensitising the community to reaccepting members and should involve the community in active ways to reduce gang activity and address societal norms. However, the holistic approach that organisations like Cure Violence take to intervene in gang activity and violence, is an effective example of a strategy which not only rehabilitates gang members but also reduces the overall prevalence and impact of gangs on communities. When this strategy was implemented with the First Community Resource Centre as Operation Ceasefire in South Africa, the efficacy was demonstrated in the 50% reduction of gang violence in Hanover Park, within the first six months (Cele, 2013a). The project worked with gangs, former gang members and the community to rehabilitate and change the normalisation of gang violence. They not only addressed individuals but also created a positive union amongst people in the community. Thus, areas where this approach to gang violence has been implemented, have shown a significant reduction in the impact and prevalence of gang activity on the community, demonstrating its potential in combating gangsterism (Cure Violence, 2020).

## Concluding Remarks

By routinely addressing the effects rather than the socioeconomic and psychological causes of gangsterism, existing laws, policies, and interventions have not been successful at reducing gangsterism within the South African context.

Current laws and policies focus on the criminological components of gangsterism. These laws and the interventions that follow are ineffective as they allow for intimidation by gang members, minor punishment for gang activity, corruption, and the proliferation of a black market for drugs. Research suggests that possible revisions of these laws and policies might include the development of improved correctional service, the legislation, regulation, and taxation of illegal drugs; as well as implementing strategies to prevent corruption within police and governmental departments. By allowing for the effective regulation and punishment of gang activity along with appropriate rehabilitate programmes, these revisions show promise for improving the government's response to gangsterism.

At present there are limited comprehensive interventions that address the causes of gangsterism within the South African context and the extent to which existing interventions work is, at large, unknown. Additionally, by lacking a theoretical underpinning, some interventions that show promise are specific to their context and cannot always be generalised to the rest of the population. Review of the history, development, and impact, as well as current intervention strategies for gangsterism, suggests that interventions should be multidimensional and address inequalities within South Africa through youth development, addressing social norms, providing opportunities for skill development, and meaningful work as well as emphasising community involvement. Thus, by investigating the potential of the aforementioned strategies in reducing gangsterism, future research should focus on designing and developing the evidence base for interventions that can successfully reduce gangsterism across South Africa.

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