

# Youth violence

## Sources and Solutions in South Africa

Edited by

Catherine L. Ward, Amelia van der Merwe, Andrew Dawes

**Youth Violence**  
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*Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa*

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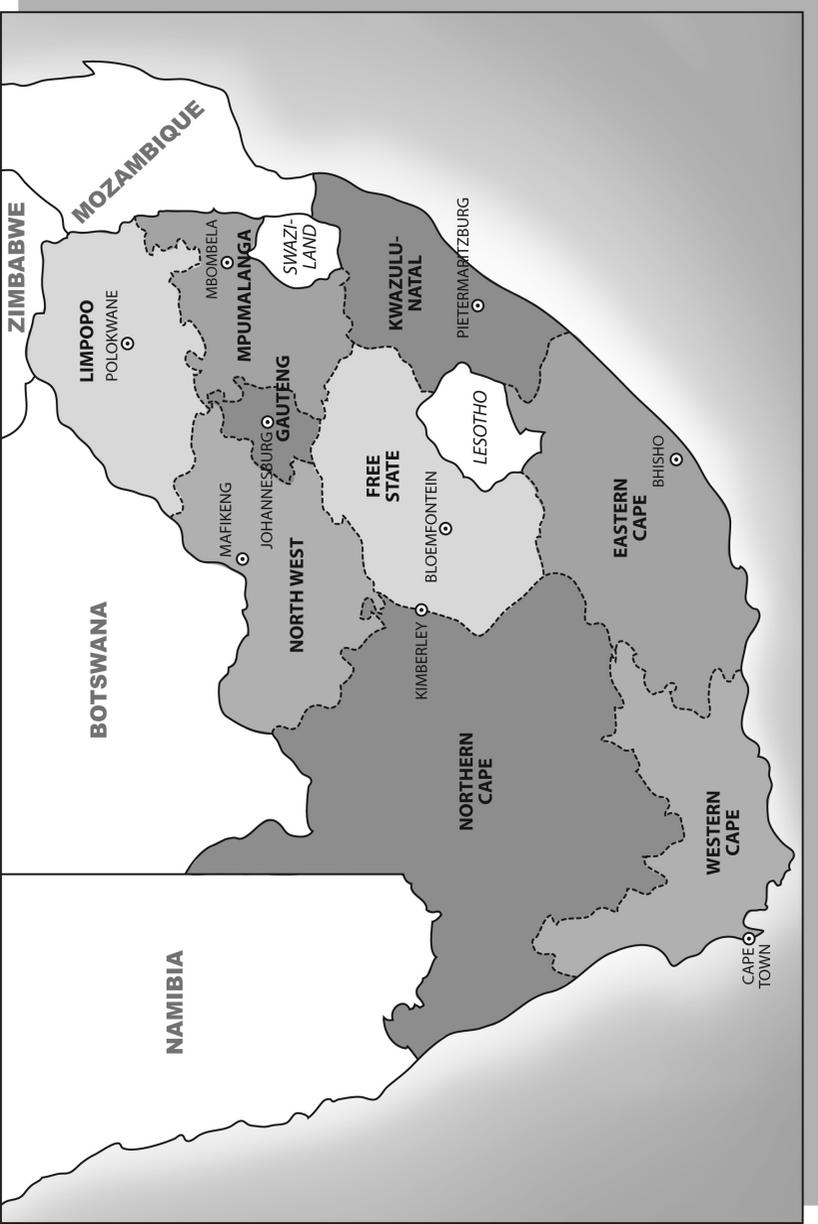
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# MAP OF SOUTH AFRICA



# Foreword



In 2025, governments of many developed countries will have published reports noting how 10–20 years of programming to address root causes and risk factors for violence has brought youth homicide rates down from around five per 100 000 to less than one per 100 000 population.

The reports will highlight the economic dividends paid by these prevention investments in the shape of increased economic productivity and reduced criminal justice, health and social sector costs of responding to violence, and the human and social benefits of people feeling safer and more secure at home, on the street, at school and at work.

The plausibility of this scenario arises from the fact that, in 2010, programmes to stop violence from occurring in the first place shifted in many developed countries from being ‘innovative’ to becoming part of mainstream policy and budgeting.

This scenario also begs the question as to what, in 2025, governments in today’s developing countries will be writing in their annual reports.

Will these reports bemoan how violence and crime, driven by the surging demand for and access of young people to alcohol, drugs and guns, have spiralled out of control?

Will they lament how the collapse of the family, the unravelling of positive social relationships, and increasing economic and social inequalities are to blame? Or will they talk in more empowered and optimistic terms of how the recognition of evidence-based prevention in the first decade of the twenty-first century galvanised a prevention commitment that has helped to at least stabilise and in some instances significantly decrease youth violence rates? If the action recommendations in *Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* are actually implemented – whether in South Africa or in any other developing country – then the latter empowered and optimistic scenario for 2025 can perhaps become reality.

As Ward, Dawes and Matzopoulos note in their scene-setting introduction: ‘The overall goal of this book is to provide a summary of the evidence to date, so that policymakers and those who implement programmes to prevent youth violence may be alerted to the critical need for interventions that are based on evidence for effectiveness and designed in a manner that takes the causes into account.’

This statement captures the great power of this book, which provides an antidote to the often media- and myth-driven processes that frequently dominate policymaking to produce quick-fix, repression-heavy tactics that at best have no effect on youth violence and may even make matters worse.

*Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* collates current scientific knowledge about violent and non-violent behaviour in South Africa, and shows how this converges with international information on the evidence for effective youth violence prevention programmes. In so doing, the book presents a compelling picture of youth violence as more akin to a disease with a clear set of causes than a type of crime, and prevention as more a matter of getting tough on the underlying causes than getting tough on youthful criminals. This picture is empowering because it helps us to see how numerous different sectors – rather than just police and criminal justice – have much to offer by way of preventive programmes, such as support by social workers to new parents and their infants, the educational sector's provision of life skills training in primary schools, and the enactment and enforcement of laws to limit the supply of alcohol and violent media.

The evidence-informed approach to youth violence prevention that is adopted in *Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* is therefore intended to complement policing and criminal justice-based approaches. The approach relies on the use of population-based data to describe the problem, its impact and associated risk and protective factors, while drawing on scientific evidence for effective, promising and theoretically indicated prevention strategies.

Part of the approach is also to ensure that all policies and programmes include built-in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. At the same time, taking a life-course perspective helps to identify the best times to disrupt developmental trajectories towards violent behaviour. Early intervention with a focus on younger age groups is required for successful prevention, and in essence, this book emphasises the need to invest in long-term approaches to helping youth develop in positive ways.

In his foreword to the World Health Organization's 2002 *World Report on Violence and Health*, Nelson Mandela wrote: 'We owe our children ... a life free from violence and fear ... We must address the roots of violence. Only then will we transform the past century's legacy from a crushing burden into a cautionary lesson.' Since then, much has changed in the global response to violence, and, at least when judged by the number of United Nations (UN) reports and resolutions, commitment to evidence-based violence prevention is growing. For instance, in the last few years the UN General Assembly has

adopted resolutions calling on Member States to increase investments in the prevention of violence against children and against women, and in the prevention of armed violence, in all cases with explicit recommendations that policy and programmes be informed by the available scientific evidence. However, national- and municipal-level prevention programming and ongoing monitoring of youth violence is essential unless these commitments are to remain a dead letter. Of the many developing countries with a major stake in getting youth violence prevention right, South Africa is well positioned to succeed, since it combines high levels of such violence with reasonably good national and local systems to monitor violence and its risk factors, and a strong history of primary prevention activities in relation to other issues of public health concern. A clear understanding of youth violence prevention and unwavering political and financial commitment to a set of carefully selected prevention strategies must now be added, and in time, South Africa could be looked to as a leading supplier of success stories in the prevention of youth violence.

*Youth Violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* can help advocates, policymakers, researchers and programme implementers to reduce the heavy burden of deaths, injuries and other negative individual and social consequences of youth violence. It can contribute towards reducing the far-reaching impact such violence has on mental and physical health, school and job performance, people's ability to successfully relate to others, the safety of communities, and ultimately the social and economic development of countries.

While written primarily by and for South Africans, the text takes many lessons from the international literature and especially from success stories in developing countries such as Brazil and Colombia. It is therefore a national book of global relevance, so please read it and act on its recommendations to help ensure that by 2025, evidence-based violence prevention is a routine part of mainstream activities in South Africa and other developing countries everywhere.

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# Chapter One



## YOUTH VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA: SETTING THE SCENE

*Catherine L. Ward, Andrew Dawes & Richard Matzopoulos*

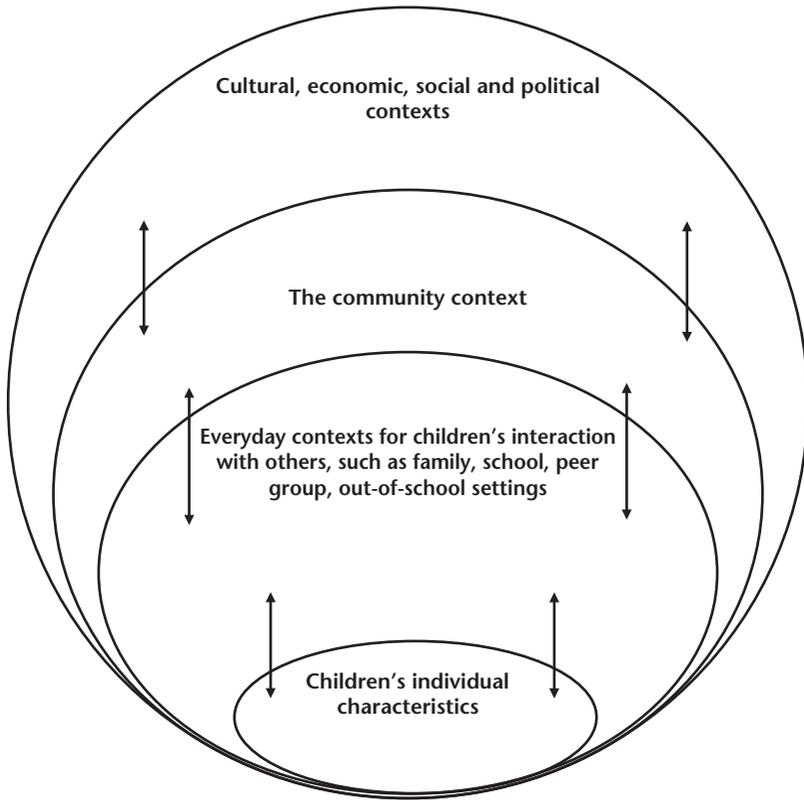
### INTRODUCTION

Violence, and how to manage it, are problems much discussed in South Africa. The public discussion is chiefly concerned with policing – about arming police, whether to allow police to make use of weapons and kill if necessary, about having better relationships between communities and those who police them. We take a very different stance.

As developmental psychologists, we (the editors) are concerned about children and their environment: families, schools, friendship groups and neighbourhoods. We are concerned that too many South African children are growing up in dysfunctional families, poorly performing schools and violent neighbourhoods – and that unless we address these problems we will raise another generation of children who do not know any other way to solve a problem than to resort to violence.

To accomplish this, we take an ecological approach to the many interacting factors that place young people at risk for developing violent conduct, and we take into account the factors that reduce these risks. In this respect, we hope to provide an informed approach to preventing violence, where possible, in future.

The ecological approach views young people as bringing their own characteristics to the settings in which they develop and interact. The most influential settings are those in which they have frequent interactions with others (such as their families and schools). These settings in turn are nested within and have mutual interactions with community settings. And communities are themselves nested within broader cultural and socio-economic settings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; see Figure 1.1).



**Figure 1.1: A multilevel model of risk factors for antisocial behaviour**  
Based on Bronfenbrenner (1979)

This book is not about quick wins (although we do introduce some ideas for short-term interventions), but takes the ‘long’ view – the view that reducing violence is about the environments we provide now for the next generation.

Why a focus on *youth* violence? This has an easy answer: young people are most likely to be both the victims and perpetrators of violence, worldwide (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002) and in South Africa (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009; Foster, this book).

What has far less of an easy answer is how to define the age group we refer to as ‘youth’. The United Nations defines ‘youth’ as between the ages of 15 and 24 years, while South African National Youth Policy employs a much broader age definition (14–35 years). This broader age band was selected in order to recognise that the education and development of many young people had been compromised during the conflict that accompanied the final years of

the apartheid regime. Defining youth in this broad way allowed policies that would be able to offer opportunities to people who were no longer ‘young’ by the United Nations definition, but who had missed out in important ways earlier, and who could benefit from (for instance) being able to complete their education, despite being relatively old for school (Chapter 4 gives more details on the history underlying this decision). We decided, however, that such a broad range would not be appropriate for this book, chiefly because it extends the boundaries well into what is generally seen as adulthood, a period that has very different individual development challenges to those in the early post-school years.

Therefore, the focus of this book is on members of the population who are between the ages of 12 and 24 years. This age band was selected for several reasons. It is closely aligned with the United Nations definition of youth, and it includes the stratifications recognised by the South African Department of Correctional Services (Act 111 of 1998). These stratifications are:

- *Children*, under 18
- *Juveniles*, 18–21 years
- *Youth*, 22–24 years.

The Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008), signed into law in 2010, is the primary legislation that sets down procedures for dealing with *children* who are in trouble with the law. In terms of this legislation, children under the age of 10 do not have criminal capacity and cannot be prosecuted (Section 7(2)); those between 10 and 14 are presumed to lack criminal capacity unless the state proves the contrary.

The Act employs principles of restorative justice and provides for their diversion from the justice system for a range of offences (including certain violent crimes) and under certain conditions. It is also recognised that it is around the age of 11 or 12 that young people may begin to get involved in gangs and other forms of delinquency that place them at risk for committing or being a victim of violence (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009).

## **SOUTH AFRICAN YOUTH VIOLENCE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

It is relevant for a book on preventing youth violence to provide a sense of the history of concerns about this phenomenon in South Africa from the early twentieth century to the present.

South African history is steeped in violence, from pre-colonial times through colonisation, slavery, and apartheid, to the period of resistance and liberation when many thousands of black youths were subject to state violence and white youths were conscripted to exert the force required to sustain the system of white privilege and domination. Without wanting to downplay current concerns, it is necessary to emphasise that exposure to violence is not new for the youth growing up in the poor marginalised sections of South African society. Nor is youth criminal violence a new phenomenon. As is made clear in Foster's Chapter 2, exposure to violent crime always was, and remains, far more likely if one lives in a poor community (see also Groenewald et al., 2010).

There is much ongoing concern about youth gangs. Again this is not a new phenomenon, as noted in the seminal studies of Pinnock (1984), Glaser (2000) and Steinberg (1995; 2001), all of whom have developed conceptual tools for understanding the role of youth gangs and violence over time. Regardless of the historical period, and even prior to the 1940s, socio-economic factors including unemployment and deep long-term poverty in a context of significant economic inequality, together with poor-quality schooling, high levels of drop out and family vulnerability, have been regarded as important in explaining how the youth are drawn into crime, violence and gang membership.

The state's response to criminal youth during the twentieth century prior to the end of apartheid was to incarcerate them in prisons, reformatories and schools of industry (Badroodien, 2000; Chisholm, 1991). Pinnock (1984) argues that these institutions were central in drawing young people into gangs in the Western Cape. He also points to the racial segregation of residential areas of Cape Town under the Group Areas Act, and forced removal to new settlements on the Cape Flats, as disrupting family and community life, further fuelling youth alienation and increasing the risk of their involvement in crime. Gangs also provided 'alternative families' and sources of identification that were not available to them at home.

In 1976 and into the 1980s, as the involvement of black youths in (sometimes violent) political resistance to apartheid grew, many thousands of adolescents were subject to state violence, including violent suppression of protest activity, killings, torture and imprisonment without trial. A more limited and unknown proportion committed violent acts legitimised by the political objective of response to state repression and the ultimate transformation of the state (Reynolds & Dawes, 1999; Straker, 1992).

While the apartheid system has been abolished, its traces remain firmly entrenched in these neighbourhoods, which are still largely segregated along

lines of class and race. And as will be evident from several chapters in this book, the socio-economic drivers of youth crime and gang involvement have not changed significantly. As Foster's chapter in this book shows, in contemporary South Africa it is the young who are most likely to be both victims of violence and perpetrators of criminal acts. He cites Altbeker (2007) in drawing attention to the violent nature of much criminal activity: 'what makes South Africa's problem unique is not so much the volume of crime as its extraordinary violence, with interpersonal violence and the exponential growth in robbery the principal manifestations of this' (2007, p. 33).

Nor are gangs the only violence that the youth are exposed to: they are exposed to high levels of intimate partner violence in their own homes, between their parents (Dawes, Long, Alexander & Ward, 2006) and in their own intimate relationships (Flisher et al., 2007). And while we have no figures for child maltreatment, anecdotal evidence suggests that levels are high (Dawes et al.; Dawes & Ward, 2008). These forms of violence certainly were present prior to 1994 and continue today (Ward & Flisher, in press). Historically, there have also been high levels of community violence, particularly in poor communities. For instance, in one study of Xhosa-speaking youth in a township with high levels of community violence, all of the 60 respondents had been exposed to community violence, while 56% had been victims and 45% had witnessed at least one murder. The psychological imprint of these experiences manifested in 22% of these children fitting the diagnosis for post-traumatic stress disorder, 32% for dysthymia and 7% for major depression (Ensink, Robertson, Zissis & Leger, 1997).

Although this brief historical analysis reminds us that violence is nothing new, it is equally inarguable that levels of violence among youth in South Africa remain extraordinarily high. In 2000, for instance, a period for which cross-national comparisons are available, the homicide rate among South African males (15 – 29 years) was 184 per 100 000. This was *more than nine times* the global average (Norman, Matzopoulos, Groenewald & Bradshaw, 2007). Even though global averages mask regional differences, rates of youth homicide in South Africa do not compare favourably with other regions and countries with high rates of interpersonal violence and with similar economic circumstances. The South African homicide rate was double that recorded in the low- and middle-income countries of the Americas, which recorded the highest regional homicide rates for this age category. Among girls and women, the South African rate was more than 60% higher than the 14 per 100 000 recorded in the African region (Mathers, Inoue, Guigoz, Lozano & Tomaskovic, 2002).

In addition, South African youth form a large proportion of those in the justice and correctional systems. Prison population figures available prior to the enactment of the Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008), which changed the regulations for the incarceration of persons under 18 years, provide an indication of the involvement of youth in criminal activity: in 2004, 41% of convicted prisoners were under 25 years of age (Kane-Berman & Cronjé, 2007).

Clearly, South Africa faces a crisis with regard to involvement in violence by young people. It does have strong historical roots, and in essence the forms of violence experienced and perpetrated by young people have not changed. Yet there is much that can be done to address this issue, and more than ever before, the nation has the resources and the will to work with young people. The need for considered responses and preventive initiatives is urgent.

### **THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK**

The overall goal of this book is to provide a summary of the evidence to date, so that policymakers and those who implement programmes to prevent youth violence may be alerted to the critical need for interventions that are based on evidence for effectiveness and designed in a manner that takes the causes into account.

This book seeks to inform practice in South Africa. To this end, it brings together current knowledge regarding the sources of violent conduct in society, the family and the personal dispositions of the developing youth, as well as the factors that channel their development in more positive directions – often against the odds. In our experience, South African programmes are frequently mounted on the basis of what its proponents believe to work, as opposed to being informed by evidence (Parker, Dawes & Farr, 2004; Steyn, 2005). Often faith in the programme is based on experience in the field where interventions have been run for many years. Proponents ‘know’ it works. Clearly we need to listen to this wisdom from the field. However, until we have evidence that can be judged using sound scientific criteria, claims of effectiveness are not warranted.

Why is this important? Much energy and effort (not to mention money) is spent on developing and implementing interventions. Given this, it would be better to put our money and our effort into endeavours that are most likely to work – to reduce violence, and also, in the long run, to reduce the costs that violence creates: the cost of stitching up injuries, incarcerating prisoners and securing our homes (among others).

One example of the possible waste of time and effort is the *Scared Straight* programme. The programme was developed by inmates serving life sentences in a New Jersey prison, Rahway. Juvenile offenders were brought to the adult prison, where inmates aggressively told stories of the reality of life in adult prisons, with a view to deterring the young offenders from future crime. The programme makes a great deal of intuitive sense, but from the careful perspective of science it has been shown that, far from doing good, these programmes at best accomplish nothing, and are in fact likely to increase the likelihood of a young person offending again (Petrosino, Turpin-Petrosin & Beuhler, 2003).

Clearly, South Africa is not unique in having untested interventions. Many violence prevention programmes (aside from *Scared Straight*) in the United States also have no evidence for their effectiveness (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). These authors provide words of caution that should be heeded by South African policymakers and programme managers:

*Despite good intentions, the widespread implementation of programmes of unknown effectiveness may lull policymakers and members of the community into falsely believing that they are addressing the problem, when the resources committed to such efforts could be better used to develop more effective programmes* (Farrell & Flannery, 2006, p. 147).

Because of the seriousness and extent of youth violence, it is unrealistic to expect South African programme staff to wait until the evidence is assembled for locally tested interventions. In this regard, Farrell and Flannery (2006) point to the availability of evidence from a range of programmes (though not tested in South Africa) that can be used to inform local designs and implementation. A number of these are discussed in Section Two of this book.

Given the urgency of the problem we are considering, it is also understandable that there is a press to seek 'magic bullets' that provide simple, cheap and effective approaches to prevention. The evidence suggests that this is most unwise. Research reviews indicate that multilevel interventions are often (though not always) needed. Violence prevention is highly complex. When dealing with youths who often come from multiproblem families and challenging neighbourhoods, interventions are required that are evidence-based, age- and culture-appropriate, comprehensive, intensive and sufficiently resourced, if the desired changes are to be realised (Nation et al., 2003).

As we have indicated in this chapter, youth violence and other forms of criminal behaviour in contemporary South Africa occur against the backdrop of significant structural inequality, a dysfunctional education

system and an expanding youth population within which significant numbers are ill-equipped for the demands of an increasingly technological workplace and, as a result, are unemployed and living in poverty. The social conditions that South Africa has inherited from the apartheid era provide a toxic mix of ingredients, which include multiproblem families, dysfunctional communities with high levels of drug and alcohol abuse and gang activity (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009; Dawes & Ward, 2008). This combination renders many young people vulnerable to exposure and participation in violent conduct (see also Chapter 2 by Foster).

That said, it is critical to appreciate that the majority of young South Africans *do not* become involved in criminal activity – violent or otherwise. A nationally representative study of young people aged 12–22 conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention and covering the year February 2007–February 2008 illustrates this with several key related variables: carrying a weapon to school, substance abuse and self-reported offending (Leoschut, 2009) of their sample of 4 391 young people, 94.8% had never carried a weapon to school in that year; 68.6% had never had an alcoholic drink; 94.5% had never used cannabis (the most prevalent illicit substance in this group); and 93.8% had never stolen money or anything else from another person (Leoschut, 2009).

How is it that some young people take one path, while others take another? Familial, neighbourhood, school and peer factors act together to play crucial roles in the pathways towards pro- or antisocial conduct; and beyond context, there are individual dispositional factors at play (see Chapter 3 for an explanation of the various risk and protective factors). It is important that we understand the role of all these factors if we are to design effective interventions.

## OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The material is presented in two sections. The first provides background to contemporary youth violence in South Africa, and investigates the risk and protective factors for youth violence – those factors that either increase or decrease the likelihood of such violence. The second section then considers evidence for effective interventions to address the problem of youth violence in various contexts (such as the home and the school), evidence drawn from both local and international studies and practice.

As we have signalled in this introduction, youth violence has to be understood in relation to the structure of the South African population, and the

economic and other forces that the young are subjected to. In Chapter 2, Don Foster draws on data from different sources to position violence in South Africa in relation to other countries. He sketches the prevalence and demographics of violence in the country in terms of the age, gender and social class of the perpetrators. Foster engages with the vexed category of race, speaking of 'racialised' groups rather than 'race groups'. This usage signals his (and the editors') position that these categories are social constructions. The over-representation of black and poor youth in the crime data speaks not to their so-called race group membership as a cause of violence. Rather it is their history of 'real social processes of marginalisation, oppression, exploitation and exclusion' (p. 24) that renders a greater proportion of young people in communities with this experience (in contrast to youth in less unfortunate communities), particularly vulnerable to the development of antisocial behaviour patterns.

Foster notes that it is disadvantaged males who are the perpetrators. Why is this? His chapter proceeds to draw on evidence to explore probable reasons, mapping an argument for the roots of male violence being a function of the interplay of beliefs regarding the legitimacy of male hegemony and male biology (the greater prevalence of neuro-cognitive deficits in young males than females). Foster also points to evidence that physical maltreatment raises the risk of violent conduct in boys. He concludes his chapter by pointing to the macro areas that the evidence suggests needs to be addressed to reduce violence perpetrated by young men in South Africa. They are: the critical need to reduce social inequality; the need to change hegemonic masculine beliefs and practices by role models and in the socialisation of the young; identification and management of early onset neuro-cognitive deficits; and prevention of family violence and maltreatment. These areas are addressed in more detail in Section Two of the book.

In Chapter 3, Amelia van der Merwe, Catherine Ward and Andrew Dawes draw on an ecological approach to understanding the interplay of risk factors for youth violence that operate within the individual, family, school, peer group and community. The chapter provides a more individual psychological orientation to the development of violent conduct, while positioning the emergence of this form of antisocial behaviour in the contexts within which children grow up, and where adolescents and young adults spend much of their time.

The first three chapters examine the evidence base for understanding how young people come to engage in violent acts. This is the evidence that must be drawn on if effective interventions to prevent or at least reduce violence in South Africa are to be developed. These opening chapters

establish that youth violence is multiply determined and identify key risk factors (even if we are a long way from understanding the precise causal pathways (Rutter, 2003)).

That said, we know enough to design effective interventions based on evidence, and Section Two of this book addresses the design of interventions.

Best practice in the evaluation field is hotly debated (Donaldson, Christina, Christie & Mark, 2009). However, in spite of methodological disputes, it is increasingly recognised that both qualitative and quantitative methods contribute to our:

- Understanding of the processes of change that occur during interventions and the manner in which programme delivery influences participant change, and
- Ability to attribute causation.

There is widespread agreement that randomised controlled trials (RCTs) or times-series designs provide the best approach to understanding the causal mechanisms responsible for behavioural change, including antisocial conduct (Rossi, Lipsey & Freeman, 2004). As will be evident in the chapters that follow, there are *no South African youth violence prevention interventions* that have employed these evaluation methods. Quasi-experimental evaluations using comparison and intervention groups can be counted on one hand (see, for instance, Jones-Petersen & Carolissen, 2000).

There are a number of examples of good practice in youth violence prevention that have been subject to rigorous evaluation in high-income countries – mainly the United States of America. However, most require considerable resources both in terms of skilled personnel and other input costs. Given the many demands on the South African purse, these are not likely to be an affordable option, particularly since the population of affected youth is so large. Local interventions need to be cost-effective and they need to be based on sound evidence. There is no point in throwing money after untested interventions, no matter how well-intentioned.

A first step for any programme is to identify proximal and distal risk factors that play a role in the problem of violence and then to target these risk factors strategically (Dawes & Donald, 2000). As will become evident, the chapters in Section Two build on the risk factor perspective to suggest ways of approaching programming that have the highest likelihood of success.

Internationally, the evidence is that the most cost-effective route is to reduce the risk of later behavioural problems through early intervention with

parents and young children (see, for example, Chapter 5). Once children have developed a well-established pattern of antisocial conduct that increases in frequency and severity as they move through adolescence and into young adulthood, changing behaviour becomes an increasingly difficult and costly endeavour (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2007).

Effective intervention also means taking the whole ecology of children's development into account (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). While it may be more difficult to intervene as children grow older, it is by no means impossible. Furthermore, intervening in more than one setting is likely to improve chances of success (Dawes & Donald, 2000). Therefore, this book is particularly concerned with early and multilevel intervention to prevent violent conduct in the South African context. Our challenge is to find cost-effective interventions that address the problem at the level of the community and neighbourhood, and in institutions such as the school and in the family. There is much international evidence and a range of local programme experiences on which we can draw and this book provides illustrations and pointers for improving the local evidence base and local interventions.

Thus, Section Two turns to the question of 'what works' in violence prevention in a variety of settings. The chapters in this section are structured by domain, roughly in accordance with the ecological model. First, the broader situations in which the youth find themselves in South Africa are discussed in Chapter 4. Settings that are proximal to the young person are examined next: the family (Chapter 5), the school (Chapter 6) and leisure environments (Chapter 7). Gangs (Chapter 8), sexual violence (Chapter 9), the media (Chapter 10) and the criminal justice system (Chapter 11) are then addressed, followed by the wider context of the city (Chapter 12).

The recent and contemporary situation of South African youth is addressed holistically in Chapter 4 by Saadhna Panday and her colleagues. They note that South Africa's transition to democracy has not yet produced significant dividends for the majority of young people who still inhabit a structurally violent society with limited opportunities, particularly for the many who have not completed a secondary education. The chapter provides an analysis of post-apartheid policies that were formulated in the late 1990s (but only adopted later) in an effort to address the needs of marginalised and disadvantaged youths. A central principle of the policy was that youth development should provide more than skills – it should be seen holistically, as young people were deemed to need support in a range of areas of well-being. In spite of the promise, Panday and her colleagues discuss reasons for very modest programme implementation and impact, and conclude that in

many respects the level of deprivation has worsened for the youths and that the upstream socio-economic risks for violence exposure and perpetration remain significant.

The section continues with a consideration of the importance of intervention with young children so as to prevent antisocial patterns becoming established and to provide parents with effective parenting skills (Chapter 5). Several chapters in Section One point to the importance of intervention in the early years. Chapter 5 sketches the evidence for effective prevention in the preschool years (0–5 years), in two primary sites of socialisation: the family and the school. As in other contributions, the authors recognise that the South African evidence base is very limited and the chapter draws principally on material from high-income countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom.

This contribution makes a strong case for basing South African programmes on those with high standards of evaluation research available, that is, randomised controlled trials (RCTs) and quasi-experimental studies. The authors also note that local programmes may have to be adjusted for local conditions, including cost constraints, but that the key ingredients and programme delivery methods established as making the difference must be followed. The chapter uses a matrix approach to elaborate the interactions and implications for preventive interventions of early child development; parental (or other primary caregiver) roles during this period; and the environmental contexts within which these processes occur. The ability of the caregiver to regulate the child's behaviour with sensitivity is given prominence. Challenges to effective parenting are posed by the deprived and otherwise challenging environments that are typical of many South African families. In addition, the mental status of caregivers, which is often negatively impacted by such circumstances, is highlighted.

The chapter provides examples of effective evidence-based programmes to strengthen parenting and support vulnerable families that are appropriate for the range of ages and developmental stages of early childhood. Prominence is given to home-visiting support during the first few years of life in order to improve sensitive parenting, support vulnerable caregivers and reduce the risk of maltreatment. In toddlerhood and beyond, it is important to identify and assist children with neuro-cognitive deficits that place them at risk for antisocial conduct. Finally, the chapter discusses parenting programmes designed for toddlers and preschool children that may be delivered at a universal level (to all parents and children of a certain age), or that may be targeted more towards aggressive children or caregivers whose parenting

styles either maintain or escalate their children's aggressive and/or defiant behaviour. The chapter concludes with a set of guidelines for using evidence-based interventions in early childhood. Key conclusions are that resources must be found to support early intervention; South African programmes need to draw on evidence and test their interventions as far as this is economically feasible; and that the country needs to establish cost-effective preventive interventions that can be delivered to scale by non-professionals.

As Gevers and Flisher (Chapter 6) note, schools are more than places where children receive formal education: they are also places that can either encourage or discourage a range of social and emotional development. As such, they are prime sites for intervening in young people's lives. Yet South African schools are often the sites for a range of types of violence, such as bullying, corporal punishment, gang activity and sexual violence (Burton, 2008). There are several approaches to intervening with violence in schools, and Gevers and Flisher characterise them as whole-school programmes versus discrete programmes, and comprehensive versus specific programmes. Whole-school programmes encompass all aspects of a school, from the physical infrastructure through curriculum and policies, to relationships among educators, learners and administrators. As such, they have the potential to address the multiple risk factors that drive school violence, but they can be both costly and complex to manage. Discrete programmes, by contrast, are aimed at a specific aspect of the school, such as educators or infrastructure. They are typically easier to manage, but careful thought needs to be given to the target group – small subsets of the school population may be less likely to change their behaviour than if there is a broader group who are able to support the changes. Comprehensive programmes address a range of risk behaviours, while specific ones are more focused.

While interventions in schools have, so to speak, a captive audience, out-of-school settings are also key arenas for intervention. Although, as yet, we have no comparable data for South Africa, studies in the USA show that youth violence tends to peak at times when young people are not at school (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), and young South Africans have noted that having nothing to do during out-of-school time is a risk factor for gang membership (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009). Wegner and Caldwell (Chapter 7) describe the potential of out-of-school time programmes to reach young people who would otherwise be difficult to reach through school-based programmes and to increase the connection to school for all young people. Leisure programmes, they note, offer a particularly fruitful avenue for social and emotional learning and for young people to

develop the self-regulation and mindfulness that are not typically part of the school curriculum, but can help to manage the impulsivity that may lead to aggression. In addition, they note that leisure programmes can offer plenty of opportunity for young people to develop prosocial skills and passions. Wegner and Caldwell then go on to suggest principles for programming at micro-, meso-, macro- and exosystem levels, including the importance of youth participation in shaping and directing programming.

Cooper and Ward (Chapter 8) address what is perhaps one of the more intractable peer environments for young people: the gang. They briefly review risk factors for gang membership, noting the large overlap between these and risk factors for delinquency in general. Then they review programmes that have been evaluated, characterising these as prevention (programmes that seek to prevent young people from joining gangs in the first place), disengagement (programmes that try to detach young people from the gang), suppression (programmes that suppress gang activity) and 'mixed models', combinations of prevention, disengagement or suppression programmes. They note that programmes that combine prevention and disengagement are most likely to succeed, although they encourage humility in the face of a problem that is deeply rooted in social and economic conditions in communities.

Sexual violence does not, of course, fall neatly into the ecological paradigm that we have mapped out for the chapters that concern intervention. We have decided to treat it separately from other forms of violence because, while it shares some risk factors with other forms of violence, it also has unique risks (such as early exposure of children to sexualised material and acts), and it is addressed by separate legislation in South Africa, most notably the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007. In Chapter 9, Van der Merwe, Meys and Waterhouse provide an overview of what we know about rates of youth sexual offending around the world and in South Africa and of the legislative framework in South Africa for defining and addressing sexual offences. One of the key points of difference between sexual violence and other forms is of course that some sexual acts are illegal by definition only. For instance, some sexual acts may be consensual, but considered to be unlawful because one or more of the people involved are younger than a statutorily defined age of consent. Thus consensual intercourse may be regarded as statutory rape. The other area where sexual violence is distinct from other forms of violence is that it is normal for children to explore their sexuality and the chapter provides guidelines as to what normal sexual development is. The authors go on to discuss the tasks of assessment and intervention, noting that the most

effective interventions are likely to address other forms of offending as well as sexual offences, since most sexual offenders are also involved in other forms of antisocial behaviour.

Chapter 10, by Jane Stadler, discusses the contribution of film media, in particular, to the socialisation of the young and its influence on the development of violent orientations to interpersonal conflicts. Psychological research has made significant contributions to our understanding of the role of media in socialisation. Among other evidence reviewed in this chapter, research findings indicate that the correlations between smoking and lung cancer are only marginally higher than those for exposure to media violence and aggressive behaviour – surely a pointer to preventive interventions. Stadler notes that ‘the media entertainment industry is heavily reliant on the popularity of screen violence’; that ‘television series featuring crime and violence are regularly among the best-rated programmes’ (p. 319) and that by 2008, the digital game industry generated more revenue than other media.

We have included the topic in this book precisely because of the potency of screen media as a source of socialisation in an already violent society. Images of violence and narratives that legitimate violence as a mode of conflict resolution are likely to be readily available to virtually all South African children through one or other screen medium. Policy debates in this area are highly contested. This contribution is important in providing a balanced perspective on an issue affecting virtually all children and youths, where claims to harmful effects and denial thereof, may or may not be supported by evidence. Findings may also be used selectively by lobby groups concerned with restricting children’s access to programming with violent content, or those, often with commercial interests, who would resist control. Stadler points out that there is clear evidence that long-term exposure to violent screen media is associated with aggressive behaviour (when controlling for other factors). Video gaming is a much more recent and expanding phenomenon. She notes that the critical difference in this genre is that in contrast to viewing a film, gaming involves players taking on roles and characters and actively participating in violence. Games emphasise enhancement of fighting skills and often the violence is gratuitous.

Stadler notes that there is minimal South African research on these issues, but the processes of influence are highly unlikely to differ from those affecting, say, North American children. She concludes her chapter with reference to preventive interventions, including ratings of screen media by such bodies as the Film and Publications Board and improvements in parental knowledge

concerning the effects of exposure to screen violence and gaming. She also signals the importance of caregivers' mediation of children's exposure and the development of media literacy in both adults and children.

Chapter 11 (Van der Merwe and Dawes) then addresses the issue of intervening in youth violence via the criminal justice system. They pay particular attention to the opportunities for diversion that are introduced with the new Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008). Perhaps the most important reason for diversion is that interventions with young people do have the potential, even at this apparently late stage, to reduce recidivism and to protect them from becoming victims of violence in the prison system. Having said this, at the time of writing, the only diversion programme available to young South Africans arrested for sexual violence is the SAYStOP programme. Other programmes are aimed at those arrested for property offences and not specifically for violent offences. Van der Merwe and Dawes suggest a range of diversion programmes, which can cater for different types of offence, as the young offenders are likely to have different needs. They note that the most effective programmes are theoretically grounded, rely on evidence and are multimodal, structured and include a cognitive-behavioural approach. They offer a set of principles for the development of diversion programmes and review a number of model intervention programmes. These programmes have in common, they note, a focus on relationships with adults who model prosocial behaviour and high programme intensity to match the gravity of the youths' crimes. Most also have highly trained, multidisciplinary teams focusing on the determinants of youth behaviour, and multimodal, and operate across different contexts. Finally, they raise a number of considerations for designing programmes for the local context.

Neighbourhood and city contexts are increasingly recognised as playing a role in youth violence and Shaw identifies this in Chapter 12. As she notes, most of the world's young people now live in urban environments. Part of the effects of rapid urbanisation has been that many grow up without access to education, housing, healthcare and employment that together reduce their risk for victimisation by, or perpetration of, violence. Shaw reviews the policy environment that can support the development of city-level interventions and examines the principles of effective intervention. Effective city-level interventions, she argues, 'can provide an over-arching framework for intervention, so that attention is given to the range of risk factors' (Shaw, p. 384). These frameworks should include attention not only to the diversity of risk factors affecting youth violence in the local context, but also to the geography of risk, the assets available in particular areas, and the impact of

violence on the citizens of these areas. Including young people in the design and implementation of programmes is also likely to improve the chance of success. She then goes on to review examples of successful interventions, such as that carried out in the city of Diadema, Brazil; the *Fica Vivo* programme in Bela Horizonte, Brazil; and the youth project implemented by the Afro-Reggae Cultural Group in the Vigario Geral *favela*. What these have in common, she argues, is strong components of participation of local citizens, especially young people. Finally, Shaw observes that while randomised controlled trials of city-level interventions may not be possible, there are models available for evaluating multi-agency collaborations, and for the use of benchmarks and indicators that are grounded in good programme theory.

The second section of the book thus reviews and makes suggestions for effective programming to prevent youth violence, from the most intimate of contexts (the family), to the more remote contexts of the neighbourhood and city. Each chapter offers principles for developing effective interventions. Although we have no evaluations of programmes in the local context that provide information of costs relative to benefits, studies from the USA are instructive. In that country, findings indicate dramatic savings for evidence-based violence prevention programmes (Dodge, 2008). The evidence is that chronically violent individuals cost North American society around \$2 million each over the course of a lifetime. Even if a prevention programme costs \$2 million to run, and only one child is prevented from becoming chronically violent, that programme breaks even. Most effective programmes do considerably better than this. This makes it very much worth our while in South Africa, with our scarce resources, to invest in carefully designed programmes and to evaluate (and cost) them.

If anything is to be achieved by this publication, it will be that the people who make decisions regarding policy and programming for young people at risk will begin to use evidence-based interventions and test the efficacy of indigenous programmes.

This is our hope.

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# SECTION ONE





# Chapter Two



## GENDER, CLASS, 'RACE' AND VIOLENCE

*Don Foster*

### INTRODUCTION

Anyone who lives in South Africa knows that violence is a serious problem. It was a serious problem in the earlier apartheid era and remains a major problem now. This chapter tries to set out some of the basic facts about violence in terms of demographic and other factors, placing the local national picture within some international contexts. It examines different sources of information: burden of disease figures, World Health Organization (WHO) information, local mortuary studies, prison data and some studies of perpetrators. It is mainly descriptive as it tries to sketch the big picture of violence in demographic terms, but towards the end turns to explanatory mode and concludes with some big picture potential solutions.

This chapter comes with a kind of warning sign, from no less a figure than the eminent scholar of youth psychology, Sir Michael Rutter. In an important chapter, Rutter (2003) cautions that in attempting to understand the causes of violent and antisocial behaviours, all we have at present from a large number of studies is a set of fairly well-replicated risk factors or indicators, but that this is a far cry from grasping the 'precise nature of causal mechanisms' (Rutter, p. 13). There is agreement that violence and antisocial actions have multifactorial origins, but we are not yet at the stage of being able to reduce these factors to a 'much more limited set of causal mechanisms' (Rutter, p. 19). Mindful of a modest and humble stance towards a difficult topic, we set out to search for some of the big factors.

One additional caveat: we should be further mindful that there is no such thing, in biological or physical terms, as 'race' or 'race groups'. What we ordinarily perceive or understand by 'race' is the product of centuries

of ideological and discursive social constructions. The effects, however, of centuries of racialised oppression and discrimination are real enough and come up repeatedly in criminal statistics. 'Race' then should be read only as a proxy for other real social processes of marginalisation, oppression, exploitation and exclusion. To keep us in mind of this issue it may be prudent to speak of 'racialised' categories or groups.

### **A NOTE ON THE ISSUE OF CLASS**

The concept of 'class' was a central building block in the social sciences for much of the twentieth century. Class has only been put into question over the past two decades, mainly since the 1990s (Bradley, 1996; Lee & Turner, 1996). Class in this sense meant some kind of economic factor as an explanation for hierarchy, differentiation or inequality in society. In the original Marxist formulation, class turned on ownership of capital, but this was replaced over time by a raft of other indicators: income, job, skill-training, education. This remains one of the central problems: what exactly counts as class?

By the 1990s class priority was challenged on three grounds. First, among developed societies, class structures themselves had changed since the major wars and again in the 1970s. Second, it became clear that other markers of differentiation, particularly 'race', sex/gender, ethnicity and age were independent contributors to social structures and were not reducible to class. Third, the rise of postmodernism and poststructuralism posed new challenges and were opposed to 'foundationalist' (class-based) accounts of society. Theoretical emphasis shifted from structures to meanings and discursive aspects were given new priorities. Even for other theorists who championed materialist factors, class was seen as an oversimplification and was replaced with more complex stratification approaches including, for instance, culturally based criteria (Kingston, 2000). Other alternatives proposed that inequality (a continuous distribution) could be as important as class (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009). It should be clear enough that class is no longer a straightforward issue at all.

In South Africa the issue of class is, if anything, more complex. The 1970s and 1980s were characterised by fierce debates between Marxist and liberal camps regarding the relative weightings of 'race' and class, but both suffered from a paucity of adequate empirical groundings. More recent work has made it clear that in material terms, South Africa is a highly unequal society and that both class and race have contributed to the substantial disparities. Based on improved empirical data, Seekings and Nattrass (2006) conclude that South Africa is marked by two major class divides:

- 1) The first is between the rich (owners, managers and professionals) and the working classes.
- 2) The second divide is between those who have jobs (most of the time) and the unemployed (a category which also includes workers in precarious sectors such as agriculture and domestic work).

Largely missing from South Africa is systematic consequential data: implications of class for health, longevity as well as crime and violence. This is because information has been collected in terms of 'race' and not class categories. The general problem for class analysis is the lack of agreement regarding definitional criteria. Since there is no final word on either class criteria or boundary criteria, this chapter will avoid trying to define classes and instead show that research is based on varying class factors.

A further issue raises questions about the relationship between class and violence. A paradox is at play. There is much data to show associations between violence and poorer/disadvantaged classes and countries. However, Marxist and socialist scholars (see Panitch & Leys, 2008) will remind us, with justification, that most of the violence in the world has been, and arguably still is, produced by the ruling or dominant classes; including world wars, state repression and genocide. Ruling classes also generate many social ills that promote violence. Instead of solving this paradox, let us keep an open mind about the real underlying issues of violence. One thing is clear though; class does matter – even if we cannot readily define it.

## THE ISSUE OF VIOLENCE

Violence, in its various manifestations, constitutes an enormous problem at both a national and an international level. Not only is it a major killer and a cause of many more people being seriously injured, but the economic costs in terms of healthcare, work losses as well as costs and time of policing and the criminal justice system, are enormous. The human costs of violence are beyond calculation but clearly considerable in terms of loss, grief and pain, but also in infecting communities with a climate of fear, anger, suspicion and terror.

In 1996 at the 49th World Health Assembly, a resolution was adopted that declared violence to be a major and growing health problem across the world. Six years later the World Health Organization (WHO) published the first ever *World Report on Violence and Health* (Krug et al., 2002). This text contains a Foreword by Nelson Mandela, with a clear message: 'We are not powerless against violence; it can be turned round; we can prevent violence.'

This section in the chapter takes a look at global patterns as well as the local national scenario. Perhaps we will have some reasons to be more pessimistic than Mandela when the data has been revealed.

## International patterns

According to the *World Report on Violence and Health* (Krug et al., 2002) an estimated 1.6 million people worldwide died as a result of interpersonal, self-inflicted, collective and political violence in the year 2000. Of these deaths 9% were attributed to high-income countries and an astonishing 91% to low- to middle-income countries. Suicide accounted for a surprising 49% of deaths (mainly in South East Asia and Western Pacific regions), homicide for 31%, and war-related violence for 19% of deaths. On gender differentiation, males accounted for 77% of all homicide victims, the highest rate being among males aged 15–29 years, at 19.4 per 100 000 people. Males account for over 60% of suicides, with the male rate twice as high as the female rate for those aged 60 years and over.

An update of these international trends for the year 2004 has been provided by the World Health Organization (2008). The WHO reported fairly similar patterns to those in 2000, but also some shifts. Of the world total of 1.64 million ‘intentional’ injuries in 2004, 844 000 (52%) were suicides, 600 000 (37%) were homicides and 184 000 (11%) were due to war or conflicts. In the 2004 figures, conflict-related deaths were down from 19% to 11%. Males again comprise the majority of war-related (84%) and homicide (81%) fatalities. Men also predominate in suicide deaths (71%). These deaths occur overwhelmingly in low- and middle-income countries; for murder (95%) and war-related conflicts (99%). Youths are more implicated in war fatalities in low-income countries than their wealthy counterparts.

It is clear enough that the burden of violence falls disproportionately on the poor. Death rates in low/middle-income countries (32 per 100 000) are more than twice that in high-income countries (14 per 100 000). In the USA, African-American youths aged 15–24 years showed a homicide rate (39 per 100 000) more than twice that of Hispanic youths, and over 12 times the rate of white youths (3 per 100 000).

Specifically regarding youth (defined as between 10 and 29 years) violence, the WHO Report (Krug et al., 2002) tells us of an estimated 200 000 youth homicides in 2000, the highest rates being in Latin America (36 per 100 000) and African countries (18 per 100 000), where states are regarded as either ‘developing’ or undergoing rapid social changes. (See Table 2.1 for homicide

rates among youths for selected high- and low-rate countries.) Most of the countries from Western Europe have very low rates. At the lowest rates of all, Scandinavian countries such as Sweden, Norway and Finland registered less than 20 deaths in the year 2000 (Denmark reported exactly 20 deaths), so that rates were not calculated. Mandela was correct: 'violence can (almost) be prevented'. As always with violence the majority of victims, as well as perpetrators, are male.

A range of studies suggests that for each youth murder, there are between 20 and 40 victims of non-fatal violence sufficiently serious to require hospitalisation. As with murder, the majority of victims are male, but the ratio is lower than for fatalities. Rates of non-fatal injuries 'increase dramatically during mid-adolescence and young adulthood' (Krug et al., 2002, p. 28). Data from the same report shows that non-fatal attacks are less likely to involve firearms. Data from 66 countries gathered by the WHO indicates that youth violence in many countries increased between 1985 and 1994, increasing faster for males than females (Krug et al., 2002).

**Table 2.1 Homicide rates among youths aged 10–29 years  
(Selected countries)**

Country	Year	Total Rate (Per 100 000)	Male : Female Ratio
Colombia	1995	84.4	13.1:1
El Salvador	1993	50.2	14.6:1
Puerto Rico	1998	41.8	14.5:1
Brazil	1995	32.5	11.5:1
Albania	1998	28.2	9.8:1
Venezuela	1994	25.0	16.5:1
Russian Fed	1998	18.0	3.4:1
Greece	1998	0.9	-
United Kingdom	1999	0.9	3.9:1
Spain	1998	0.8	2.9:1
Germany	1999	0.8	1.6:1
France	1998	0.6	1.9:1
Japan	1997	0.4	1.7:1

Source: WHO Report (Krug et al., 2002)

Note: No data is given for South Africa.

As an indicator of where South Africa is placed in the international context regarding homicide, a recent dataset from 198 countries gives comparative homicide rates per 100 000 people for the year 2004 (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2009). For some countries two figures are given, a low and a high estimate, indicating that even in the case of murder, statistics on rates of violence are not exactly precise. For South Africa in the year 2004, the two figures are 40 (South African Police Service (SAPS) information) and 69 (WHO information) per 100 000. Colombia is the only other country close to South Africa with rates of 46 (local police) and 61 (Pan American Health Organization figures) per 100 000. Some other countries with relatively high rates of homicides include Jamaica (34 and 55 per 100 000), Brazil (26 and 31 per 100 000), Côte d'Ivoire (46 per 100 000) and the Russian Federation (19 and 30 per 100 000). Despite contestation regarding the accuracy of statistics, it is quite clear that, in terms of murder rates, South Africa is one of the most violent countries in the world.

## National trends and issues

Improvements in modelling approaches to the 'burden of disease' estimates for South Africa (Bradshaw, Groenewald & Laubscher et al., 2003) and the establishment in 1999 of the National Injury Mortality Surveillance System (NIMSS) (see Suffla, Van Niekerk & Duncan, 2004; Prinsloo, 2007) have enabled us to get a better picture of the place of various forms of violence in the overall national mortality rate. The NIMSS is a mortuary-based reporting system on causes of fatal injuries. Each year, since 1999, has seen an increase in the number of mortuaries included in the system, starting with 10 mortuaries in five provinces in 1999 and increasing to 21 mortuaries in six provinces (a case total of 29 596) in the year 2005 (Prinsloo, 2007).

In terms of the top 20 specific causes of premature mortality in South Africa for the year 2000, males and females combined, homicide/violence ranks as second (after AIDS), road traffic accidents as fourth and suicide as eleventh (Bradshaw et al., 2003). For females, homicide/violence is ranked at seven, road traffic accidents at eight and suicide at a lowly nineteenth.

According to NIMSS data for the year 2002, the percentage breakdown for mechanisms of non-natural forms of death in South Africa was as follows:

- Homicide 45%
- Accidents 37% (of which transport-related constituted 73%)
- Suicide 10%
- Undetermined 8%.

Of all non-natural deaths 81% were male and 19% female. The leading cause of death for males was homicide and for females was road traffic accidents. The NIMSS data for the year 2005 showed a decrease in violence. In 2005 non-natural deaths were due to violence/homicide (39%), accidents (39%, of which 75% were transport-related), suicide (11%) and undetermined (11%). Gender ratios were unchanged: male victims accounted for 81%. In terms of age categories both murder and suicide peaked in the 25–29 years category followed by 20–24-year-olds. If we treat the youth category as the WHO does in terms of age 10–29 years, then youths in South Africa account for 48% of violence victims and 41% of suicide victims. NIMSS data for 2005 reported rankings of mechanisms of death as follows: firearms ( $n=4\ 481$ ), sharp force (3 535), pedestrian (2 754), unspecified (1 483) and blunt force (1 387) (Prinsloo, 2007).

To get some idea where South Africa stands in terms of global trends, Matzopoulos (2004) compared NIMSS data for 2000 with WHO world data for and WHO Afro region for the same year 2000. The South African homicide rate was more than five times higher than the global average and 30% higher than the Afro region. Homicide exceeded world rates for virtually every age category and for both genders. Suicide among South African males exceeded world rates for all ages except 60 plus years, whereas South African females were lower than world average rates for all ages. Local road traffic deaths were roughly double the world rate.

Regarding racialisation of suicide patterns, the NIMSS data for years 1999 and 2000 show clear patterns (Burrows, 2005). White men and African women consistently show the highest and lowest rates for suicide. Whites represented 34% of suicides while forming only 11% of the population. Africans constituted 47% of suicides and 78% of the population in the year 2001. Coloured persons, roughly 8% of the population, were overrepresented as victims of suicide (15%), homicide (20%) and accidents (19%) (Burrows, 2005; Schlebusch, 2005).

The NIMSS datasets also provide information on the influence of alcohol. For the 1999 survey year, blood alcohol concentration tested positive in 58% of homicide victims, 58% of accident victims and 40% of suicides (Burrows, 2005). For the year 2005 the figures were very similar, in testing positive for alcohol: violence 58%, accidents (transport-related) 52% and suicide 47% (Prinsloo, 2007).

National crime figures also attest to the physically violent nature of South African society. Altbeker (2007) puts the case succinctly when he says that:

*What makes South Africa's problem unique is not so much the volume of crime as its extraordinary violence, with interpersonal violence and the exponential growth in robbery the principal manifestations of this (Altbeker, p. 33).*

There are few who would disagree with this claim. For a long time, and with a surprising degree of consistency over time, the rates of murder, attempted murder, rape and assault (common and with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm) have been very high.

Table 2.2 gives national violent crime figures for 1994/5 and for 2005/6.

To get some sense of the comparative rate of violence, the Race Relations Survey (Cooper, 1994) reported that in 1991 the murder rate in the United States was 10 per 100 000, the rape rate 42 per 100 000 and the rate of serious assault was 433 per 100 000 people. For South Africa in 1992 the rates per 100 000 were as follows: murder 98, rape 120 and serious assault 668.

**Table 2.2 National violent crime figures and ratios (per 100 000 of the South African population) 1994/5 and 2005/6**

	1994/5		2005/6	
	Number	Ratio per 100 000	Number	Ratio per 100 000
Murder	25 965	66.9	18 528	39.5
Attempted murder	26 806	69.1	20 571	43.9
Robbery with aggravated circumstances	84 785	218.5	119 726	255.3
Rape and attempted rape	44 751	115.3	54 926	117.3
Assault with grievous bodily harm	215 671	555.8	226 942	484.0
Common assault	200 248	516.0	227 553	485.3
Indecent assault	4 009	10.3	9 805	20.9

Source: South African Police Service figures reported in Kane-Berman (2007)

The same text reports an 11-city police-reported crime study between 1982 and 1992 that showed Johannesburg had the highest rates for murder, rape and burglary. A British-based comparative study of homicide in 1997 placed South Africa at substantially the highest recorded rate at 57 per 100 000 among 22 nations considered. The second highest murder rate was the United States at 6 per 100 000 (see Brookman, 2005). England and Wales had a murder rate of 1.5 per 100 000. By the year 2000 South Africa had the second highest murder rate of 51, behind that of Colombia at 62 per 100 000. Although the local murder rate has dropped from 66 in 1994/5 to 40 in 2006, South Africa in 2004 remained the highest rate in a United Nations Survey with Ecuador second at 18 per 100 000 (South African Institute of Race Relations, 2007). More recent figures indicate that although the murder rate in South Africa continues to decrease, it remains much higher (at 37 per 100 000) than the most recent global homicide rate estimate (7.6 per 100 000) (Burger, 2009).

Other forms of violent crime also occur at high rates. Violent crimes against children under 18 years have increased between 2002 and 2005, rape is up by 55%, murder up by 45%, serious assault up by 50% and common assault increased by 28% (Kane-Berman, 2007). In the case of rape, Jewkes and Abrahams (2002) cite a Human Rights Watch Report in 1995 that placed South Africa as the 'rape capital' of the world. A recent United Nations Report comparing 65 countries for the year 2000 placed the South African rate for rape (123 per 100 000) far ahead of other nations. In a study of female homicides for the year 1999 drawing on reports from 25 mortuaries, Mathews et al. (2004) claim that the rate of 9 per 100 000 (that translates into four women killed every day) is the highest rate in the world for intimate femicide.

All of this adds up to a dismal and tragic picture of violent crime.

Giving a slightly different picture, the NIMSS Report for the year 2005, covering 21 mortuaries, showed that homicide rates for Durban, Tshwane/Pretoria, Johannesburg and Cape Town declined steadily from the years 2001/2002 to 2005, while neither suicides nor road traffic accidents dropped (see National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, NIMSS, 2007). Adding all four cities together, homicides declined from 7 502 in 2001 to 5 825 in 2005. While one cannot discard entirely the possibility of reporting bias, it appears most likely that this decrease is due to a reduction in firearm-related deaths. These were down in all four cities, and dropped by nearly half in Johannesburg (1 618 down to 827) and substantially in Cape Town (1 123 down to 720); welcome news from a public health perspective. Incidentally, recent research in large cities in the United States has also reported decreasing rates of homicide for firearms in most cities (Benbow, 2007).

Regarding variations across different provinces, patterns are also fairly clear: one of the poorest provinces, Limpopo, shows consistently the lowest rate for all forms of violent crime. At the other end of the scale, the Western Cape (murder, rape and indecent assault), Northern Cape (attempted murder, rape and serious assault) and Gauteng for robbery with aggravated circumstances (includes bank robberies, car and truck hijackings and robbery of cash-in-transit vans) all head the table. Gauteng and the Western Cape are among the wealthiest provinces. What this seems to suggest is that it is not absolute poverty that is a causal factor, but rather certain forms of relative deprivation or inequality that is a primary link in the chain.

Finally, with respect to class issues, SAPS crime figures each year spell out the same story: violent crime occurs most frequently in poor, marginalised black and coloured township areas. Figures released in July 2008 indicate that Nyanga in Cape Town was the national murder capital. Other Western Cape areas to feature prominently in violent crime were Harare, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu, Mfuleni, Delft, Kraaifontein and Mitchell's Plain (*Cape Times*, 1 July 2008). All of these are poor and black/coloured areas. While violent crimes are all down on previous annual figures by roughly 5% – for which we should be grateful – they also all remain very high.

These disparities between districts are supported by an earlier collaborative report from the City of Cape Town and the Medical Research Council (see Groenewald et al., 2008). Rates of premature mortality in general were highest in the black townships of Nyanga and Khayelitsha, whereas the southern suburbs (previously white-only areas) were by a substantial margin the lowest. While HIV and AIDS contributed in part to this pattern, the highest rates of homicide were also reported for the following three districts: Nyanga, Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha, which are perhaps the most disadvantaged areas in the greater city of Cape Town.

## PRISON FIGURES

An overall picture of offenders and various demographic characteristics may be seen through prison figures for South Africa. Since this goes beyond violence, it gives us only a crude approximation, but the patterns are nevertheless telling. In all cases, data was reported by the Department of Correctional Services or the Judicial Inspectorate of Prisons and given in the annual South African Survey, earlier called the Race Relations Survey.

In terms of gender, the pattern is quite clear – only 2% of the prison population, sentenced and unsentenced, are female, and this figure has been

stable for more than a decade from 1995 to 2005 (Kane-Berman, 2007). This same report goes on to give further details: in terms of age as at March 2004 there were 28 827 under 21 years of age and a further 48 379 aged between 21 and 25 years out of a total prison population of 187 640. Thus 41% were youthful prisoners under the age of 25 years. Prior to the promulgation of the Children's Act (2008), the proportion of young offenders apparently increased. Unsentenced awaiting-trial prisoners under the age of 18 years increased from 181 in 1995 to 2 934 in the year 1999, then declined to 1 217 in 2005, which is still a sizeable increase over mid-1990s data. Of those prisoners, under the age of 18 years, half were sentenced for crimes categorised as aggressive and a further 13% for sexual crimes that most likely also involved violence. Nearly two-thirds of under-18-year-old offenders were sentenced for crimes of violence.

In terms of racialised characteristics the patterns are also fairly clear and relatively consistent over time (see Table 2.3). The prison population does not represent the national demographic data in years 1989 and 2005. Coloured people are considerably overrepresented, while both Indian and white people are underrepresented.

**Table 2.3 Prison population in South Africa by 'race' 1989 and 2005 (%)**

	Percentage of prison population 1989	Percentage of South African population 1989	Percentage of prison population 2005	Percentage of South African population 2005
African	71.3	69.9	80.7	79.4
Coloured	24.0	10.5	17.0	8.8
Indian	0.7	3.1	0.4	2.5
White	4.1	16.5	1.9	9.3

Such racialised patterns are supported in a study by Glanz, Mostert and Hofmeyr (1992) of all convictions in South Africa between 1956 and 1988. They also provided a more detailed analysis of convictions for the year July 1987 to June 1988 using data from the Central Statistics Service. Coloured youths were overrepresented in respect of total convictions for all crimes as well as for the seven most serious crimes, ranging from murder through rape to motor vehicle theft.

Another piece of the big picture is also provided by Glanz et al. (1992). It has often been claimed that the 'big picture' of crime and in particular

violent crime is different for ‘developing’ and ‘developed’ countries, passing over, rather hurriedly, the complex meaning of such terms. Glanz et al. compared three major categories of crimes (property, against person, drug-related) for years 1970–1975 in both developing and developed countries. South African data for the year 1983 shows close accord with the pattern for other developing countries where violence against persons is far higher than for developed countries (see Table 2.4).

**Table 2.4 Categories of crime by form of development (percentage of crimes committed)**

Development (1983)	Property crimes	Crimes against person	Drug-related crimes
South Africa	51	36	13
Low/middle-income countries	49	43	8
High-income countries	82	10	8

Source: Glanz et al. (1992)

## PERPETRATORS

In this section, we take a closer look at the demographics and risk factors among perpetrators of violent deeds. Prison figures and police-reported data provide a more general picture, but not a detailed analysis of those who did the deeds. Mortuary-derived data provide a picture of victims rather than perpetrators. In the South African context, Glanz, Mostert and Hofmeyr (1992) provided a detailed analysis of all those persons, seven years and over, convicted of crime in the period July 1987 to June 1988. Additional, and more recent, data is gleaned from the Civil Society Prison Reform Initiative (CSPRI) (Muntingh, 2008). To provide some kind of comparison we also look at Fiona Brookman’s (2005) study of homicide in the United Kingdom (UK) using police-generated Home Office official data.

## Youths

In the Glanz et al. (1992) study for the 1987–1988 year, youths between ages seven and 20 years constituted 25% of all convictions. However, when it comes to the seven most serious crimes (murder and attempted, rape and attempted, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary and theft of motor vehicles),

then young males, 7–20 years of age, made up 42% of convictions. For each of these seven most serious crimes, 'conviction rates for males peak in the 18–20 years old age category' (Glanz et al., 1992, p. 36). Youths committed 30% of all murders, 35% of attempted murder, 70% of rape cases and 88% of all burglaries in 1987–1988.

It is important to note that the youth in South Africa are increasingly being diverted out of the justice system, so we should expect to see reductions in custodial sentences. The percentage of youths in prison now amounts to 2%, whereas it had been double this in the past (Muntingh, 2008). The majority of youths in prison are 16 and 17 years old (Muntingh, 2008). Seven children under the age of 14 years were in custody at the time the report was being written, one of whom was accused of a sexual crime, another of a violent crime, and the rest of property and other crimes (Muntingh, 2008). Approximately half of unsentenced youths were accused of violent crimes and a third of economic crimes (Muntingh, 2008). Thirty eight per cent of sentenced children were accused of economic offences, 43% of violent crimes and 12% of sexual offences (Muntingh, 2008).

Regarding homicide in the UK, Brookman (2005) reports as follows: in Scotland the majority of accused are males aged 16–29 years. In Northern Ireland most are aged 25 and below. In England and Wales the peak age of offending is 31–35 years, closely followed by the 21–25 years category.

## Gender

Among a total of 4 043 homicide cases in England and Wales between 1997 and 2001, males accused numbered 88%, with 69% of victims being male and 31% of victims being female. In Scotland murder is even more of an all-male encounter; only 16% of victims were women. In Northern Ireland males made up 93% of offenders and 87% of victims.

For murder and attempted murder in South Africa in 1988/9, male convictions made up 93% of cases. Among youngsters in the seven to 20 age range only, males comprise 94% of all serious, mainly violent crime. The only crime for which young women had marginally elevated representation (13%) was that of aggravated assault. As Glanz et al. (1992, p. 48) put it: 'as the level of violence increases, the involvement of females decreases'. In a study of firearm fatalities in two Cape Town mortuaries between 1984 and 1991, Hansson (1998) reported that when characteristics of shooters were known (941 cases), then 99% were male with a modal age of 22 years; 91% of victims

were also male. In the Hansson study, the majority of suicide cases were also male (84%), white (85%) and the majority (89%) shot themselves in the head at home (84%).

It is clear enough that the construct of masculinity is heavily implicated in violent acts of various sorts and in the use of firearms.

## **Class**

As Brookman puts it, there are 'a number of difficulties in trying to determine the social class of those involved in homicide in the UK' (2005, p. 38). Official records in the UK record the economic position and key occupation of victims, but not of offenders. Of UK victims, where 23% of occupations were 'not known', the bulk of victims were either 'no current occupation' or 'manual worker'. In a more detailed analysis of 54 cases of male-on-male homicide in England and Wales, Brookman (2005) found not a single case of a professional or skilled worker as perpetrator. Furthermore she cites other UK studies that report over 60% of murder accused as unemployed.

For the South African case, Glanz et al. (1992) report that illiterate offenders are convicted at considerably higher rates than those with some education. More advanced levels of education were found to be proportionately lower in all types of serious crime. If illiteracy and poor education are regarded as proxies of class, then the lower class is clearly a risk factor for violence. Violent crime also features more prominently in deprived areas than in wealthier ones, and this surely also indirectly implicates class as a factor. In the UK, a large study of all admissions for assault in English emergency hospitals over a four-year period, 2002 to 2006, also found clear evidence that class and deprivation were associated with violence, for both victims and perpetrators (Bellis, Hughes, Anderson, Tocque & Hughes, 2008).

## **Racialised categories**

In both the United States (Wilson & Herrnstein, 1985) and in the United Kingdom (Brookman, 2005), black and minority offenders are overrepresented in violent crimes. For England and Wales 1995–2001, black offenders of murder were at 11% while constituting only 2% of the population. Asian offenders at 6% were only marginally elevated above the population proportion at roughly 4%. Racial issues here are clearly also a proxy for class since most of the black and Asian immigrants live in poor, decaying inner city areas.

In South Africa, among young offenders, coloured youths are considerably overrepresented in serious crime. Total convictions for 1987–1988 of the seven

most serious crimes, by racialised categories, were as follows (given as rates per 100 000): coloured 1 496; African 334; white 137; Indian 94. Coloured youths offend at 4.4 times the rate for Africans and 16 times the rate for Indian South Africans. Glanz et al. (1992) report that these conviction rates for coloured males changed little over the 30-year period between 1956 and 1987. From general prison statistics, we could extend this claim for a further 20 years to the year 2008; a very stable pattern. This cannot purely be a proxy for class, since Africans in general have been less educated, more unemployed and poorer. The urban situation of coloured people in the Western Cape, forced removals and the high prevalence of male gangs must be other factors, but the coloured areas in Cape Town are certainly marginalised, deprived and poor.

In the study by Mathews et al. (2004) of female homicide in the year 1999 based on a sample of 25 mortuaries, coloured male perpetrators were again substantially overrepresented. Table 2.5 gives the percentage of offenders by racialised categories comparing intimate with non-intimate femicide.

For both intimate and non-intimate femicide, coloured perpetrators were roughly twice the rate of population representation. Clearly 'race' and class intersect since this study found perpetrators of femicide more likely to be blue collar workers, farm workers and security workers.

**Table 2.5 Perpetrator 'race' by type of femicide in 1999**

	Percentage of perpetrators of non-intimate femicides	Percentage of perpetrators of intimate femicide	Percentage in SA population
African	68.3	76.4	76.6
Coloured	13.2	17.7	8.8
White	2.6	3.9	10.9
Indian	0.3	2.0	2.6

Source: Mathews et al. (2004)

### Cautionary remarks

As a start we should place a cautionary sign over the potential reification of these large human categories such as gender-sex, class and 'race'. The dangers are twofold. First is the tendency to think of categories as fixed,

stable, homogeneous and often as dichotomous, for example black-white, male-female, upper-lower class. Human beings are in fact far more varied and diversified than such labels allow (Warnke, 2007). They are cross-cut by a range of other categories, not least those such as occupation, ethnicity, religion, age, geography, nationality and even in terms of illness or health. The meanings of categories change over historical times and across cultural domains. For example, recent years have witnessed a new critical analysis of hegemonic categories such as whiteness, masculinity and heterosex. Major categories do not exhaust who we are as persons: we are also mothers, siblings, sports fans and hobbyists (Warnke, 2007). In addition, the simplistic and iterative deployment of large scale categories, particularly in fields such as health or security studies, increases the danger of reconstructing unwarranted stereotypes.

The second danger when we deploy such categories is to imagine that the category itself is the causal agent or explanatory site. Instead, these labels should, in the main, be interpreted as shorthands or proxies for other correlated processes. Racialised categories, for example, may stand as proxies for impoverished home conditions, poor quality of education and diminished forms of self-regulation. The danger in the repeated use of labels and statistics is that we become lazy or theoretically lax and so fail to look beyond the categories to find real reasons why people commit violent deeds. For instance, in the work of American prison psychiatrist James Gilligan (1996, 2001, 2003), he reports that the most frequently repeated tale from violent prisoners in accounting for their violence was: 'He dis'ed (disrespected) me (or my mother, wife, partner, friend)'. They used the term so often that the abbreviated form became the standard phrase – 'he dis'ed me'. Clearly those people who are black, younger, immature and who come from disadvantaged and/or victimised backgrounds are in turn more likely to experience disrespect or to interpret situations as disrespectful. But it is the underlying emotion of shame-anger, and the hierarchical structure of society, not the category, that is doing the conative work. Even when the category itself seems to be implicated, as in the case of masculinity, it is not the category alone (there are violent men and non-violent men), but some high dosage or quality variant or distortion that does the dirty work. Beware then the potential reification of categories and labels.

Nonetheless, the general patterns of violence both in developed societies, such as the United States and United Kingdom, as well as developing societies, such as South Africa, show that it is predominantly young men with disadvantaged class, education and family backgrounds and then again only

a minority of them, who are responsible for most aspects of serious violent crimes. Why are young men so violent in a range of ways? Is it primarily due to patriarchal ideology and the hegemonic values of masculinity or is the tendency wired into men's bodies? The answer appears to be a bit of both along with other processes in-between.

## Sex/gender patterns

The issue of sex/gender difference has become rather controversial since survey results of American families (Straus, Gelles & Steinmetz, 1980) found that men and women were similarly aggressive. The most common situation in families was when both partners mutually used violence. Such findings differed sharply from the earlier Maccoby and Jacklin (1974, p. 352) review of sex differences, which concluded boldly that: 'the greater aggressiveness of the male is one of the best established and most pervasive of all psychological sex differences.'

They went on to conclude that sex differences in aggression have been observed in all cultures where such comparative studies have been done. They also concluded that sex differences were apparent 'as early as social play begins – at age two or two-and-a-half years' (p. 352). A later review by Maccoby (1998) reported that direct aggression, both verbal and physical, was more common among boys and that by the third year, aggression was twice as high for boys as girls.

In contrast, by the late 1990s, some 70 studies were reviewed that found women in domestic situations as aggressive, or more so than men. For more severe forms of violence (kicking and punching) women were just as high (Straus, 1999). A range of studies had also shown roughly equal gender rates in initiation of violent acts. On the other hand, police data and national crime victim surveys continued to support male perpetrator violence in terms of sex/gender ratios ranging between 7 : 1 and 13 : 1 (men : women). When the issue turns on injury and frequency, women on average suffer more frequent and more severe injury. As Murray Straus (1999) argues in an attempt to account for the discrepancies, these findings reflect different aspects of domestic violence, and probably apply to different types of people. When domestic violence comes to the attention of criminal authorities, it is chronic, severe and ends in injuries requiring medical attention. Women considerably outnumber men as victims in these situations.

The conclusions by Straus (1999) have been supported by a series of meta-analytic reviews over the past decade. In a review of 82 studies of domestic

conflict mainly in the United States, conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, Archer (2000, p. 651) concluded that:

*Women were slightly more likely than men to use one or more acts of physical aggression and to use such acts more frequently, whereas men were more likely to inflict an injury, and overall, 62% of those injured by a partner were women.*

In a further study, reviewing 58 studies that used the Conflict Tactics Scale, Archer (2002) reported that women were more likely to throw, slap, kick, bite or punch and hit with an object while men were more likely to beat up, choke or strangle.

Janet Hyde (2007) studied 46 meta-analyses assessing sex/gender differences on a range of variables such as cognition, communication, social, personality and miscellaneous. She reported that the vast majority (78%) of gender effect sizes were small or zero. In short, women and men are in terms of psychological attributes largely similar. The largest single gender difference was in the area of motor performance, such as throwing velocity (effect size  $d = +2.18$ ). Aggression showed up as a moderate gender difference (physical  $d = +0.33$  to  $+0.84$ ; verbal  $+0.09$  to  $+0.55$ ) with males being more aggressive (Hyde, 2007).

In a rare review of studies in real-world settings, employing self-reports, observational methods, peer reports and educator reports across 16 nations, Archer (2004) found that sex differences (male predominance) were larger for physical than verbal aggression, supported by earlier findings. Self-report anger measures showed no difference. Indirect aggression, assessed by social exclusion and ostracism rather than direct attacks, was either zero or in the female dominant direction. Aggression (both verbal and physical) was more common among males at all ages sampled, was shown to be consistent across cultures, and occurred from early childhood onwards with peak sex differences between ages 18 and 30 years. Findings here were also used to test two substantial theoretical positions – ‘social role theory’ (SRT) and ‘sexual selection theory’ (SST); the latter drawn from evolutionary theory. SST found support for the findings of peak differences among young men, after puberty, at a time of reproductive competition, when these young men will take risks including rape and involvement in violent crime. Social role theory (SRT) is rooted in social structures. Historical divisions of labour produce different role expectations transmitted through socialisation. Boys learn that aggression is part of an instrumental set of actions that support the masculine role. Pursuit of high-status positions may legitimate a range of aggressive acts. In this review SRT draws support from the finding of an

overall sex difference in the male direction, but considerable variability due to contexts. SRT did not find support since the magnitude of sex differences did not increase with age in childhood. The limited number of nations in this review would, however, restrict tests of cultural variability in violence, which is certainly quite considerable (see Table 2.1 on p. 27).

The issues of both sex/gender difference and age variations are given a more rigorous test in longitudinal studies, in particular the Dunedin study (Moffitt, Caspi, Rutter & Silva, 2001), which showed both neurological and social factors at work in creating violent youngsters. There is now substantial evidence that there are two different developmental trajectories to violence: a 'life-course-persistent' path and an 'adolescence-limited' pathway (Krug et al., 2002). This research, by Terrie Moffitt and colleagues, followed a cohort of children born in 1972–1973 in Dunedin, New Zealand, from age 3–21 years. This involved multiple data sources: reports from parents and educators; self-reports, peer informants, observer ratings and official police and court records (Moffitt et al., 2001; Moffitt, 2003). The 'life-course-persistent' pathway involves only a small fraction of a cohort (around 5% of offenders) and is a disorder having neuro-cognitive origins. It shows early childhood onset and extreme sex differences; the ratio of male to female is 10 : 1. These are the people who evidence violence throughout childhood, report violent offending in teenage years and persist with an adult record of violence. In the Dunedin study a total of 46 study members (from the 1 037-strong 1992 sample) showed court convictions at age 21, convicted of 115 violent offences (Moffitt et al., 2001).

The other 'adolescence-limited' trajectory is predominantly a social phenomenon heavily shaped by peer example and social relationships. The onset is adolescence and this path is responsible for the bulk of youth antisocial behaviour. Gender/sexual difference is minimal either by age of onset or offences. In the Dunedin study the first self-reported delinquent act were as follows: 512 boys at mean age 13.3 years; 468 girls at mean age 13.7 years. Figures for first arrests were: 101 boys first arrested at mean age 13.5 years; 49 girls first arrested at mean age 13.7 years. Boys were first convicted at age 17.7; girls at age 17.9 years. Self-reported offences in teenage years show gender similarities; for example the gender ratio for drug offences at age 15 years is one-to-one and for theft offences at age 15 it is 1.6 male : 1 female. Sexes were similar in physical violence towards partners in relationships, even at the more severe end of violence. However, when self-reports turned to violent criminal offences, the gender ratio increased to roughly 3.5 : 1 male to female. For violent crime convictions at age 21 years, the gender ratio was 32 to one (Moffitt et al., 2001).

The Dunedin study also confirmed a well-known phenomenon of offending: the concentration of crimes by just a few offenders, but for the first time showed that female crime was also concentrated. Half of the 64 002 offences self-reported by males at age 21 were reported by only 41 men (8%). Half of the 23 613 offences self-reported by women at age 21 were reported by only 27 (6%) females. But men were more actively offending. The most active 5% of males accounted for 28% of self-reported offences, while the most active 5% of women accounted for 12% of the total (Moffitt et al., 2001). It looks as though the key reason why male criminal violence persists and is so male dominated is that sex-ratio for the 'life-course-persistent' path is roughly 10 : 1. Few females suffer from these neuro-cognitive symptoms; we do not fully understand why. The concentration phenomenon was also reported in the South African Birth-to-Twenty project; relatively small numbers of children were persistently problematic (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). However, further research is required to claim definitively that this 'concentration of offender' phenomenon is operative in low- and middle-income societies where disadvantage is so widespread.

### **Childhood victimisation**

The local Birth-to-Twenty study (Barbarin & Richter, 2001) reported hitting and physically hurting in 30% of Johannesburg families by the time children were six years old. And what is the link between victimisation and sex differences? A range of studies have found, quite simply, that boys are hit more frequently and disciplined more harshly than girls (Maccoby, 1998; Moffitt et al., 2001; Straus, 2001).

### **Masculinity**

The study of masculinity as an ideological construct, that is, as a construct implicated in power relations, only emerged as an area in its own right from the late 1980s (see Segal, 1990; Connell, 1995). This line of questioning emerged primarily from second wave radical feminists from the late 1960s who raised awareness of the widespread nature of masculine violence. These concerns arrived rather later in South Africa (see the edited text by Morrell, 2001). The construct of masculinity is, however, also implicated in the persistence of male-dominated violence. For instance Luyt and Foster (2001) showed that hegemonic masculinity was characterised by three factors: 'toughness', 'success' and 'control'. Secondary school males who lived in a Cape Town area

characterised by crime, violence and gang activity endorsed these masculine factors to a far greater extent than males in a non-gang-dominated area. In another Cape Town-based study, Adam Cooper (2005) interviewed coloured adolescent males awaiting trial for violent crimes. Their depiction of masculinity was dominated by discourses of strength, gang-related activities and an obsession with guns and shooting. All these young violent boys came from deprived and marginalised backgrounds and appeared to take up these gang-inspired macho masculinities as one of the few options for achieving a positive male identity (see also Cooper & Foster, 2008). What it does perpetuate is a sub-culture of violence on the Cape Flats.

We have known of the notoriously high South African rape rate for quite some time, but results of a mid-2009 study sent shock waves through local and international circles (Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell & Dunkle, 2009). From a sample of 1 738 men, mainly young (70% under 30 years) and drawn from all racial groups in city, urban and rural districts of the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, a total of 27.6% admitted rape of a woman or a girl. Of those who admitted rape, nearly half (46%) said they had raped more than one victim. Of the full sample of 1 738 men, 8% claimed to have raped 10 or more victims. The majority, some 75%, first raped before they turned 20 years of age. Coloured men were significantly overrepresented among those admitting forced sex. Rape was significantly associated with greater trauma, poor emotional relations and parental absence in childhood. These men were also more likely to have engaged in a range of other risky sexual transactions and to have been physically violent to a partner. An extremely toxic form of masculinity operates in nearly a third of young South African men.

Another recent local study adds insight into the construction of masculinity in rural South Africa (Jewkes et al., 2006). The study interviewed 1 370 young males aged 15–26 years (mean: 19 years) from 70 villages in rural Eastern Cape in 2002/3. Questionnaires and interviews were in Xhosa. Average age of first rape was 17 years. Overall prevalence of rape was 20.9% (n=287). Of those who had raped, 223 (12.6%) had raped a non-partner, and 190 of these reported only gang rape, 64 (4.6%) had raped an intimate partner and 51 (3.7%) had raped both. Having previously been physically violent was more common among rapists (59%) than non-rapists (23%). Relatively more advantaged men (in these poor areas) were more likely to rape. Rapists differentiated from non-rapists in terms of having more adverse childhoods (neglect plus physical/sexual abuse), heavier alcohol and drug consumption and showing greater prior physical violence to intimate partners. Perhaps the

**Table 2.6 Rape and number of lifetime sexual partners**

No. of partners	Men who had raped a non-partner vs. those who had never raped a non-partner		Men who had raped an intimate partner vs. those who had never raped an intimate partner	
	Raped a non-partner	Never raped a non-partner	Raped an intimate partner	Never raped an intimate partner
None to 5 partners	32.7	66.8	34.8	63.7
6–16 partners	67.3	33.2	64.2	36.3

Source: Jewkes et al. (2006)

most interesting result (see Table 2.6) found that young rapists had a much higher level of sexual partners in general.

Roughly two-thirds of rapists reported between six and 16 sexual partners, whereas roughly two-thirds of non-rapists reported between zero and five lifetime sexual partners. Jewkes et al. (2006) interpret the primary reason as due to an ‘exaggerated sense of sexual entitlement’ (p. 2958). There were further indications that neither category of rapist showed much feeling for their sexual partners, a finding also supported by an earlier study of rapists in Johannesburg by Vogelmann (1990). Such indifference to the emotional stance of victims is a further indicator of entitlement as a factor in violence (Foster, 2000). Patriarchal ideology that emphasises a sense of ‘sexual entitlement and enacting fantasies of power’ (Jewkes et al., 2006, p. 2959) is clearly implicated in the continued cycle of violence in South Africa.

### **Class and inequality**

Finally, the issue of class. Lower socio-economic class has been cited throughout this chapter and in the wider literature as one of the key factors in producing violence. But what exactly does class mean? In usual social science terminology it refers to a cluster of factors such as economic (income, wealth, ownership) as well as occupational and educational indicators. However, from a more psychological perspective, class refers to a combination of three kinds of processes:

- 1) Resources and opportunities
- 2) The notion of everyday stressors
- 3) The idea of status, recognition and respect.

An American study by Straus et al. (1980) showed that higher levels of stressors were a good predictor of greater family violence. Those lower in terms of socio-economic class are likely to experience greater stressors yet have fewer buffer or protective devices in terms of resources, opportunities or status. Class in this sense is merely a proxy, an indicator of factors that constrain and enable human development. Nor does class act on its own; it is always refracted through the lens of family dynamics – family size, degree of conflict, young motherhood, divorce, remarriage, family financial woes and so on.

Absolute poverty is not necessarily a predictor for violence. As we have seen, some of the poorest provinces in South Africa also have the lowest rates of reported criminal violence. This points to some kind of relative deprivation rather than class in an absolute sense. Fascinating research over the past 15 years or so has begun to unravel the mystery: it is class in the context of wider inequality. Violence has been shown to be strongly associated with economic inequality. Regarding the link between inequality and violence, there are now over 50 studies showing that greater inequality is associated with higher levels of violence. This work is superbly pulled together by Wilkinson (1996, 2005) and Marmot (2004). At the international level for instance, countries like Japan and Sweden are more egalitarian than the United States, are more cohesive and show higher levels of trust and lower rates than the US of violent crime. Within the US, Wilkinson (2005) reports a study in 10 US cities that found a correlation between income inequality and average hostility of 0.68. Internationally, a study of 63 countries showed a correlation of 0.53 between homicides and the Gini coefficient, one index of economic inequality and a correlation of 0.68 between homicide and inequality when the ratio of the income of the top 10% to the bottom 10% was used as the measure of inequality (Wood, 2006). Dynamics turn on issues of status and recognition, which become more problematic with increased inequality. Hostility is triggered as efforts to ward off humiliation, shame and disrespect. It may involve an increase in cortisol levels. The pathway to violence is probably via unacknowledged shame. As Wilkinson (2005) reports, in the most deprived areas, violence is highest among young men, but teenage pregnancies and depression are high among women. Situations that produce violence in men produce different responses in women, since men are more concerned with

status (Wilkinson, 2005). In economic terms, South Africa is one of the more unequal countries in the world indicated by a national Gini coefficient in the region of between 0.68 and 0.73 (Brown & Folscher, 2004). As we have seen, South Africa also has one of the highest rates of violence in terms of murder, attempted murder, rape, femicide and is fairly high even for problems such as road traffic deaths and suicide.

Two recent studies examine the relationship between violence and inequality. The South African Institute of Race Relations (2009) published a comparative report on the state of the nine provinces, presenting 2007 data (the latest available breakdowns), including figures for average annual household income and crime rates per 100 000. A violence index can be compiled by adding the rates for murder, rape and aggravated robbery. Income may be taken as a proxy for inequality; greater provincial income assumes a wider spread. The two most unequal provinces (Gauteng and the Western Cape) also present the highest violence rates (647 and 442). The two poorest provinces (the Eastern Cape and Limpopo) present the lowest violence index figures (260 and 110). In summary, income inequality is associated with rates of violence. The study by Demombynes and Ozler (2005) used 1996 Census household data along with South African Police Service 1996 crime data to map each police precinct in South Africa, as well as relations in adjacent catchment areas. Their results showed that violent crimes were more likely to occur in areas with high inequality in the wider criminal catchment area, whereas property crimes were strongly correlated with inequality in the precinct. This is further evidence for a link between economic inequality and violence, in this study represented by data for rape and aggravated assault.

## CONCLUSION

In a thoughtful reflection, Graeme Simpson (2001) reminds us that there is far more continuity than not in underlying conditions in the apartheid 1980s and the post-apartheid 1990s through to the present 2000s. Experiences of marginalisation, impoverishment and relative deprivation for the majority of young people continue to frame their lives. Now they show different kinds of resilience in the face of exclusions and hardships that remain much the same; now they find a sense of identity and meaning in criminal youth gangs. They express it in terms of a mock world of employment, from which they are excluded, describing criminal actions as 'doing business' or as 'going on duty' (Simpson, 2001, p. 125). Simpson goes on to remind us that a tough law-enforcement policy will achieve little; prisons will consolidate criminality

and violence. Solutions must involve a 'process of human development' (p. 128) to give young males in particular a stake, a place to belong.

If this chapter has any merit it is to point to the big issues that create the patterns that we can now see more clearly. We do not understand everything about the causal pathways to youth violence (Rutter, 2003). However, we do have enough understanding to know the big areas that require change. First, it is now clear enough that inequality, and of course class, is deeply implicated. The message is clear enough: we need greater equality in economic terms, racial terms and gender terms. Second, we know quite clearly that patriarchal ideology continues to enable particular forms of masculinity, that, aided and abetted by reputation, peers, collectives and gangs produce tremendous damage in and from only a small proportion of males. We will need to challenge and transform the patriarchal structures and discourses that continue to manufacture dangerous men. If a fraction of the violence of these boys has roots in early childhood neuro-cognitive problems, then we will have to understand more about the causal mechanisms.

Third, we know that family dynamics, particularly for young children, form important roots of subsequent violence. We will have to change age-old wrongful beliefs that hitting children is good for them. We know now that hitting, hurting and abusing children is simply a recipe for later disaster. We need to cultivate the message that children (and all human beings for that matter) require recognition, honour, respect and opportunities to belong; that hitting and neglecting them will come back to haunt us. We need to teach different solutions, greater tolerance, to family conflicts. We require far greater resources to support troubled families and young children. These factors and understandings are not difficult to grasp but it will take a mighty effort – from government, schools, businesses, civil society and all of us – to turn the ugly tide. However, in the long run, Mandela in the Foreword of the *World Report on Violence and Health* is quite right: 'violence can be prevented'.

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# Chapter Three



## THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH VIOLENCE: AN ECOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING

*Amelia van der Merwe, Andrew Dawes & Catherine L. Ward*

### INTRODUCTION

Causal and contributory factors for antisocial behaviour, including violence and the relationships between them, are complex (Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998). Most explanations for the development of these behaviours emphasise that risk factors operate and interact on a number of levels, typically at individual, familial and community levels, with contributions from peer groups, schools and other 'everyday' settings in which children and young people interact regularly and frequently (for example Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Loeber & Dishion, 1983; Patterson, DeBaryshe & Ramsey, 1997; Rutter et al., 1998).

In what follows, we use Bronfenbrenner's (1979) approach to identify risk factors affecting, and within, the individual, family, school, peer group and community. Much of the local and international research evidence pertains to the individual level of explanation, and is drawn from studies conducted from a psychological or psychiatric perspective. In the South African case, we need to be aware that there is a range of contextual drivers to antisocial and violent conduct in young people. Most important, perhaps, is the long-term and deep poverty in which many children grow up. Poverty by itself does not cause violence, but it may increase the effect of other risk factors. For instance, it may enhance the likelihood that youths become involved in crime in order to support their daily existence, or in order to redress the exclusion felt through not having material goods that define social inclusion. Poverty environments, particularly in the cities, are also associated with drug dealing, which is acknowledged to be associated with violence (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

In this chapter, we will pay attention to the contributory factors operating at the various ecological levels, including sources of developmental variations in violent behaviour.

### DEVELOPMENT IN CONTEXT

Children grow up within an ecology of contexts: smaller, more intimate contexts, such as family and school, are nested within larger contexts such as the neighbourhood (Bronfenbrenner, Moen & Garbarino, 1984). A key element of the ecosystemic model is the connections between the various elements: none of them can be viewed in isolation (see Figure 3.1).

### Violence and antisocial behaviour

Violence and antisocial behaviour often co-occur and overlap and this is likely to occur across development in the clustering of different behaviours, and in youths' prognoses and outcomes. It is vital, in attempting to understand the evolution of violent behaviour, to attempt to define these concepts.

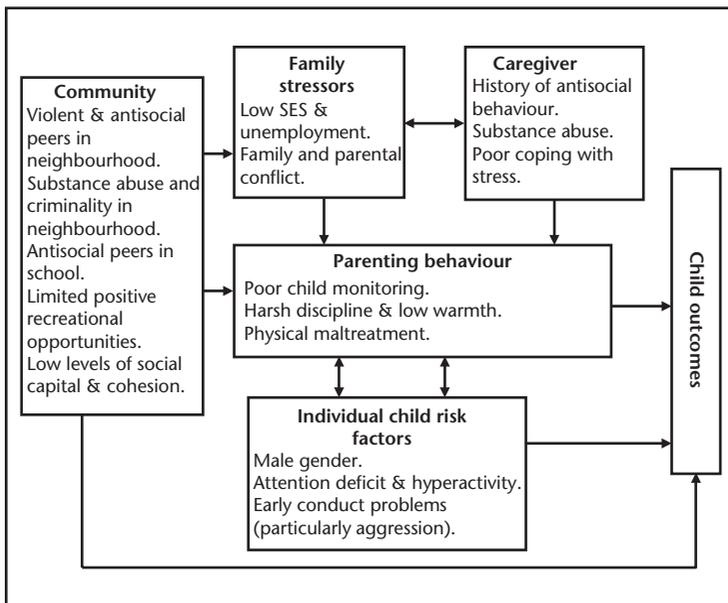


Figure 3.1: Established sources of risk for child antisocial behaviour

Definitions of violence in the research literature are inconsistent and varied (Tate, Reppucci & Mulvey, 1995). Scholars frequently use the terms 'aggression' and 'violence' interchangeably, even though 'aggression' is a broader term that includes 'the entire spectrum of assertive, intrusive, or attacking behaviours'; thus violence is better described as a subcategory of aggression (Leventhal, 1984, in Tate et al., 1995, p. 777). The World Health Organization's definition of violence is as follows:

*The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation* (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002, p. 5).

In this chapter, the term 'antisocial behaviour' will be used to refer to a broad range of contra-normative behaviours occurring during childhood and adolescence. Antisocial behaviour includes the full spectrum of deviant child and adolescent behaviours from minor behavioural infringements, such as smoking, to moderate behavioural contraventions, such as fighting and stealing, to serious and violent behavioural expressions of antisocial tendencies, such as aggravated assault.

It is important to emphasise that there is considerable overlap in the determinants of violent and other types of antisocial behaviour, and there are relatively fewer studies focusing exclusively on the development of violent conduct (Hawkins et al., 1998). It is therefore useful to conceptualise violent behaviour as one aspect of a constellation of moderate to serious antisocial behaviours that tend to co-occur.

### **Individual-level risk factors**

Individual children bring elements to their social contexts that will affect how that social context responds to them. Certain individual attributes increase the likelihood of youth violence. Chief among these are:

- Age
- Gender
- Impulsivity, inattention and hyperactivity
- Substance abuse
- The inability to feel guilt
- The child's own victimisation.

Individual determinants of antisocial behaviour, including violence, which have repeatedly been isolated as significant include:

- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Risk-taking
- Attention deficits
- Early onset conduct problems (aggression, oppositional, disruptive and destructive behaviours)
- Young age at first conviction
- Male gender
- A low resting heart rate (Bailey, 2003; Broidy et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Herrenkohl et al., 2001; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Loeber, Farrington, Stouthamer-Loeber, Moffitt & Caspi, 1998).

Children in South Africa may be particularly at risk for biological insults that predispose them to Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). In the Western Cape, the prevalence of ADHD from all causes has been estimated to be 5% (Kleintjes et al., 2006), and the proportion of children without the full disorder, but who nonetheless display ADHD symptoms, is likely to be higher still. Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS) is a particular syndrome associated with attention deficits and hyperactivity among children (Fischer, Bitschnau, Peterzell, Eder & Topitz, 1999). In one Western Cape community the prevalence has been found to be between 6% and 7.4% of first-grade children, many times higher than estimates of prevalence in the US population (Viljoen et al., 2005). This data was obtained from a community with high alcoholism and FAS and so rates in other areas of the country may be lower. However, the most prevalent pattern of excessive alcohol consumption in South Africa as a whole is binge drinking, which is the drinking pattern most likely to cause FAS (Obot, 2006; Parry, 2005). No doubt children in other communities are also likely to be at risk for FAS.

Regular maternal prenatal use of other substances, such as tobacco, cocaine and methamphetamine, are also likely to compromise fetal development and have been shown to be associated with attention deficits (Fischer et al., 1999) and, in the case of tobacco, with aggressive behaviour (Höök, 2006). Tobacco is widely used among South Africans (Sitas et al., 2004). Use of methamphetamine ('tik') in particular is increasing (Parry, Myers & Plüddeman, 2004). Cocaine is also being identified among patients seeking treatment for substance abuse disorders (Cerff, 2006). In each case, significant numbers of South African children are placed at risk for developing violent behaviours, before birth.

Maternal antenatal anxiety has been linked to attention deficits and hyperactivity in boys and emotional and behavioural disturbances in both boys and girls at age four (Connor, Heron, Golding, Beveridge & Glover, 2002).

Attention deficits, hyperactivity and Oppositional Defiant Disorder frequently co-occur with childhood Conduct Disorder and delinquency and are associated with the manifestation of Antisocial Personality Disorder in adulthood (Rutter, Kim-Cohen & Maughan, 2006). Recent research indicates that the co-occurrence may be due to underlying behavioural dysregulation, deficits in inhibitory control and delay aversion (Rutter et al., 2006). This may explain the mechanism by which attention deficits and hyperactivity are connected to violence: young people with these problems are less able to inhibit aggressive responses to stimuli.

A further biological insult that predisposes children to aggression is prenatal (maternal) and early childhood malnutrition (Jiangong, Raine, Venables & Mednick, 2004; Neugebauer, Hoek & Susser, 1999). Close to 22% of South African children under nine years are estimated to be stunted (Labadarios, 2000). Significant numbers are therefore at risk for aggression, independent of other factors.

Early childhood physical abuse of boys is a risk factor for emotional dysregulation and aggression (Finkelhor, 2008; Lansford et al., 2007; Maas, Herrenkohl & Sousa, 2008). While accurate estimates of child maltreatment rates for South Africa are not known, available data suggests that they are likely to be very high (Dawes & Ward, 2008).

Despite the overlap between antisocial behaviour in general and violent behaviour specifically, a few key individual factors differentiate violent young offenders from non-violent young offenders (Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 1998). These factors include (early) age of onset of violent behaviour and high levels of aggression (Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 1998). Previous low individual guilt, current hard drug use and perpetration of violence have been identified as enduring and robust predictors of future violence in adolescents (Loeber et al., 1998; Molcho, Harel & Dina, 2004; Sussman, Skara, Weiner & Dent, 2004).

Gender socialisation processes are believed to be integral to higher levels of aggression among men than women. Females display higher levels of internalising (nervousness, withdrawal, worrying and anxiety) as opposed to externalising disorders than males (Anderson & Bushman, 2002; Wood & Jewkes, 2001) and these internalising processes appear to protect against the development of interpersonal aggression. Men, on the other hand, appear to be socialised to externalise their distress in the form of aggression towards others.

The earlier a child develops an aggressive pattern of behaviour, the more likely s/he is to continue to be aggressive. Among males, aggressive behaviour between the ages of six and 13 is likely to persist into adulthood, while findings for females do not yield such consistency (Hawkins et al., 2000). For instance, in one study in Sweden, two-thirds of the boys whose educators rated them aggressive at ages 10 and 13 had criminal records for violent offences by age 26. This was six times higher than for their classmates who were not rated aggressive (Stattin & Magnusson, 1989). There have been similar findings in other studies, including one in China (Chen, Rubin, Li & Li, 1999). From the social learning perspective, young aggressive boys have already acquired a violent repertoire that is likely to affect the kinds of environment that they are exposed to: it is likely that they drift towards environments that reward violence and perhaps even broaden the repertoire of violent acts that they are exposed to.

In the context of South Africa, the young age at which children are likely to become involved in criminal environments is of particular concern. Studies show that children begin to be involved in gangs around the age of 11 or 12 (Legget, 2005) and since joining a gang is a gradual process, this suggests an earlier exposure to, and drift towards, violent contexts. Another indicator of concern is the young age of many South African arrestees: figures from the Department of Correctional Services indicate that on 31 December 2006, of the total of 160 198 prisoners in South African prisons, 1 997 (1.2%) were under the age of 18 (Department of Correctional Services, 2007). This is very likely to be an underrepresentation of the number of juvenile arrestees. As children awaiting trial may also be detained in police cells, places of safety, secure care centres, or they may be released into the care of their parents or guardians (Muntingh, 2007). It is of great concern that of the children in prison, 1 043 (52.3%) were awaiting trial (Department of Correctional Services, 2007). Detention facilities for children awaiting trial often lack the capacity to detain children separately from adults (Muntingh, 2007). For these children, prisons are therefore likely to serve as environments that will strengthen their socialisation into violence. Together, these results suggest that a great many South African children are deeply involved in very violent contexts from an early age, a fact that places them at risk of strengthening their violent repertoires rather than learning alternative, prosocial behaviours.

Pro-substance use norms and pro-violence attitudes have also been associated with the onset and perpetration of youth violence (Elliott, 1994; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; O'Donnell, Hawkins & Abbott, 1995; Sussman

et al., 2004). A number of studies have established an association between prior use of alcohol and committing a violent offence, but scholars have warned that the relationship between alcohol use and violence is unlikely to be simple, linear or unidirectional (Bailey, 2003; Huang, White, Kosterman, Catalano & Hawkins, 2001).

Use of substances may introduce children to social environments where violent behaviour is modelled and rewarded. For instance, children living in communities in Cape Town where gang activity is endemic report that substance abuse is a route via which children become gang members: once addiction begins, they may start to sell drugs on behalf of a gang in order to acquire their own and then become inducted into a life of crime and violence in order to meet the demands of the gang (Ward, 2006). The literature consistently identifies children who have beliefs or attitudes that are favourable towards deviant behaviour in general (use of substances, violence, rule-breaking, cheating) as being likely to be aggressive (Hawkins et al., 2000). Children who hold such beliefs have internalised an expectation that violence will be rewarded. As just one indication of the link between youth substance abuse and violence in South Africa, a recent study of male arrestees found that 65% of those under the age of 20 tested positive for drug use (Parry, Plüddeman, Louw & Leggett, 2004).

Being a victim of aggression or abuse also may put a child at risk of developing violent behaviours. For instance, male adolescent sexual offenders are likely to have been sexually abused themselves and to use in their own offending the same methods that their abuser used (Burton, 2003). Some sense of the scope of the problem may be obtained from Childline, a hotline for children to report child abuse and neglect. In 2000, Childline received 1 734 calls related to child sexual abuse, and in 43% of these cases the perpetrators were under the age of 18. Many were themselves victims of sexual offences (Wood & Netto, 2000). In terms of crime more generally, the recent National Youth Victimization Survey reported that 41.4% of young people aged 12–22 had been the victims of crime in the year preceding the survey and that a common change in young people's behaviour afterwards was to become more aggressive (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Young people victimised by severe violence are more likely to approve of aggression as a social response, to have problems interpreting social cues and to have deviant social goals. Young people who witnessed severe violence are likely to perceive positive outcomes for aggression (Shahinfar, Kupersmidt & Matz, 2001). The very high rate of youth victimisation in South Africa is cause for concern not only in and of itself, but also because

of what children may learn in terms of violent behaviour, what violence might accomplish, and what is acceptable in terms of behaviour used to reach goals.

## **Developmental variations in risk factors**

As is evident from the preceding discussion, risk factors vary in their impact during different developmental periods.

In middle childhood different factors come into play. Loeber and Dishion (1983) showed that one of the strongest and most consistent predictors of aggression at age six was family characteristics, while from nine years onward, individual conduct problems (antisocial referrals, aggressiveness, etc.) were the best predictors.

A meta-analysis by Lipsey and Derzon (1998) found that for children aged 6–11, the two strongest predictors for serious and violent offending at ages 15–25 included committing general offences and substance abuse (primarily tobacco and alcohol). For young adolescents (aged 12–14), social isolation and antisocial peers were the most potent predictors (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Other predictors included male gender, family socio-economic status, antisocial caregivers (for the 6–11 age group) and committing general offences (for the 12–14 age group) (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998). Earlier aggression predicted violence at age 15–25 for both age groups (6–11 and 12–14); while school attitudes and performance, caregiver-child relations, gender (male) and physical violence at age 12–14 additionally predicted future serious and violent offending (Lipsey & Derzon, 1998).

Some risk factors are consistently implicated in the development of violent and other antisocial behaviour, irrespective of child age or developmental stage. For example, poor academic performance and hyperactivity have demonstrated their association with later (age 18) violent behaviour across a number of developmental points, including ages 10, 14 and 16 (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). In addition, family conflict and management strategies, measured at ages 14 and 16, predicted violence at age 18, as did selected non-familial social influences, including the presence of delinquent peers, gang membership, and neighbourhood adults involved in crime (Herrenkohl et al., 2000).

Most research on the determinants of youth violence has focused exclusively on risk factors, with little attention to protective factors that reduce the probability of violent behaviour (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). This

is an important area for future research, as recent research suggests that interactions between risk and protective factors cumulatively determine youths' outcomes, including the perpetration of violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Huang et al., 2001). The limited research on protective factors demonstrates that the absence of internalising symptoms, prosocial attitudes, positive peer relationships, good caregiver-child relations and communication, attendance at religious services, good family management practices and high bonding to school, all reduce the risk of antisocial behaviour and violent behaviour (Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2001; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Loeber et al., 1998). However, research in this area can be criticised on a number of grounds. Most importantly, there is fundamental disagreement on what constitutes a 'protective factor' among scholars in this field (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). With few exceptions, research incorporating protective factors conceptualises risk and protection as opposite extremes along an undifferentiated continuum. Recent research on the mechanisms and processes that protect youths from engaging in violent behaviour suggest that it is simplistic to view protective factors as the opposite of risk factors (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). In spite of this, the tendency to view matters this way prevails. Future studies need to focus on investigating the interactions between risk and protective processes – how individual child, family and other environmental factors interact to produce or contribute to positive outcomes (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000).

No single risk factor, pathway or combination can predict youth involvement in violence with absolute accuracy (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). However, serious, chronic and violent antisocial behaviour is more likely to develop when multiple risk factors are continuously present across a number of social contexts, and across development, from early and middle childhood to adolescence and adulthood, particularly in the absence of protective factors.

### ***Developmental pathways towards antisocial behaviour***

It is not sufficient to understand the risk and protective factors for youth violence: their relative influence across development needs to be considered. The age of onset and the temporal or sequential ordering of behaviours are considered important aspects of developmental pathways to antisocial behaviour (Loeber et al., 1993). Behavioural outcomes are the result of cumulative, interacting risk and protective influences and experiences over time and are not due to the additive effect of distinct, static and independent risk and protective factors. Behavioural outcomes are best understood as the

product of interactions between risk and protective factors, which build on each other over time, forming a 'chain' of linkages – risk or protective factors are unlikely to be determinative in and of themselves. The chronologically sequential and cumulative structure of risk and protective factors, and the linkages between them, can be depicted in developmental pathways leading to particular behavioural outcomes.

In a chronological sense, it appears that antisocial behaviour develops in an orderly and predictable fashion, with less serious behavioural problems preceding moderately serious antisocial behaviours, which in turn precede very serious antisocial behaviours (Elliott, 1994; Loeber et al., 1993; Loeber et al., 1998). Over time, antisocial behaviour in general, and violent behaviour in particular, tend to become increasingly diverse and serious (Elliott, 1994). Loeber et al. (1993) propose three developmental pathways in antisocial behaviour from childhood to adolescence:

- 1) An early authority conflict pathway, consisting of stubborn behaviour, followed by defiance and authority avoidance
- 2) A covert pathway, consisting of minor covert behaviours (for example lying, shoplifting), followed by property damage, followed by moderately serious antisocial behaviours, followed by serious antisocial behaviour
- 3) An overt pathway, consisting of aggression, followed by physical fighting, and finally, more serious and varied forms of violence (see Figure 3.2 for a presentation of component behaviours).

Empirical research has shown that violent behaviours tend to develop in the hypothesised order, and that entry into antisocial behaviour tends to occur in the earlier rather than later stages of the developmental pathway (Elliott, 1994; Loeber et al., 1993; Loeber et al., 1998). The rate of violent offending is often highest in those who display behaviours characteristic of both overt and covert pathways and of all three pathways (Loeber et al., 1993).

Different developmental trajectories of conduct problems seem to lead to different types of delinquency (Nagin & Tremblay, 1999). Specifically, in a longitudinal study, a chronic oppositional trajectory (holding physical aggression and hyperactivity constant) predicted covert delinquency (theft), while chronic physical aggression (with oppositional behaviour and hyperactivity held constant) predicted serious, overt delinquency (physical violence in adolescence) (Nagin & Tremblay, 1999).

Moffitt (1993) argues that for many adolescents, antisocial behaviour is temporary and situational, while for others, it is relatively stable and persistent over time and across different contexts. Moffitt (1993) proposes two qualitatively

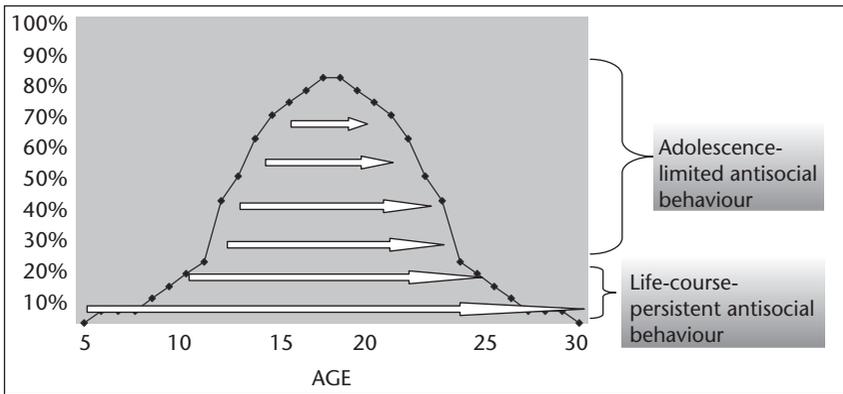
EARLY CHILDHOOD	MIDDLE CHILDHOOD	ADOLESCENCE AND ADULTHOOD
<b>Authority conflict pathway</b>		
<i>Stubbornness</i> Obstinate, wilful behaviour	→ <i>Defiance</i> Doing things in own way Refusing to do things Disobedience	→ <i>Authority avoidance</i> Staying out late Truancing Running away
<b>Covert pathway</b>		
<i>Minor covert behaviour</i> Lying Shoplifting	→ <i>Property damage</i> Firesetting Property damage	→ <i>Moderately serious antisocial behaviour</i> Joyriding Pickpocketing Stealing from a car Illegal cheques/credit cards
		→ <i>Serious antisocial behaviour</i> Stealing a car Selling drugs Breaking and entering
<b>Overt pathway</b>		
<i>Aggression</i> Annoying others Bullying	→ <i>Fighting</i> Physical fighting Gang fighting	→ <i>Violence</i> Attacking someone Strong arming Forced sex

**Figure 3.2: Developmental pathways to antisocial behaviour\***

\* Based on Loeber et al. (1993)

different categories of antisocial behaviour on the basis of the timing and duration of antisocial behaviour: ‘life-course-persistent’ antisocial behaviour (the distinct minority) and ‘adolescent-limited’ antisocial behaviour (the majority). This developmental theory attempts to account for the discontinuity in adolescent-limited antisocial behaviour and the continuity of antisocial behaviour for the more serious and chronic life-course-persistent group. It also supports the frequent assertion that the vast majority of serious and violent offences can be accounted for by a small number of (persistent) offenders.

The onset of serious, violent offending rarely occurs before age 12, but the rate of serious and violent offending increases dramatically up to age 16 and has been shown to double between ages 13 and 14 (Elliott, 1994). This trend has also been demonstrated in South African crime data (Masuku, 2002). Large-scale international datasets indicate that most violent young offenders initiate violence between ages 14 and 17 (with antisocial behaviour peaking at age 17) and decline sharply between the ages of 21 and 27 years (Elliott, 1994; Moffitt, 1993). Relatively few individuals display antisocial behaviour before adolescence, in early childhood, and beyond adolescence, in middle and late adulthood (see Figure 3.3). Thus, antisocial behaviour is temporally unstable for the majority of individuals, but for a small group of individuals, antisocial behaviour is remarkably stable over time, as a result of continuity



**Figure 3.3: Life-course and adolescent-limited antisocial behaviour\***

\* Based on Moffitt (1993)

in individual and contextual risk factors (Moffitt, 1993). In the presence of the necessary predisposing individual and contextual risk factors, an antisocial interactional (specifically aggressive) style is likely to persist once it has developed (Huesmann, Eron & Lefkowitz, 1984). Although life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour is characterised by stability, the behavioural manifestation or expression of this disposition varies as social opportunities change at different points during development (Moffitt, 1993). This lends support to Loeber et al. (1993) and Elliott's (1994) assertion that expressions of antisocial behaviour may vary and/or diversify over time.

Moffitt (1993) hypothesises that child neuropsychological deficits (sometimes due to maternal drug use, poor prenatal nutrition, etc.), particularly impaired verbal and executive functioning (affecting receptive listening and reading, problem-solving, expressive speech and writing, memory), may be associated with the temperamental traits, behavioural development (notably, inattention and impulsivity) and cognitive abilities underlying the more chronic forms of antisocial behaviour. These temperamental characteristics increase the difficulty of child-rearing, which may account for the frequent co-occurrence of neural maldevelopment and unsupportive caregiving (Moffitt, 1993). Furthermore, children with neuropsychological deficits are disproportionately found in families that support the development and maintenance of pathological behaviours, due to the co-occurrence of the sources of neural maldevelopment (malnutrition, drug use, etc.) and family disadvantage and deviance (Moffitt, 1993). Thus, it is the continuity in the interaction between the child's neural maldevelopment

(and its effects on child temperament, behaviour and cognition) and contextual risk factors in the child's family and broader environment that supports the maintenance of chronic antisocial behaviour.

The interaction between neuropsychological processes and contextual risk factors is complex. A recent longitudinal study found that Time 2 effortful control (a dimension of self-regulation) was predicted by parenting variables (limit-setting, responsiveness to negative affect and support for autonomy). In addition, effortful control was accounted for by contextual risk factors such as poverty, ethnic minority status, household density, single parenting status, number of household moves in the child's life, parental history of depression and other mental health problems, parental history of legal problems and negative life events (Lengua, Honorado & Bush, 2007). Time 1 effortful control, contextual risk and parenting had a direct effect on the development of social competence, while contextual risk had an indirect effect on social competence through parenting at Time 2 (Lengua et al., 2007). These findings emphasise the importance of psychosocial, as well as biological influences, in neuropsychological functioning. Cicchetti's (2002) work supports these results. He stresses the bi-directional effects of genetic, neurobiological and behavioural systems and their complex reciprocal interactions with cognitive, emotional, social and representational domains in shaping developmental outcomes. In his view, negative as well as positive developmental outcomes are the product of self-regulated cognitive activity. Not only do biological factors influence psychological processes, but social and psychological experiences influence brain activity, modifying gene expression and brain structure and functioning (Cicchetti, 2002).

Children with pre-existing vulnerabilities who do not continuously and cumulatively interact with criminogenic social environments are less likely to develop the more persistent forms of antisocial behaviour (Moffitt, 1993). On the other hand, those children whose lives are characterised by continuous interactions between individual risk factors and contextual or environmental risk factors have the highest probability of displaying life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour. It is this minority of youths who are responsible for the most serious and violent offences and who should be targeted by the most comprehensive and intensive interventions.

Moffitt's more recent work (as cited in Rutter et al., 2006) demonstrates that overall, the key principles of her developmental taxonomy continue to be supported. However, some unexpected findings have emerged. Firstly, this work shows that a small proportion of youths identified as demonstrating

high levels of disruptive behaviour in childhood do not go on to engage in antisocial behaviour and show high levels of adjustment in adulthood. Secondly, another sub-group of youths with significant early-onset conduct problems later develop emotional and behavioural difficulties that are quite different from antisocial behaviour, characterised by avoidance, notably, social isolation, avoidance of close relationships, depression and anxiety (cited in Rutter et al., 2006). These findings suggest that other mechanisms and processes, which as yet have not been identified, may influence the form of poor outcome (avoidant or antisocial) associated with early-onset conduct problems.

Patterson, Debaryshe and Ramsey (1997) follow a social learning approach to the development of antisocial behaviour. They argue that this type of behaviour develops in a predictable sequence from early childhood to adolescence (Patterson et al., 1997). Children who are reared in family environments characterised by unsupportive parenting, including authoritarian parenting, low levels of positive reinforcement, problem-solving, involvement, monitoring and cognitive stimulation, are identified as at high risk for the development of antisocial behaviour by Patterson et al. (1997). Contextual factors such as poverty, unemployment or domestic conflict/violence place children at further risk through their effect on caregivers (Patterson et al., 1997). Specifically, when caregivers who have poor parenting skills, or who are antisocial themselves, are exposed to stressors such as these, significant disruptions in family management practices occur. These practices lead to coercive interactions between the child and the caregiver (that will not be accompanied by prosocial skills development), which increases the likelihood that children are rejected by prosocial peer groups and experience academic failure when they reach school. These failures are associated with an increased likelihood of depression and membership of a deviant peer group, which reinforces continued antisocial behaviour (Patterson et al., 1997).

Another influential developmental theory of violent behaviour is the Social Development Model (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). Broadly speaking, it aims to identify general factors and processes that explain the development of both normatively disapproved (antisocial), as well as approved (prosocial) behaviours (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). At its most fundamental level, the Social Development Model assumes that the same principles, factors and processes that influence the development of one behaviour can predict other behaviours in a particular behavioural spectrum (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). The utility of the Social Development Model has been demonstrated in its ability to predict a number of adolescent risk behaviours, including

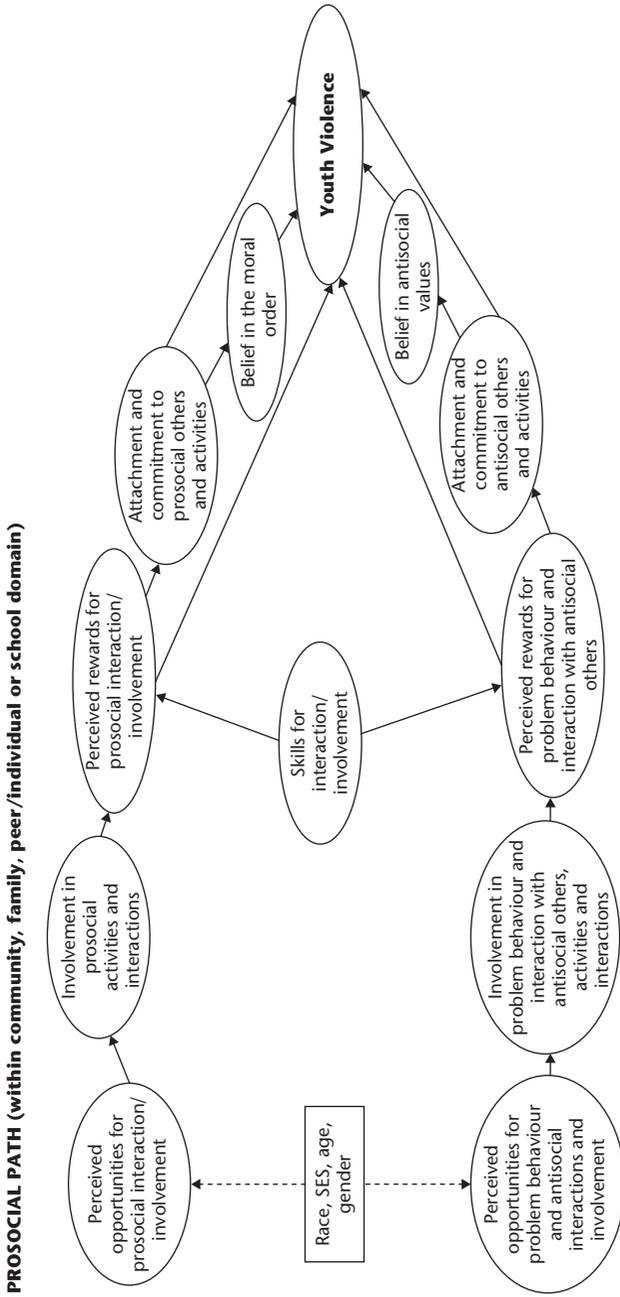
delinquency, violence and substance abuse. For example, school bonding and academic achievement, as well as norms against substance abuse (as constructs of the Social Development Model), have been shown to predict lower rates of involvement in serious offending and substance abuse among aggressive boys whereas skills for prosocial involvement have been identified as inhibiting offending behaviour (O'Donnell & Hawkins, 1995). The Social Development Model has also been useful in guiding the development of effective interventions for problem youths (Fleming, Catalano, Oxford, & Harachi, 2002; Huang et al., 2001).

The Social Development Model takes an integrated approach to explaining behavioural outcomes in children and adolescents, acknowledging that biological, psychological and social factors at multiple levels in different social domains influence the development of pro- and antisocial behaviours (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). It uses the role of individuals and institutions at community, family, school and peer-individual levels; norms and values; socialisation and social bonding to explain positive and negative child and adolescent outcomes. In this respect, the Social Development Model builds on ecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which states that development is the product of continuous and increasingly complex interactions between the individual and the resources and constraints social environment.

The Social Development Model incorporates a developmental perspective, taking into account that past behaviours affect future attitudes and behaviours and that patterned behaviour development is the product of reciprocal social interactions over time (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). In the Social Development Model, developmental periods are specified according to changes in social environments rather than changes in cognitive or moral development and correspond with transitions from preschool, to primary school and high school (early childhood, middle childhood and adolescence) (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). The model additionally asserts that different socialising influences gain salience at different periods of development (for example, family during early and middle childhood and peers in adolescence) and that different expressions or patterns of risk behaviour may appear at different developmental stages (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996).

The Social Development Model aims to predict antisocial and prosocial behaviours through specification of causal processes in childhood and adolescence (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). These pathways are outlined in Figure 3.4.

The Social Development Model states that children and adolescents learn pro- and antisocial behaviours from socialising agents within a range of



**Figure 3.4: Social Development Model\***

\* Based on Catalano & Hawkins, 1996

developmental contexts such as the family, school and community. According to this model, socialisation follows the same processes of learning whether it results in prosocial or antisocial behaviour (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). Two developmental pathways are specified in the model – one path in the model specifies the processes that promote antisocial behaviour and the other specifies the processes that encourage prosocial behaviour (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). The developmental processes leading to either prosocial or antisocial behavioural outcomes are similar – each path includes two dimensions that underlie the four constructs described below: participation or involvement in activities and social interaction with others (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996).

It is argued that youths are socialised through developmental processes involving four key endogenous constructs:

- 1) Opportunities for involvement in activities and interactions with others
- 2) The degree or intensity of involvement and interaction
- 3) The skills to participate in the activities and interactions
- 4) The reinforcement received from performing the activities and interactions (Herrenkohl et al., 2001).

## **Microsystemic risk factors**

The everyday contexts of child development are the most powerful in terms of socialising children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is in the interactions between what children bring and what these socialising environments offer, that children learn to be either violent or prosocial.

### ***The family***

The family is one of the most powerful socialising environments for children, an effect that continues through adolescence (Bronfenbrenner et al., 1984). Many risk factors for youth violence identified in the literature are located in the family, and include:

- Family conflict and violence
- Caregiver criminality
- Antisocial siblings
- Large family size
- Low maternal education
- Low maternal age
- Poor family management practices

- Harsh and/or inconsistent disciplinary practices
- Poor monitoring and supervision of child activities
- Permissive or lax parenting
- Low family bonding (Hawkins et al., 1998; Loeber et al., 1998; Patterson et al., 1997).

Using randomly selected participants and structural equation modelling to analyse results, Weiss, Dodge, Bates and Pettit's (1992) findings indicate that the effect of harsh discipline on children's aggression is partially mediated by maladaptive social information processing patterns that develop as a result of exposure to harsh disciplinary practices. Social cognitions play an important role in facilitating or inhibiting aggressive behaviour – children who tend to behave aggressively are more likely to have hostile attributes (Schwartz et al., 1998).

Modelling is a central learning process (Crowell, Evans & O'Donnell, 1987; Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Herrenkohl et al., 2001; Patterson et al., 1997; Rutter et al., 1998). Exposure to antisocial norms that present violence as an acceptable means of problem-solving normalises the occurrence and use of violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2000). Violence in the family of origin has been shown to predict physical and psychological abuse in later intimate partner relationships (Cast, Schweingruber & Berns, 2006; Kwong, Bartholomew, Henderson & Trinke, 2003; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Skuja & Halford, 2004) and against one's own children (Dietz, 2000; Ferrari, 2002; Straus & Kaufman-Kantor, 1994). International studies have indicated that harsh and/or inconsistent disciplinary practices, including severe physical punishment and abuse, are key factors in the development of antisocial, including violent behaviour (Crowell et al., 1987; Loeber et al., 1998; Patterson et al., 1997). In South Africa, a recent national survey found that although the majority of South African parents agree that corporal punishment is not a desirable approach to discipline, 57% of parents smack and 33% beat their children. These rates are lower than are found in many other parts of the world (Dawes, Kafaar, De Sas Kropiwnicki, Pather & Richter, 2000), but are still unacceptably high.

Children whose parents are warm and affectionate, responsive to their child's temperament and who teach them empathy for the wronged person, facilitate the development of guilt, whereas the development of guilt is inhibited in children whose parents neglect them or use physically abusive or punitive disciplinary practices (Hoffman, 1998; Kochanska, Gross, Lin & Nichols, 2002; Walter & Burnaford, 2006).

Caregiver and sibling criminality also provide children with direct role-modelling of deviant behaviour (that may include violence) and may furthermore give children access to social environments (such as friends of the caregiver or sibling) that similarly model and/or reward deviant behaviour. In this regard, it is concerning to note that 10.5% of young people surveyed in the National Youth Victimization Survey reported that their parents had engaged in behaviours that could get them into trouble with the law (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

The relationship between large family size, low maternal education, low maternal age and youth violence is likely to be one of poor family management practices, harsh or inconsistent disciplinary practices and poor monitoring and supervision of child activities. Large family size makes it more challenging to monitor children and low maternal education and age are related to increased stress in parenting and less knowledge of effective child-rearing practices (Robin & Spires, 1989; Wagner, Schubert & Schubert, 1985). Emotional abuse has also been implicated in the aetiology of violent behaviour (Crowell et al., 1987).

Family poverty also influences child development in many ways. Poor women are less likely to access or to receive good perinatal care, and children's well-being is thus compromised from the beginning – and is accompanied by less access to resources that may address these problems. Poor children are also more likely to be exposed to lead (for instance, in paint used in houses and on toys, which has negative effects on brain development); poor mothers are less likely to stimulate their children at home (partly because of their own poor education and perhaps because they may return to work early); poor children also tend to be less ready to go to school, and their educators tend to have lower expectations of them (McLoyd, 1998). There is also evidence that poverty is more associated with continuity of violence than with its onset: once involved in a violent lifestyle, socio-economically deprived young people are less able to access prosocial opportunities (Elliott, 1994). Many South African families are living in conditions of deep poverty: a study based on the 1999 October Household Survey found that 50% of South African households had an income lower than R2 000 per month, and another 30% earned between R2 000 and R5 000 (Amoateng, Richter, Makiwane & Rama, 2004). One sign of hope is that interventions to reduce poverty may also reduce violence. A micro-finance programme (combined with a gender and HIV training curriculum) reduced the experience of intimate partner violence in programme participants by 55% over the two years of the study (Pronyk et al., 2006).

### ***The school***

Schools are important arenas for child socialisation and tend to become more important as children move into adolescence (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1997). Children with poor achievement at school, who drop out, who are not committed to school, who have low educational aspirations, and who change schools often, are more likely to engage in violent behaviour (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990; Sampson & Laub, 1997). Each of these is likely to reflect poor attachment to school. Conversely, attachment to school protects against youth violence (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004). The child's valuing of education is likely to be influenced by parental valuing of education, but will also be affected by characteristics of schools themselves. Schools which successfully promote academic competence are those that have a clear mission and high-quality instruction and that monitor students' progress and emphasise staff development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). These characteristics speak to a school's ability to model prosocial behaviour, to reward it, and to assist with the development of self-efficacy for prosocial behaviours and of standards that include prosocial norms. Many South African schools, however, are chaotic and challenging environments which do not achieve these standards: teaching time is crowded out by the many other functions educators are required to perform, with educators spending on average only 46% of school time on teaching (Chisholm, 2004). Other research shows that the majority of students fail at most levels of the system and that school management is often not capable of fulfilling assigned functions (Hoadley, 2007). One indicator of this is the very high dropout rate in South African schools – in 2000, nearly 70% of respondents in a survey had not completed high school (Department of Education, 2003). Not only is this an indicator of school quality or of concern for children's futures, but it raises the issue of what it is that these school dropouts find to occupy their time. Leisure boredom is a substantial contributor to risk behaviours (including violence) among young people (Wegner, Flisher, Muller & Lombard, 2006).

An additional concern about South African schools is that they often directly model violence for learners. Despite the fact that it is illegal, many schools still use corporal punishment. Of the respondents in the National Youth Victimisation Survey, 51.4% reported having been caned or spanked at school (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). In addition, 16.8% of young people indicated that they fear travelling to school and 20.9% had been threatened or hurt while at school (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

### ***The peer group***

Peers are another key socialising influence, especially in adolescence (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996; Sampson & Laub, 1997). Affiliation with a delinquent peer group or siblings, and particularly gang membership, consistently predict youth violence, while affiliation with peers who disapprove of delinquency lowers its likelihood (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004; Hawkins et al., 2000). Many delinquent acts are committed in the context of seeking peer approval, suggesting that peer groups play similar socialisation roles as do families and schools. That is, they too model and reward violent behaviour, enable children to develop self-efficacy for violent acts and set standards that approve violence.

Complementing research informed by the Social Development Model (Hawkins et al., 2000) is an emerging body of work on peer contagion. This is a phenomenon most researched in adolescence, but also observed in early and middle childhood. Participation in everyday activities with deviant peers is observed to raise the probability of antisocial behaviour in youngsters who are developing deviant patterns (but not in those who have not shown such tendencies). Deviant behaviour escalates as moderately deviant youngsters observe, begin to imitate and are reinforced by more deviant peers (Dishion & Dodge, 2005).

This learning is also evident when children with externalising tendencies are aggregated together for administrative purposes, such as special schools and delinquency prevention programmes. The phenomenon known as 'delinquency training' alerts us to the need to be cautious of aggregating groups of antisocial youth in prevention programmes (Gifford-Smith, Dodge, Dishion & McCord, 2005; Van Lier, Vitaro & Eisner, 2007).

Although there is no data that can indicate how many South African youths are affiliated with delinquent peer groups, it is concerning that in the National Youth Victimisation Survey, those young people who indicated that they had been threatened or hurt at school, typically indicated that the perpetrators were either other learners or other young people from outside the school (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). Worryingly, the number of gangs children might be exposed to is large: in Cape Town at the end of the 1990s, for instance, the number of gangs was estimated at 130, with approximately 100 000 gang members (Standing, 2005) – this in what is, according to Census 2001, a city of 2.9 million people.

### ***After-school and leisure activities***

Children whose time is occupied with prosocial activities, such as homework, tutoring, sports and cultural or artistic endeavours, are far less likely to engage in substance abuse or delinquency (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). However, a study in Cape Town finds that South African high school learners have high levels of leisure boredom, suggesting that children are either bored by the activities to which they do have access, or that they do not have access to a sufficient range of activities (Wegner et al., 2006). Also in Cape Town, in a study exploring children's views of gang activity, lack of access to after-school activities was a risk factor given much emphasis by children describing the attractiveness of gangs (Ward, 2006).

A further word of caution is warranted in regard to unstructured programmes that seek to engage youths in positive activities and draw them off the street. In their review of these prevention programmes, Van Lier et al. (2007) point to the risks of antisocial peer contagion in such settings. They 'are at high risk of attracting high risk children and adolescents and then amplify behaviour tendencies through peer contagion processes during the intervention' (p. 285). To reduce the risk of iatrogenic programme effects, structured activities, avoidance of aggregation of at-risk and deviant participants, and control over peer dynamics that reinforce antisocial behaviour should be provided.

### **Mesosystemic risk factors**

The mesosystem refers to interactions between microsystems. For instance, what happens at home may well affect how a child performs at school: a child who is witnessing violence between his/her parents might not be able to concentrate well and may therefore perform poorly in his/her schoolwork. A sympathetic educator who notices this may be able to provide necessary support to the child. If this does not occur, s/he may enter a downward spiral of increasingly poor work at school. Risk in one system therefore affects risk in another, while protective factors in one system may compensate for risk in another. However, the more risks young people face, the less likely they are to experience protection: children with unsupportive home environments are also likely to have high-risk school and peer environments (Herrenkohl et al., 2003).

### **Exosystemic risk factors**

The exosystem consists of slightly more remote contexts that affect the more intimate contexts of school, home and peer group. Chief among these are

the neighbourhood (not the physical, geographical neighbourhood as much as the social context created by how people act as neighbours to each other) and the media.

### ***Neighbourhoods***

Socially disorganised communities are unable to realise common prosocial values among their residents and so are unable to maintain effective social controls (Sampson, 1992). In practice, this means that even if children's own homes encourage prosocial norms, they encounter different standards of behaviour in different neighbourhood venues – the values of their own home are less likely to be upheld in their school, in their friends' homes and at the local park. Thus children are not given multiple opportunities from different socialising agents to develop one consistent set of prosocial standards by which to evaluate their behaviour, nor are they consistently exposed to similar models of prosocial behaviour (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994).

Furthermore, the longer a child spends in a neighbourhood, the more likely s/he is to be influenced by it (Gephart, 1997). The National Youth Victimization Survey found that 63.3% of the respondents had lived in their current neighbourhood for more than 10 years (Leoschut & Burton, 2006), suggesting that these young people have had plenty of time to be socialised by neighbourhood norms, in addition to norms held by their families, schools or other social contexts.

Social disorganisation also affects parenting, by reducing the amount of social support parents may receive from neighbours. This is particularly important for poorer families, who may be less able to access social support outside the neighbourhood. Lower social support for parents has consistently been found to be associated with child maltreatment (Coulton, Korbin & Su, 1999; Coulton, Korbin, Su & Chow, 1995; Sampson, 1992).

Schools, too, are affected by social disorganisation. Communities with lower social organisation are likely to have higher rates of suspension from school (Hellman & Beaton, 1986) and higher rates of drop out (Simcha-Fagan & Schwartz, 1986).

No direct assessments of social disorganisation in neighbourhoods across South Africa could be identified. However, neighbourhoods that are characterised by both poverty and high crime rates (particularly drug sales) are likely to be socially disorganised (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994). Judging from the high proportion of respondents to the National Youth Victimization Survey who reported drug-selling in their neighbourhoods, many children live in such neighbourhoods: 21% of respondents said they personally knew

people in their neighbourhoods who sell drugs and 28% reported knowing people who buy drugs (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Both neighbourhood poverty and neighbourhood affluence have been shown to be associated with child well-being. This refers to the average poverty or affluence of the neighbourhood as a whole, which has an effect separate from the poverty or affluence of individual families. Neighbourhood affluence has been shown to be related to young children's IQ scores (Chase-Lansdale, Gordon, Brooks-Gunn & Klebanov, 1997) and to boys' likelihood of completing high school (Ensminger, Lamkin & Jacobson, 1996), while neighbourhood disadvantage has been associated with:

- Teen parenting (South & Baumer, 2000)
- Delinquency (Stouthamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington & Wikström, 2002)
- More restrictive parenting practices (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2003)
- Low birthweight (O'Campo, Xue, Wang & Caughy, 1997)
- Child maltreatment (Coulton et al., 1999).

The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood thus affects children's survival, protection and development.

A possible explanation for these effects of the neighbourhood is that affluent neighbours are likely to have professional and managerial occupations, and so provide role models of work habits and evidence of the rewards of completing school. Concentrated affluence (together with residential stability) seems to be related to exchanges between parents that promote effective child management (by helping each other manage the other's children and to solve child-rearing problems), while concentrated disadvantage is associated with low expectations for shared child control (Sampson, Morenoff & Earls, 1999).

### ***Mass media***

Another prominent socialising influence for young people is the mass media. Evidence from around the world suggests that where children are exposed to violent images on television and where they live in an environment that does not have strong anti-violence norms, they are likely to become more aggressive (Buvinic & Morrison, 2000; Huesmann & Miller, 1994; Sampson, 1991). According to Census 2001, 53.8% of South African households have a television set, a figure that will underestimate actual access to television. A study of South African children's exposure to films and parental monitoring

of the content (Brookes, 2004) found that families have greatest exposure to films on public access television, followed by DVD and video and finally the cinema. Parents were concerned about exposure to violence, sex and bad language via the media and reported that they struggled to inculcate in their children a value system in the face of what their children were exposed to in the media. Children (aged 6–12 years) echoed this in their reports that films (particularly frightening ones) could have direct emotional effects on them for long periods. Even though most parents in this small study indicated that they do control what their children watch, particularly younger children, children indicated that they find ways of watching inappropriate material without their parents' knowledge. Clearly, the media has an effect on South African children and where its content is violent, may place them at risk for developing aggressive behaviours (see Chapter 10).

### **Macrosystemic risk factors**

The contexts of the microsystem, the mesosystem and the exosystem are visible everyday arenas in which children live and interact with others. The macrosystem, however, is less tangible but nonetheless influential. The socio-economic aspects, attitudes and ideologies of a culture exert their influence on all its contexts.

#### ***Socio-economic factors***

Both poverty itself and the perceived gap between rich and poor seem to play a role in rates of violence (see Chapter 2). As mentioned earlier, children who are raised in poor families and in neighbourhoods where the majority of families are poor are more likely to engage in violence (Hawkins et al., 2000). Neighbourhood poverty is often associated with community social disorganisation and poor families have less opportunity to move to better neighbourhoods (Sampson & Lauritsen, 1994; Sampson, 1991; Sampson, 1993). Poverty at family and neighbourhood level, however, is more likely in a country where poverty is widespread. It is broad socio-economic factors, such as opportunities for employment, that influence whether a family is likely to be poor or not. Unemployment among 15–24-year-olds in South Africa had been falling steadily since 2003, but even at its most recent lowest point of 46.9%, which it had reached by September 2007, it remains unacceptably high (Netshitenzhe, 2008). Latest figures from the Presidency indicate that it was over 50% by June 2010 (Manuel, 2010).

The perceived gap between rich and poor may also play a role in violent behaviour. There is often (but not always) a correlation between the Gini coefficient (a measure of income inequality in a country) and violent crime (Sampson, 1991). One study found that income inequality and level, together with the per cent of the male population aged 15–29 and unemployment rates (especially the unemployment of young men), influenced non-state violence (Wood, 2005). Although few studies address how individuals perceive the gap between rich and poor, it may well be that perceptions of this gap are used to justify violence, and so reduce any internalised moral sanctions (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Cprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). For instance, in a study investigating why young people join gangs in Cape Town, young people uniformly reported that gangsterism gave access to goods such as brand-name clothing that were perceived to be central to full participation in society (Ward, 2006). One justification for crime (often violent), therefore, was to obtain goods that otherwise only the rich could afford. Relative deprivation may also sometimes be used as a reason for violent crime when basic necessities, rather than luxury goods, are sought.

Consequences of violent actions are therefore minimised through emphasising the perpetrator gains and this gain is justified in terms of what is essential for either physical or social survival. This disengages moral judgement and makes violent behaviour more possible (Bandura et al., 1996).

### ***Attitudes and ideologies of the culture***

While government policy (for instance, as exemplified in the Constitution) is manifestly anti-violence, much of the rhetoric of leaders appears to have a pro-violence tone. A case in point is the recent call by Zizi Kodwa, the ANC Youth League spokesperson, for ‘dogs [political opponents] to be hit very hard until their owners and handlers come out into the open’ (Majova, 2006). Ongoing political violence (Govender & Killian, 2001) suggests that violence is frequently used by political factions to resolve disputes. Thus there is apparently a rhetoric, at least within political circles, which favours violence as a problem-solving technique. This is likely to add to pro-violence social norms and weaken anti-violence messages from leaders. These conditions imply a standard that violence is a legitimate behaviour.

### **Chronosystemic risk factors**

Finally, it should be acknowledged that violence among young people is not a new phenomenon in South African history. The apartheid state used

young people to maintain its oppressive policies and other young people were actively and integrally involved in the liberation struggle against apartheid (including in its violent aspects) both as perpetrators and as victims (Hamber, 1999; Seekings, 1996). Clearly, we have a long history of socially sanctioned use of violence to solve problems (Hamber, 1999). Such legitimisation of violence provides the role models as well as an implicit standard that the use of violence is acceptable and, perhaps even more, necessary and laudable. In the absence of clear anti-violence standards and norms, it is almost inevitable that children learn violent behaviours.

### **Protective factors**

Protective factors are defined as those that buffer young people from the detrimental effects of adversity in their internal and external environments and promote resilience. Resilience can be defined as having persistent positive outcomes in the face of severe stressors (Rutter, 2003; 2006).

Few studies have investigated factors and processes that protect vulnerable or at-risk young people from engaging in antisocial, including violent behaviour. This is an important area for future research, as existing research suggests that as the risk factors for violence increase, a proportionate number and intensity of protective factors are needed to effectively reduce the risk of youth perpetration of violence (Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Herrenkohl et al., 2000; Sameroff & Seifer, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1989). Children whose attitudes are prosocial are less likely to behave violently (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004). The limited research on protective factors indicates that the presence of childhood internalising symptoms (nervousness, withdrawal, worrying and anxiety) protects children from developing externalising symptoms, as do prosocial attitudes, good caregiver-child relations and communication, good family management practices and high bonding to school (Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2003; Loeber et al., 1998). Similarly, engagement with religious practices – especially those that are practised privately, such as private prayer and Scripture reading – are consistently related to lower deviance generally (Koenig, 2001; Matthews et al., 1998; Pearce, Jones, Schwab-Stone & Ruchkin, 2003). While the mechanisms by which religious involvement serves as protection are not well understood, at least two are likely to be exposure to norms that discourage deviance and the influence of a peer group that models prosocial attitudes and behaviours (Matthews et al., 1998). Although the 2001 Census indicates that 85% of South Africans report affiliation with a religion (the majority – 80% – with

Christianity), no data is available on either private religious practices or on youth involvement with religion. This makes it difficult to estimate the extent to which faith-based organisations might play a role in helping young people develop the kinds of spiritual practices that are protective. The large numbers of South Africans who do report a religious affiliation, however, suggests that many young people must be among them.

## CONCLUSION

Many South African children live in communities in which violence is endemic, frequently permeating multiple settings, including the home, school and neighbourhood (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). A vast literature suggests that the determinants of this violence operate at individual, family, school, peer, community and broader societal levels. As the number and intensity of risk factors increase, particularly in the absence of protective mechanisms, so does the likelihood of violent behaviour.

The majority of the research that links violence exposure and emotional and conduct problems is descriptive (for example Ensink, Robertson, Zissis & Leger, 1997; Govender & Killian, 2001; Magwaza, Killian, Peterson & Pillay, 1993; Martin, Theron, Ward & Distiller, 2006; Peltzer, 1999; Seedat, Van Nood, Vythilingum, Stein & Kaminer, 2000; Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga & Stein, 2004; Ward, Flisher, Zissis, Muller & Lombard, 2001; Zissis, Ensink & Robertson, 2000), and South African data on risk and protective factors is in its infancy (Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007). A great deal more conceptual and empirical work needs to be done in this area before we will properly understand how protective factors affect risk factors and outcomes in children and youths in our specific South African context.

The primary purpose of accurately identifying the determinants of youth violence, as well as naturally occurring protective factors, is to provide an evidence base for intervention. Although at present we have limited country-specific evidence on risk and protective factors, we cannot wait to build an evidence base before intervening. Too many young people are either falling victim to violence, or falling into the trap of becoming perpetrators, or both. We can go forward on the basis of what we know from international studies about risk and protective factors in this arena, building interventions, provided that we remain alert to the possibility that risk and protective factors may not apply quite as straightforwardly in our context as they might in another and test for this while we test the interventions.

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## SECTION TWO





# Chapter Four



## THE SITUATION OF THE YOUTH IN SOUTH AFRICA

*Saadhna Panday, Chitra Ranchod, Busani Ngcaweni & Soraya Seedat*

### INTRODUCTION

A complex interplay of factors motivates violent behaviour and the ecological approach (which contextualises individual behaviour within the families, communities and societies in which they are nested, has been used to provide an organising framework for understanding how these work together – in essence, for understanding why some young people behave violently and others do not (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002). While the thrust of most research into youth violence has been on proximal factors related to individual and familial behaviour (see Chapter 3 in this book), increasingly, the contexts in which young people grow up are being identified as the root causes of violence. For instance, the link between structural inequalities among neighbourhoods and youth involvement in violence and delinquency was first identified in the 1940s (Haynie, Silver & Teasdale, 2006; Shaw & McKay, 1942). By now, the relationship between rates of violence and inequality in a society is well established (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010).

South Africa's unique history has given a particular structure to these contexts. Apartheid policy concentrated poverty and many other risk factors in marginalised black communities, thereby establishing preconditions for the social diffusion of violence (Altbeker, 2007; Ramphela, 1991). Despite South Africa's transformation to democracy, the majority of young people live in communities that experience high rates of poverty, unemployment, substance abuse and weak social cohesion (Morrow, Panday & Richter, 2005). As a result, they are at increased risk for exposure to, and involvement in, violence.

## HISTORY AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

### Globalisation and youth development

Young people aged 15–24 years make up 1.2 billion (18%) of the six billion people in the world, 86% of whom reside in developing countries (United Nations, 2007). Africa's share of the world population of 15–34-year-olds is 34%, and this proportion is expected to increase until 2050 (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). Given the size of this population, young people's impact on societal development is likely to be profound.

The youth today are better educated than ever in human history, many more children are able to enter youth healthier than ever before and access to contraception means that family sizes are also diminishing. The spread of democratic governance offers many young people the opportunity to participate in civic and political life. And globalisation has inextricably altered the world in which they are growing up (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). For those with skills and resources, globalisation offers unprecedented opportunities. However, for a variety of reasons, including their poor preparedness and lack of local opportunities, the majority will not be able to benefit (Hansen, 2005).

### Transition to adulthood

The complexity associated with the transition into adulthood has brought into question the appropriateness of the traditional definition of 'youth'. Flanagan and Syversten (2005) write that 'youth' is an elastic category that begins with the biological, but ends with the cultural. The onset of puberty is a distinct biological marker associated with the end of childhood and the beginning of adolescence, but of itself is not enough to confer adult status. They note that taking on adult responsibilities requires economic, social and emotional maturity. These attributes develop over time through the processes of completing school, finding work, setting up a home and beginning family life. As has been the case throughout human history, the socio-cultural and economic context in which young people grow up determines both the timing and ability of youth to achieve these markers of adulthood.

Opportunities for participation in education have expanded dramatically the world over. Particularly in modern societies (although less so in sub-Saharan Africa), young people are spending longer periods of time in

education and delaying their entry into the labour market with the result that they remain financially and residentially dependent on families for longer than in the past. This in turn delays entry into stable relationships including marriage. The transition has been described as a 'yo-yo trajectory' that is fractured, differentiated, individualised and characterised by multiple transitions (Bradley & Devadason, 2008). What was once a short linking period between childhood and adulthood has now lengthened into what should be considered as a life stage in its own right (Arnett, 2004), and the notion of youth itself, together with efforts to facilitate youth development, has come to be fixated on problematising this period and on problem reduction approaches to young people rather than perceiving them as a group that offers many opportunities for national development. The notion of 'youth' is culturally constructed and unfortunately has tended to be informed by a deficit approach.

### **South African youth between 1976 and 1994**

Historically in South Africa young people have played a significant role in at least the recent history of the country. The school students' protest action against Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in June 1976, which was met by security force brutality, was a significant turning point in resistance to the apartheid state. From that time until the un-banning of political organisations in February 1990 and the commencement of negotiations towards a democratic South Africa shortly thereafter, young black people played an increasingly active role in the political struggle. Schools became sites of organisation and resistance. Many young people were exposed to the organised violence of the state and many (although the numbers are not known) participated in violent resistance to the apartheid regime (Dawes, 2008).

During this period, schools and universities were frequently closed and in the mid-1980s the slogan 'liberation before education' emerged from the ranks of young people involved in the resistance. This meant that, for a proportion at least, schooling came second to political action and there is little doubt that this period impacted negatively on the educational preparedness of the youth.

Young people in this period were viewed with considerable ambivalence. Whereas the collective political agency of the youth in South Africa was celebrated when they took to the streets during the Soweto uprisings of 1976, the same agency became the source of 'moral panic' among certain segments

of society that sounded alarm bells about the brutality of young people in rendering the country ungovernable (Everatt, 2000; Seekings, 1996). Their involvement in violent protest and other forms of direct action gave rise to their being viewed as a 'Lost Generation'. The label incorporated the concern that when the new democracy arrived, it would be undermined by generations of poorly educated citizens socialised into violence and criminality (Chikane, 1986). It is of note that this term was not applied to young whites who had to participate in the brutalities of South Africa's war in Angola as conscripts; the 'Lost Generation' was 'black and dangerous' (Seekings, 1996; Straker, 1989; Van Zyl Slabbert, Malan, Murais, Olivier & Riordan, 1994).

During the negotiations for a new political dispensation, youth involvement in political violence reached new heights as young people from the African National Congress and Inkatha battled for supremacy, particularly in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal – the latter frequently aided and abetted by state security forces (Dawes, 2008). Van Zyl Slabbert et al. (1994, p. 11) provide a summation of the stereotyping of black youth during this period:

*Given the nature of conflict in South Africa over the decades ... the concept of youth became part of prevailing political, racial, ethnic and socio-economic tension. The underlying structural conditions almost compelled analysts to think of youth in racial/ethnic terms ... 'black youth' were 'lost', 'rebellious', 'irresponsible'... Youth as a social category in the South African context invited hyperbole and rhetorical extravagance and thus led to stereotypes that obscured and confused.*

As the political struggle shifted towards negotiating a new democracy rather than fighting against the apartheid regime, political shifts in the early to mid-90s drew some young people away from 'street protests' to 'street corners' – from participation in the anti-apartheid struggle to deviance and delinquency. Time and energy that was previously consumed in the struggle suddenly became available for other pursuits, but there were too few apparent avenues to channel this energy constructively. The centre, some argue, was no longer holding and this led to the description of this generation (of black youth) as being 'lost' in the political quagmire and transition of the day.

However, the concept of a 'lost generation' did not go unchallenged. Although the consequences of denied and delayed education and economic opportunities had begun to show – a study of the Community Agency for Social Enquiry showed that 27% of young people were 'marginalised' due to failure to access education, employment and other developmental opportunities (Everatt & Orkin, 1993) – only around half a million had entered the criminal justice system. The study concluded that the concept

of a 'lost generation' was unfounded and that through targeted strategies, marginalisation could be turned around (Everatt & Orkin, 1993).

In addition it must be said that while the political violence of 1976–1994 took a particular form and raised the salience of youth exposure to violence in public imagination, the township environments constructed by the apartheid state had long been sites of exposure to interpersonal violence and gang activity for generations of young people (Seekings, 1996). Violence exposure, in essence, was therefore nothing new, and in the anti-apartheid struggle merely took a particular form.

### **A developmental approach towards youth development**

As South Africa moved towards democracy, the youth development sector began to appeal for a policy and institutional framework that would respond to the socio-economic needs of young people. And the youth sector had reason to be hopeful due to the central role it had played in the anti-apartheid struggle. Politics at the time was affirming of young people regarding them as 'the valued possession of the nation' (Mandela, 1994). The National Youth Development Forum replaced the concept of a 'lost generation' with a powerful idea emerging in the international literature – positive youth development (Pittman & Fleming, 1991; Pittman, O'Brian & Kimball, 1993). While the former stereotyped young people as out of control and in need of fixing, the latter sought to draw on the inherent strengths of the youth to promote development.

Despite the build-up of momentum in the youth sector in the early 1990s, youth development received scant attention in the post-apartheid policy frameworks. High expectations were compromised by disparate views in the youth sector on the institutional vision for youth development and by an over-confidence that the political activism of young people was enough to earn them special favour in the reconstruction phase of the country (Everatt, 2000).

In the early 1990s, three institutional mechanisms – a youth ministry, youth affairs attached to another ministry and a youth agency – were considered for youth development. A decision was taken to mainstream youth development across government departments to accommodate the cross-sectoral nature of youth development and the need for integrated development. In 1996, the National Youth Commission and the South African Youth Council were formed as two institutional mechanisms to champion and co-ordinate youth development at policy and civil society levels respectively, by the National Youth Commission Act No. 19 of 1996.

A third structure, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, was set up as a labour market intervention in 2001 to promote skills development, job creation and youth entrepreneurship.

In 1997, the National Youth Commission developed a comprehensive national youth policy that involved a consultative and inclusive process and promoted an integrated and positive approach towards youth development. While the United Nations defines youth as being between 15–24 years of age, the National Youth Policy chose a wider age definition (14–35 years) to provide developmental opportunities for young people who had lost out on beneficiation as a result of apartheid. Such a wide definition has posed problems in meeting the diverse developmental, social and economic needs of young people. This is particularly evident in the failure of various government departments to cohere definitions of children and the youth, producing significant overlap and gaps in service delivery.

But the 1997 National Youth Policy was never adopted by parliament. It was subsequently replaced by the National Youth Development Policy Framework 2002–2007, which adopted the youth development approach as its conceptual framework. This framework also emphasised a positive, strengths-based and inclusive approach to development, as opposed to a problem-fixing or risk-reduction approach (Hamilton, Hamilton & Pittman, 2004; Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003). It was based on the premise that all young people, whether at low or high risk, need basic services, support and opportunities to thrive. More recently, the National Youth Policy 2008–2013 has replaced previous policy documents. Its emphases are on education, economic participation, health and well-being, social cohesion and civic participation, the institution of a National Youth Service (as an opportunity to provide work experience and hence a route to long-term employment), and the development of youth workers, a category of social worker dedicated to the needs of young people. Whether this policy achieves success in improving the lives of South African young people remains to be seen.

### **Modest achievements of the youth sector**

Despite the introduction of a policy and institutional framework for youth development, the achievements of the sector have been modest. Youth development programmes remain on a small scale and have had minimal impact on the key indicators of youth development (Morrow et al., 2005;

Richter et al., 2005). A 2007 review of the National Youth Commission reported that performance was hampered by a narrow interpretation of its mandate to focus solely on policy development at the expense of implementation (Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of Chapter Nine and Associated Institutions, 2007). Although the co-ordination of youth development across many sectors is a global challenge (World Bank, 2006), integration of and accountability for youth development in South Africa was especially constrained by the failure of parliament to adopt the National Youth Policy in 2000. As a result, line function departments could not be held accountable for service delivery. Potgieter-Ggubule (2007) argues further that while young people were widely consulted during the drafting of the National Youth Policy, government departments were informed after the fact. As a result, buy-in to the policy, alignment with sector-specific policies and resourcing of the youth policy were compromised. The youth sector, like most government institutions, has also been constrained by chronically poor resource allocation, weak institutional capacity, regular staff turn-over and sometimes poor programme choices (Parliamentary Ad Hoc Committee on the Review of Chapter Nine and Associated Institutions, 2007). While creating space for the youth voice and growing youth leadership is central to youth development, over-reliance on young people with insufficient experience and skill to staff the commission limited the reach of its work.

## **KEY TRANSITIONS TO ADULTHOOD**

The identity and choices of young people are profoundly shaped by participation in key institutions – families, communities, schools and labour markets, and can exert informal social controls by signalling commitment to conventional life and prosocial values (Emmett, 2000). Families and peers are important during the early years of development, but as the youth grow older, institutions play a critical role in socialising them and in offering a sense of purpose and belonging (World Bank, 2006). But when opportunities for participation are absent, the power of institutions to inculcate self-control and self-regulation is compromised. Young people begin to gravitate towards alternative systems to develop their sense of identity, belonging and status, often with negative consequences. The result is social disintegration – a kind of social pathology (Emmett, 2000; Ramphele, 1991) to which violence is inextricably linked.

Four of the fundamental building blocks for successful transition to adulthood are: completing education, starting work, staying healthy and engaging in civic life. The inter-dependence of youth transitions means that

difficulties encountered in achieving some, particularly education and work, have consequences for others.

## **Education**

Education is central to the development of the youth as it prepares them for the world of work and for life. While the education system in South Africa is complex and its functionality determined by many factors, three determinants – *access, retention and achievement* – can be used to characterise its (non-) achievements thus far. There has been massive growth in access to the education system in the last three decades, particularly for African youth. But the system is unable to retain learners for long enough or engage them gainfully and meaningfully enough to improve their readiness sufficiently for the world of work or for life in general. In many respects, these failures can be traced back to the apartheid era, where inequalities created by the apartheid education system run deep and in fact continue to hobble the opportunities of young black South Africans. When education, as a fundamental building block and a valued entity in society, is absent or incomplete, too many young people encounter deficits in terms of who they are or what they can do.

### ***Access to education***

One of the greatest achievements since democracy is the massive expansion in access to education, especially in the enrolment of African youth. For example, school enrolment among African youth increased from 3.6 million in 1975 to 12 million by 1998 (Kraak, 2008). Since the 1990s South Africa has reached almost universal enrolment at primary school level and significant proportions of young people continue onto secondary schooling (Schindler, 2008).

Access to public higher education and to further education and training (FET; Grades 10–12 and vocational education beyond this level) has also expanded significantly. For example, enrolment in higher education more than doubled between 1988 (340 000) and 2004 (744 488) (Breier & Mabizela, 2008) and enrolment of African students, in particular, increased fourfold between 1988 (97 845) and 2002 (405 914) (Breier & Mabizela, 2008). FET enrolment also increased from a low of 76 435 students in 1991 to 406 147 students by 2002, 75% of whom were African students (Kraak, 2008).

The overall effect of increasing access to education has been a large and consistent decline in the number of young people without education for all race groups and, particularly, for the younger age cohort (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Highest levels of education of youths by age and race, 1995 and 2002: Percentages of population

Level of education	African		Coloured		Indian		White	
	1995	2002	1995	2002	1995	2002	1995	2002
<b>No education</b>								
18-24 years	4.2	1.5	2.2	0.9	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.1
25-35 years	8.0	4.8	4.1	3.8	0.8	0.4	0.2	-
<b>Primary</b>								
18-24 years	21.6	15.8	19.1	18.8	2.2	1.4	0.5	0.9
25-35 years	29.1	21.8	27.8	27.9	5.1	1.9	0.3	0.3
<b>Incomplete secondary</b>								
18-24 years	56.3	55.0	50.1	45.2	31.9	18.5	23.6	19.0
25-35 years	38.6	38.1	45.6	37.4	42.0	22.7	23.8	15.6
<b>Matric – Grade 12</b>								
18-24 years	15.7	23.9	25.5	31.1	57.3	69.1	59.0	61.0
25-35 years	17.2	25.3	17.1	22.7	39.5	53.6	44.4	44.5
<b>Tertiary</b>								
18-24 years	2.2	3.8	3.3	4.0	8.3	10.7	16.0	19.0
25-35 years	7.1	10.0	5.4	8.2	12.5	21.2	31.5	39.7

Source: Richter et al., 2005 data from Statistics South Africa OHS 1995 &amp; Labour Force Survey 2002

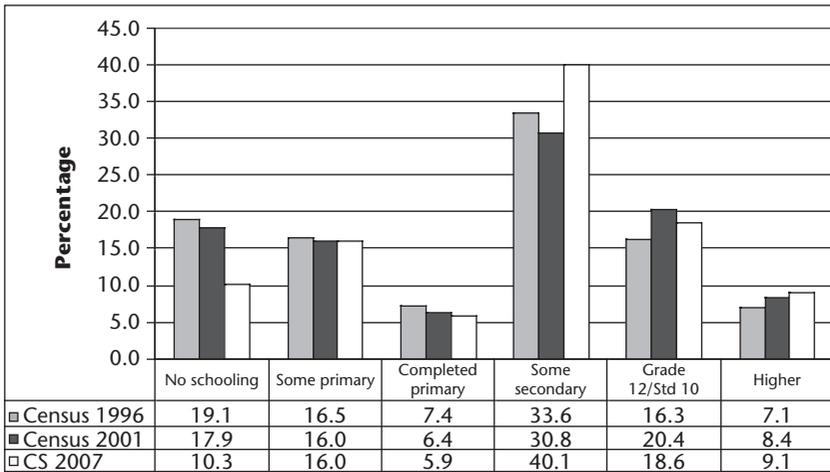
These trends are also reflected in the 2007 Community Household Survey; the percentage of the population aged 20 years and above with no schooling has declined steadily between 1996 and 2007 (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

Increases in the number of young people who have completed Grade 12 and tertiary education are also evident (Statistics South Africa, 1995; 2002). However, significant inequalities remain, particularly with respect to access to tertiary education. White and Indian youth still enjoy a significant head start over African and coloured youth in terms of access to tertiary education (Statistics South Africa, 1995; 2002). Similar trends are reflected in the 2007 Community Household Survey, where 31% of the white population aged 20 years and older had attained a tertiary qualification, as opposed to only 5.6% of the African and coloured population (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

### ***Learner retention***

Despite almost universal enrolment at primary school level, access to education is compromised by grade repetition and drop out. Although there are uncertainties about the quality, reliability and completeness of data to measure repetition and drop out, some trends can be intimated from existing data. Repetition is high in Grade 1 because of the failure to fully implement early childhood development programmes that increase the readiness of learners to enter the schooling system. Despite implementation of policy to limit repetition to once per grade, learners take on average twice (average 24.5 years) the minimum number of years required to reach Grade 12 (Schindler, 2008). As a result, a wide age range can be found in each grade and this range increases as grades increase (Motala et al., 2007). Repetition is a significant contributor to inefficiency in the system and is regarded as the root cause of significant levels of drop out later in the school trajectory (Department of Education, 2007).

Dropout is relatively contained during the compulsory years of schooling but increases dramatically thereafter. A crude estimate of learner retention showed that less than a third of the 1.58 million learners enrolled in Grade 1 in 1992 reached Grade 12 in 2003 (Schindler, 2008). While our education system is able to retain learners for the first eight years of schooling, drop out increases significantly from Grade 9 onwards, at the end of compulsory schooling. As such, entry into secondary school level is characterised by a 'revolving door syndrome' – young people are able to enter secondary schooling, but are circulating in the system unable to make it through to



**Figure 4.1: Highest level of education for persons aged 20 years and older**  
 Source: Statistics South Africa 2007a

Grade 12 (YPI, 2007b). This is evident in the 2007 Community Household Survey that demonstrates an overall improvement in the percentage of the population with no schooling and those with higher education, but very slow progress in the proportion completing secondary school education (see Figure 4.1) (Statistics South Africa, 2007a).

Dropout is also pervasive in the higher education sector with almost 30% of first time undergraduate entrants dropping out after the first year and a further 20% dropping out after two or three years of study (Department of Education, 2005). High repetition and dropout rates do not bode well for the future prospects of young people. Under conditions of high unemployment, dropping out of school, or even not proceeding to the tertiary level, can play a decisive role in whether young people are able to obtain employment and how long they will wait to find employment.

***Learner achievement***

Improving access to education, especially for previously disadvantaged groups, is a key goal of education, but is not enough. It must be accompanied by measures to improve the quality of education such that learning becomes gainful and meaningful (Motala et al., 2007). The switch to an outcomes-based curriculum that is learner-centred was an attempt to improve quality but, the performance of learners showed no improvement. Evaluation

studies have shown that South African learners are under-performing in accordance with national and international benchmarks. For example, the Third International Mathematics and Science Study repeat tested Grade 8 learners' performance in mathematics and science. South Africa had the poorest mathematics and science test scores of the 50 participating countries – including five other African countries that report lower gross national incomes (Reddy, 2003).

Learner achievement in South Africa has traditionally been gauged from the Senior Certificate Examination (Grade 12) pass rates. While Senior Certificate Examination pass rates increased between 1994 (58%) and 2003 (73%), they have declined since 2005 (68%) (Department of Labour (DOL), 2007; Richter et al., 2005; Schindler, 2008) and in 2009 were at 60.6% (Manuel, 2010). Similarly, significant investments by government, the corporate sector and civil society to improve access and performance in mathematics and science have registered minimal impact. In 2005, only 6% of the total Senior Certificate candidates obtained a higher grade pass in mathematics and only 9% obtained a higher grade pass in physical science (DOL, 2007). The curriculum has since been restructured, so that those taking mathematics can choose between mathematics and maths literacy; in 2009, 24.2% passed the former and 38% the latter (Manuel, 2010).

## **Economic participation**

Young people the world over are bearing the brunt of unemployment and face high levels of economic and social uncertainty. They are more than three times as likely as adults to be unemployed and make up almost half of the world's unemployed (43.7%) (International Labour Organization (ILO), 2006).

Employment offers a sense of competence, independence from family and social status. It triggers the development of social capital and offers young people the means to start their own families, which, in turn, promotes a sense of belonging and has an overall protective effect (World Bank, 2006). In fact, young people in South Africa identified the ability to support and care for their families and run their households as the most important markers of the transition to adulthood (Richter et al., 2005). Yet little over a third (36.5%) had attained the financial means to achieve this goal. When young people fail to access decent and productive work early in their work life, it compromises their ability to achieve their full potential. It often sets them on a vicious life course of unemployment, poor working conditions, poverty and frustration that, in turn, has the potential to damage the future prospects of

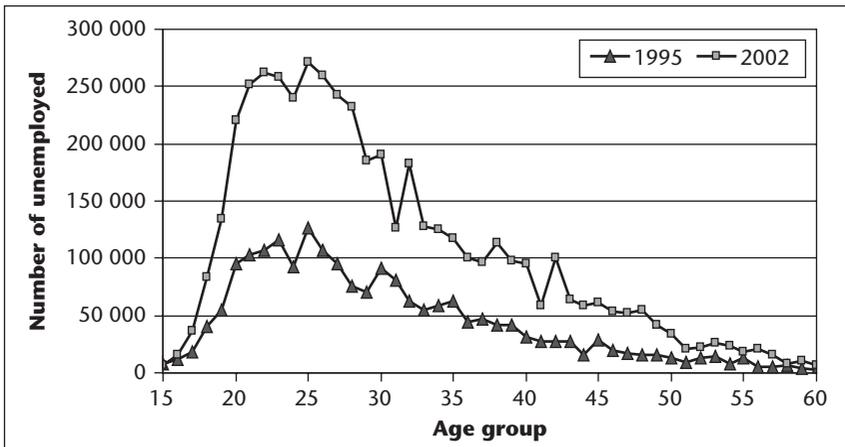
whole economies. Unemployment produces a sense of exclusion, alienation and vulnerability among youth (ILO, 2006; World Bank, 2006), rendering them powerless to exert control over their lives.

Unemployment is a youthful phenomenon in South Africa, particularly among African youth and failure to access quality education bears negatively on young people’s ability to find work. The work young people are able to find is often low-paid and insecure, and most self-employment initiatives remain survivalist in nature. Social networks and work experience are critical for young people to find work, both of which remain elusive, again particularly for African youth.

### Youth unemployment

Youth unemployment in South Africa is a long-standing problem that has reached pervasive levels. The youth comprise the largest proportion, two-thirds, of the unemployed in South Africa. Figure 4.2 demonstrates the massive growth in unemployment among the youth between 1995 and 2002. In 2002, young people aged 15–24 years made up 31% (1.5 million) of the total unemployed (Altman & Woolard, 2004). Data from the Status of Youth Report 2003 showed that more than two-thirds of 18–35-year-olds had never held a job in their lifetime (Richter et al., 2005).

Youth aged 15–24 years are twice as likely to be unemployed as adults (46.9% and 23.0%, respectively). This trend persisted between 2002 and



**Figure 4.2: Growth in unemployment between 1995 and 2002, by age**

Source: Altman & Woolard 2004 data from Statistics South Africa OHS 1995 & Labour Force Survey 2002

2007 (Statistics South Africa, 2007b), and worsened in 2009 and into 2010 (Manuel, 2010). Prospects of finding work increases with age, although unemployment rates are still high among 25–34-year-olds (25.7%) (Statistics South Africa, 2007b).

Unemployment among the youth is complicated by inequalities relating to educational status, gender and race. Poorly educated, African youth, women and rural youth make up the largest proportions of unemployed. Of the 3.4 million young people who were unemployed in 2002, 1.8 million (53.7%) were young women and 1.5 million (46.3%) were young men (Statistics South Africa, 2002). Only marginal positive shifts in unemployment were noted in 2007 among young women (52.1%) and young men (47.9%) (Statistics South Africa, 2007b).

African females across all age groups are more likely to be unemployed and young African women, in particular, bear the largest burden of unemployment. Almost three out of four African women aged 15–24 years (72.4%) and two out of four African women aged 25–34 years (49.8%) were unemployed in 2002 (Statistics South Africa, 2002). Table 4.2 demonstrates the extent to which African youth, particularly African women, are disproportionately affected by unemployment. These trends have persisted in the 2007 Labour Force Survey (the last such survey to deliver this breakdown), which showed that African youth aged 15–24 years (52.1%) and, particularly, young African women (57.8%), were worse affected by unemployment than other groups (Statistics South Africa, 2007b). Data from the 2009 Development Indicators Report, issued annually by the Presidency, further demonstrates the persistence of this trend: the Development Indicators Report shows that by June 2009, 48.1% of young people in the age group 15–24 were unemployed, and that this is by far the highest percentage; the next highest is the age group 25–34, of whom 27.2% were then unemployed (Presidency, 2009).

### ***Reasons for unemployment***

Young people value education and are critically aware of the fundamental role that education plays in their ability to find work. When asked about the main reasons for unemployment, over half of young people (51.3%) cited lack of qualifications for the job (51.3%) as the main reason (Richter et al., 2005). Other reasons mentioned include lack of jobs in the areas where they live (21.4%), work experience (13.6%), and financial difficulties related to the job search (11.7%) (Richter et al., 2005).

Table 4.2: Unemployment and employment rates by race, sex and age group, 2002

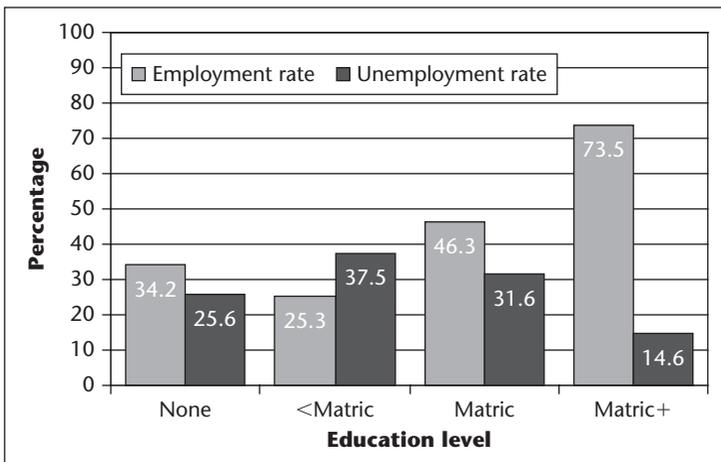
	Male			Female		
	15-24 years	25-34 years	Total	15-24 years	25-34 years	Total
<b>African/Black</b>	Unemployment rate	36.3	43.9	72.4	49.8	57.0
	Employment rate	11.4	28.0	6.9	32.5	18.4
<b>Coloured</b>	Unemployment rate	18.1	25.8	43.3	25.6	32.1
	Employment rate	32.2	51.2	23.7	56.1	39.6
<b>Indian/Asian</b>	Unemployment rate	12.4	19.4	48.2	19.8	30.6
	Employment rate	31.8	57.6	23.4	61.5	41.9
<b>White</b>	Unemployment rate	3.1	8.7	11.4	7.6	8.7
	Employment rate	31.4	61.0	33.8	68.4	52.6

Source: Statistics South Africa data from Labour Force Survey 2002

Note: Unemployment rate refers to the percentage of economically active youth that are unemployed according to the official/narrow definition. Employment rate refers to the percentage of youth in the age group who are actually employed (have been absorbed into the labour market).

Figure 4.3 illustrates the proportional relationship between education and the ability to find work. Young people who have completed education to secondary school level or higher are more likely to be employed than those with Grade 11 or less. In fact, Lam, Leibbrandt and Mlatsheni (2008) showed that both the quantity (completed secondary schooling) and quality (higher literacy and numeracy ability) of education significantly enhance the likelihood of young people finding work within the first four years of leaving school. Yet, as discussed earlier, too many young people exit the schooling system prematurely with incomplete secondary school education. Keeping young people in school for as long as possible and providing them with an education that is meaningful and gainful are two of the critical interventions required to improve labour market prospects.

The growth in youth unemployment can also in part be explained by the failure of the formal sector to create jobs at the pace at which the economically active population is expanding. Between 1997 and 2002, the economically active population aged 18–35 years increased from 6 million to 8.4 million, while the number of young people who were employed only rose from 4.3 to 4.9 million (Statistics South Africa, 1999; 2002). Women entered the labour market at a greater pace, partly reflecting the previously low rate of their participation in the economy. Between 1995 and 2002, the economically active population of women increased by 55% while those who were employed rose by 27% (Statistics South Africa, 1995; 2002).



**Figure 4.3: Employment and unemployment rates by level of education, 2007**  
 Source: Statistics South Africa data from Labour Force Survey 2007

### ***Nature of employment***

Entrance into the labour market does not guarantee prosperity, as many young people are employed in temporary positions with much lower earning capacity, few (if any) benefits and limited job security. Data from the Labour Force Survey shows a consistent pattern (Statistics South Africa, 2002; 2007b) of low levels of involvement of young people in the ranks of professionals and other high-skilled jobs (see Table 4.3). Most youth, in fact, work in the services sector as service workers, shop and market sales workers as well as clerks (Statistics South Africa, 2007b). Between a fifth and a third of young men and women can be found in elementary occupations. While many young men work as craft and related trade workers, young women take up domestic work positions. This pattern is unlikely to change in the near future. The 2007 Labour Force Survey showed that the services sector, offering temporary and low-paid positions, enjoyed the greatest gains in employment (Statistics South Africa, 2007b), although this is likely to experience the biggest decline in the current economic downturn. Chronic under-employment has come to characterise youth labour market experiences across sub-Saharan Africa (ILO, 2006). As a result, young people in the region are overrepresented in the category of the working poor (ILO, 2006).

Despite significant investments through public and private sector initiatives to kick-start youth entrepreneurship in South Africa, several studies have reported low levels of self-employment among youths (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008; Mlatsheni & Rospabe, 2002; Richter et al., 2005). Only a small proportion (6%) of respondents in the Status of Youth Report 2003 were self-employed and over half chose this option when they could not find formal employment. Entrepreneurial activity is much lower in South Africa compared to other African countries (Bosma, Jones, Aution & Levie, 2007). It also tends to be survivalist in nature, rather than formal business ventures that are profitable, sustainable and employment-generating. The culture of entrepreneurship among Africans was systematically destroyed during apartheid (Motsueyane, 1989) and requires long-term investment to re-build a business culture (Bosma et al., 2007) and grow the family social capital necessary to support such ventures.

### ***Finding employment***

The majority of young people are excluded from the formal labour market for extended periods of time very early in their career trajectories. It took

**Table 4.3: Occupation of employed youth by age group and sex, 2007**

Main occupation	15–24 years		25–34 years		All youth	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Legislators, senior officials and managers	2.0	2.4	5.2	6.5	4.4	5.5
Professionals	4.4	3.4	4.8	8.7	4.7	7.4
Technical and associate professionals	7.7	13.2	6.8	11.2	7.1	11.7
Clerks	8.3	20.8	4.9	18.9	5.8	19.4
Service workers and shop and market sales workers	12.6	17.1	16.3	13.8	15.4	14.6
Skilled agricultural and fishery workers	4.7	4.4	1.5	1.6	2.4	2.3
Craft and related trades workers	19.5	5.0	22.4	4.3	21.6	4.5
Plant and machine operators and assemblers	9.4	3.4	13.5	3.3	12.5	3.3
Elementary occupation	29.8	21.6	23.2	18.5	24.9	19.3
Domestic workers	0.9	8.2	1.2	13.1	1.1	11.9
Unspecified	0.7	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Statistics South Africa data from Labour Force Survey 2007

respondents in the Status of Youth Report 2003 an average of one year (12.4 months) to find a job after completing their education (Richter et al., 2005). Race matters in the length of the job search: while white (10.9 months) and Indian (11.0 months) men were able to find work in under a year, coloured (12.4 months) and, particularly, African men (15.9 months) took longer to find work. Racial differences in the length of the job search were also reported in the Cape Area Panel Study (Lam et al., 2008). While 50% of coloured young men were working after six months of leaving school (25% had jobs in the four months prior to leaving school), it took African men 36 months to reach the same level (Lam et al., 2008).

Unemployment early in one's career is particularly costly as it bears negatively on future prospects of finding employment (IOL, 2006). Over and above the financial consequences of long-term unemployment, the psychological effects on confidence levels and self-esteem and hope for the future are particularly damaging. Young people in South Africa are overrepresented in the discouraged work-seekers category, with more than half the number of discouraged work-seekers below 30 years of age (Statistics South Africa, 2007b). In fact, one-fifth of the respondents in the Status of Youth Report 2003 had lost hope of ever finding a job (Richter et al., 2005). The youth in South Africa are well aware of the precarious nature of the labour market. Over two-thirds (77%) of school-going learners in Gauteng believed that no matter how well educated they were, they would experience difficulty in finding a job (Emmett, 2004).

Personal contacts and networks are an important resource for young people to find work. A third of the Status of Youth Report 2003 respondents indicated that they found their first (33%) and second (34.1%) jobs through personal contacts. Yet only 10% of respondents in the 2002 Labour Force Survey actually used networks as a means to find jobs (Statistics South Africa, 2002). Despite the multiple social and economic benefits that participation in social structures can confer to young people, data presented later in this chapter illustrates that most young people are not affiliated with traditional civic structures. In an environment of pervasive unemployment and poverty, particularly among African communities, active steps must be taken to connect young people with networks that can provide resources and opportunities. Faith-based organisations represent one such viable strategy since over two-thirds of young people are linked to these networks.

Work experience bolsters young people's chances of finding work. While only 15% of Status of Youth Report 2003 participants found their first job through formal methods (submitting a curriculum vitae), this number

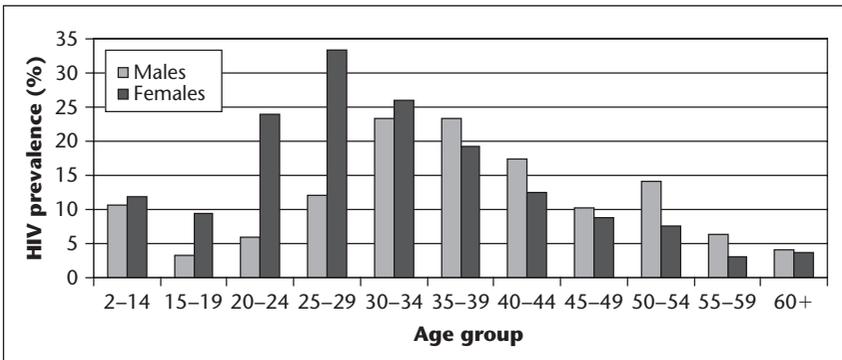
increased to 23.5% for their second job (Richter et al., 2005). Opportunities to gain work experience while at school can improve young people's prospects of finding work. However, large race differentials are reported in early access to job opportunities. While over half of white males (50.1%) and females (54.5%) in the Cape Area Panel Study had contact with the labour market by 16–17 years of age, very low numbers of African males (7.1%) and females (1.4%) reported similar experience (Lam et al., 2008). Earlier first touches with the labour market will not only provide the work experience necessary for labour market entry, but also the soft skills (work ethic, being on time, dressing appropriately, etc.) that can serve as barriers to finding and retaining a job.

## **Health and well-being**

Adolescence and early adulthood are considered the healthiest stages of the lifespan. Yet the burden of disease profile in South Africa suggests that the youth contribute substantially to both morbidity and mortality. South Africa's mortality profile reflects a quadruple burden of disease consisting of HIV (30%), other communicable diseases (21%), non-communicable diseases (37%) and injuries (12%) (Bradshaw et al., 2003). While deaths from HIV and AIDS and injuries peak in the youthful years, the risk factors for death from non-communicable disease are also initiated during adolescence and early adulthood. In fact, unsafe sex/sexually transmitted infections (31.5%), interpersonal violence (8.4%), alcohol use (7%) and tobacco use (4%), the vast majority of which are initiated during adolescence, are the leading risk factors for the burden of disease profile in South Africa (Medical Research Council, 2008).

### ***HIV and AIDS***

HIV and AIDS represents the most critical threat to the health and overall well-being of the youth in South Africa (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, 2004). Data from South Africa shows that half of the lifetime probability of acquiring HIV occurs in a five-year band for young women (17–21 years) and men (19–23 years) (Harrison, 2008a). HIV takes off at around 15 years of age and peaks among women aged 25–29 years and among men aged 30–34 years. One in three women (33.3%) and one in four men, in these respective age groups, is HIV positive (see Figure 4.4) (Shisana et al., 2005). Three household surveys (2002, 2003 and 2005) have consistently shown that about 10% of 15–24-year-olds are HIV positive (Pettifor et al., 2004; Shisana & Simbayi, 2002; Shisana et al., 2005). Gender differences in HIV prevalence are stark, with females in this age group being



**Figure 4.4: HIV prevalence by sex and age group, South Africa 2005**

Source: Shisana et al., 2005

four times as likely as males to be infected (Pettifor et al., 2005; Shisana et al., 2005). African youth (with a prevalence of 12.3%), in particular, carry the greatest burden of the disease; prevalence is below 2% for all other race groups (Shisana et al., 2005).

While the youth in South Africa are most vulnerable to HIV infection, they also present a unique opportunity to change the trajectory of the epidemic. Young people often adopt safe behaviour easily. In fact, trends from antenatal data show a significant decline in HIV prevalence among young women aged 15–19 years and 20–24 years (Harrison, 2008a). HIV prevalence among 15–19-year-olds may have peaked in 2004 at 16.1%, declining thereafter to 12.9% by 2007 (Harrison, 2008a).

Progress has been made in some areas, although significant areas of intractability remain (Mokomane, Makiwane & Bhana, 2008). There is almost universal awareness of HIV among the youth in South Africa, which has been achieved through large-scale media interventions (*loveLife*, *Soul City*, *Komanani*). However, gaps in functional knowledge (for example beliefs that a vaccine is available for HIV or that sexually transmitted infections do not increase the risk for HIV) and local mythical beliefs about HIV still persist among a small but significant cohort of young people (Kaiser Family Foundation & the SABC, 2007). Condom use also represents an important area of progress in preventing pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV. A number of studies have reported significant increases in condom use among both young men and women (Kaiser Family Foundation & the SABC, 2007; Pettifor et al., 2004; Shisana et al., 2005). Sexually transmitted infections have also shown a sharp and consistent decline between 1998 and 2006.

However, a number of areas of intractability limit the pace of the downturn in HIV prevalence. Early and unprotected sexual debut confers significant risk to the youth. By age 17, half of 15–24-year-olds have had their first sexual experience and over half of these events are unprotected (Pettifor et al., 2004; Shisana et al., 2005). Despite consistent HIV messaging, close on a third of young men engage in concurrent partnerships and over two-thirds of young people do not always use condoms during sex (Pettifor et al., 2005). Age mixing also remains a significant area of intractability for young women. Young women who are in relationships with men five years older than themselves significantly increase their risk of acquiring HIV (Pettifor et al., 2005; Shisana et al., 2005). There is also an unmet gap for HIV testing in South Africa, despite the protective effect it can exert on behaviour. Although over two-thirds of young people want to know their HIV status, only between a fifth and a third have actually been tested (Kaizer Family Foundation & the SABC, 2007; Pettifor et al., 2004).

### ***Teenage pregnancy***

Unprotected sex not only increases the risk of acquiring HIV but also of unwanted pregnancy and other sexually transmitted infections. In fact, recent studies in Uganda indicate that pregnancy may increase the risk of HIV transmission through its physiology (Gray et al., 2005). Teenage fertility has been the subject of substantial debate in the social science research and policy circles. While South Africa's total fertility rate is low compared to other African countries, the country has traditionally had high levels of fertility among adolescents. However, teenage fertility (pregnancies among those 15–19 years of age) has declined by 10% between 1996 (78 births per 1 000 women) and 2001 (65 births per 1 000 women) (Moultrie & McGrath, 2007). Similar trends were reported in the South African Demographic and Health Survey that showed a decline in teenage pregnancy from 16% in 1998 to 12% by 2003 (Department of Health (DOH), Medical Research Council & OrcMacro, 2007). While childbearing takes off at 15 years of age (2%), it peaks among 19-year-olds (27%) (DOH et al., 2007). Over two-thirds of these pregnancies are unwanted (Pettifor et al., 2005).

Declines in fertility have been attributed to increased access to information and biomedical interventions including family planning and termination of pregnancy services (Jewkes & Christofides, 2008). Yet rates remain unacceptably high and biological interventions have not been able to drive up the mean age at which childbirth begins (Moultrie & McGrath, 2007). Teenage pregnancy remains a stubborn and deeply-rooted social problem.

Young women are traumatised by the stigma and shame of early pregnancy and become trapped in a lifelong trajectory of poverty through truncated educational opportunities and poor job prospects. Reducing gender power inequities that result in coerced sex, sexual abuse and physical violence are critical to improving young women's control over when, with whom and under what circumstances they have sex (Eaton, Flisher & Aarö, 2003; Jewkes & Christofides, 2008). This needs to be supported by structural interventions that improve access to resources – financial interventions, educative interventions, and care and support from family as well as male partners – such that young women are better positioned to exert agency over their sexuality (Eaton et al., 2003; Harrison, 2008a; Jewkes & Christofides, 2008).

### ***Substance abuse***

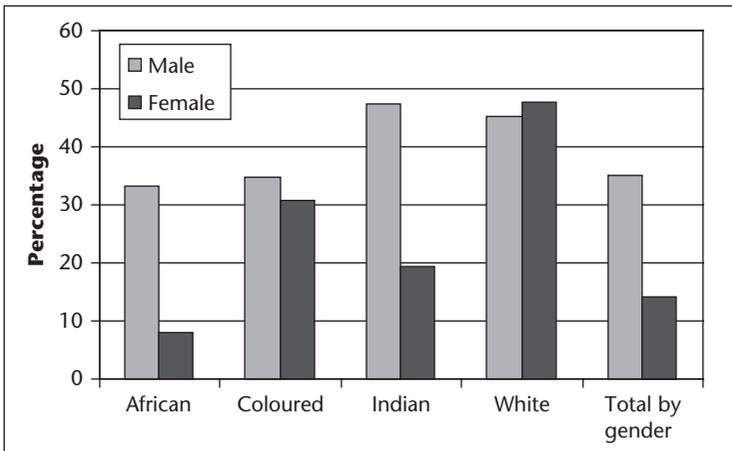
Drug use among the youth has reached near historic highs across the world (United Nations, 2005). Although rates have stabilised in recent years in developed regions, substance abuse is increasing in countries undergoing rapid transitions because of socio-economic challenges and poor legislative control to prevent and control marketing of substances (Uchtenhagen, 2004; World Health Organization, 2002). Tobacco and alcohol are the first substances that young people experiment with, probably because of their easy access and social acceptability. If initiation does not occur during adolescence, it is unlikely ever to occur (United Nations, 2005). However, worldwide trends indicate that adolescents are initiating drug use at younger ages (United Nations, 2000). The health and economic consequences of substance abuse are well documented and warrant intervention in their own right. But in contexts of high crime and violence and an HIV epidemic, the link with substance abuse is increasingly receiving attention. There is a rich store of data in South Africa correlating substance abuse with fatal (Matzopoulos, Seedat & Cassim, 2005) and non-fatal injuries, including those from interpersonal violence (Morojele & Brook, 2006; Plüddemann, Parry, Donson & Sukhai, 2004); crime (Leggett, Louw & Parry, 2002); sexual violence (King et al., 2004); and high-risk sexual behaviour (Kalichman, Simbayi, Jooste, Vermaak & Cain, 2008; Morojele, Brook & Kachieng'a, 2006a; Morojele et al., 2006b).

Policy level interventions have been particularly effective in South Africa in decreasing smoking rates among adults and adolescents. While adult smoking rates decreased by 10% between 1996 (34%) and 1998 (24%) and stabilised at around 23% in 2002, this decline was primarily due to a drop in smoking rates among men (42% vs. 35%) (DOH, Medical Research Council &

Measure DHS, 2002; DOH et al., 2007; Reddy, Meyer-Weitz & Yach, 1996). Smoking rates remain relatively unchanged among women (11% vs. 10%). In fact, a slight increase in prevalence was reported among young women and, particularly, among Indian women in 2002. A similar smoking profile was reported among the youth (Richter et al., 2005). Although overall gender gaps persist in this group, gaps are being closed and in some cases reversed, particularly among coloured and white young men and women (see Figure 4.5) (Richter et al., 2005).

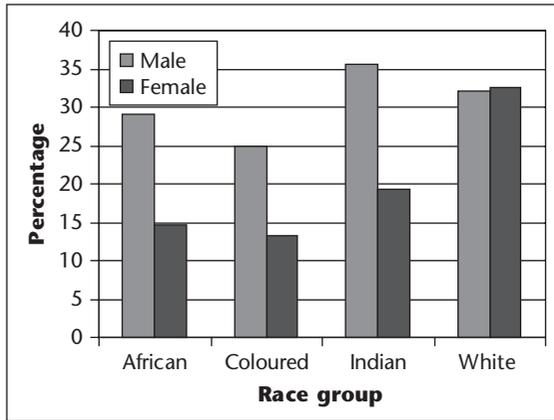
A similar pattern is evident for alcohol and drug use. Close to a third of young people (29.3%) drink alcohol at least once a week (Richter et al., 2005). Alcohol consumption rates are more than double among young men (29.1%) than among young women (15.9%). Figure 4.6 demonstrates the stark race and gender differences in alcohol consumption, although gender parity has been reached among white men and women.

Adult per capita alcohol consumption is comparatively low in South Africa (10.3–12.4 litres per adult in South Africa compared to >13 litres per adult in other regions). However, alcohol consumption per drinker is ranked among the highest in the world (Rehm et al., 2003). In other words, while a significant proportion of the population does not drink, those who do consume alcohol do so at hazardous levels. Almost a third of men and



**Figure 4.5: Percentage of the youth who currently use tobacco by race and sex, 2003**

Source: Richter et al., 2005



**Figure 4.6: Percentage of the youth who drink alcohol at least once a week, 2003**

Source: Richter et al., 2005

women (32%) reported drinking to risky levels over weekends (DOH & MRC, 1998). National estimates of alcohol abuse tend to be low because of the stigma associated with its use. However, sentinel surveillance from treatment centres over the past 12 years has consistently shown that alcohol remains the primary substance of abuse (Plüddemann, Parry & Bhana, 2008). Patients seeking treatment for alcohol abuse tend to be older, while those seeking treatment for cannabis, heroin or methamphetamine (commonly known as 'tik') tend to be younger. In general, though, the average age of patients seeking treatment in South Africa (27–35 years of age) is low. In fact, the proportion of patients younger than 20 years of age has increased over time and remains high across treatment centres. Rates range from one in 10 in East London to a third in Cape Town (Plüddemann et al., 2006).

Levels of drug abuse are also underestimated because of the illegal nature of its use. Studies of drug use in South Africa are small scale, limited by geographic area, population group or to high-risk groups. However, trends in demand for treatment suggest that substance abuse is increasing on the whole and that a broader range of substances is being used. These include cocaine/crack, heroin and a range of club drugs (Parry et al., 2002). The Status of Youth Report 2003 reported lifetime prevalence of drug use at 13.4% (Richter et al., 2005). Despite overall race and gender differences in substance abuse (white 33.6% vs. black 10%; men 17.5% vs. women 9.6%), gender gaps are closing, particularly for white men (35.5%) and women (32.1%).

### ***Youth violence and mental health***

There is clear evidence from studies focusing on South African youth that exposure to violence results in psychological distress in children and adolescents (Ensink, Robertson, Zissis & Leger, 1997; Peltzer, 1999; Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilingum & Stein, 2004; Seedat, Van Nood, Vythilingum, Stein & Kaminer, 2000; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008; Ward, Flisher, Zissis, Muller & Lombard, 2001). Some children are at higher risk for mental health problems than others as a result of heterogeneity in their exposure to other risks. This differential risk may be explained by several factors, including:

- Pre-trauma levels of psychopathology (in other words, children who have pre-existing psychopathology or who exhibit exaggerated acute reactions after trauma are at a high risk for adverse outcomes)
- The level of exposure (in other words, children who are exposed to acutely dangerous events and to high levels of violence for long periods face a higher risk than children briefly exposed)
- The characteristics of the child or adolescent (for example, gender, age, subjective perception of threat to life, coping style)
- Social factors (in other words, children exposed to high levels of violence within a stable social milieu or in the presence of good social support have better outcomes) (Pine, 2003).

Local studies investigating mediating and moderating variables are rare (Barbarin, Richter & De Wet, 2001; Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Shields et al., 2008). Recent work evaluating the relationship between exposure to community violence (neighbourhood, school, police and gang violence) and psychological distress in a sample of children living in Cape Town underscores the importance of the family in helping children cope with violence (Shields et al., 2008).

The association between violence exposure and psychological distress is likely to be linear, with levels of distress increasing as the amount of exposure increases (Barbarin et al., 2001; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008), although a few studies among African-American youth in the United States suggest that the relationship may be curvilinear (in other words, distress increases as violence exposure increases until it decreases at very high levels) (Fitzpatrick & Boldizar, 1993). The strongest associations, in both local and international studies, are with symptoms of mood and anxiety disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Symptoms of depression and PTSD appear

to be related to most forms of violence, although associations with other adverse outcomes, such as behavioural disorders (for example, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Oppositional Defiant Disorder) have also been described (Pine & Cohen, 2002; Seedat et al., 2000; 2004; Ward et al., 2001). PTSD is characterised by intense fear, horror, helplessness or disorganised behaviour, symptoms of persistent traumatic re-experiencing, avoidance or numbing and persistent hyperarousal for at least one month, and clinically significant disturbance in functioning (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). International estimates of lifetime prevalence of PTSD range from 1–14% in the general population, with much higher prevalence rates (15–90%) in children and adolescents who are exposed to trauma. In local studies, rates of PTSD have been in the order of 6–22% (Ensink et al., 1997; Peltzer, 1999; Seedat et al., 2000; Ward et al., 2001).

However, these studies were not conducted among national probability samples of adolescents. There are no nationally representative data on the prevalence of violence exposure and its association with post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorder and substance abuse/dependence. In general, among adolescents, psychiatric manifestations may closely resemble those observed in adults and are characterised by specific mood and anxiety disorder symptoms. Among children, a broader range of depressive, anxiety and behavioural symptoms may predominate (Pine & Cohen, 2002). For example, Barbarin and colleagues (2001) found that in their study of 625 six-year-old black South African children, outside of the anxiety-depression domain, the principal effects of violence occurred in the domains of attention and aggression problems. Mothers themselves had high levels of emotional distress secondary to exposure to community violence and this had important implications for their children's response to community violence. The authors found that maternal coping, child resilience and positive family relationships mitigated the effects of exposure.

Depression and PTSD are also the most prevalent psychological consequences of childhood sexual abuse and rape (Carey, Walker, Rossouw, Seedat & Stein, 2008). Rape, in particular, carries with it a high-conditional risk for PTSD (Breslau et al., 1998). In 1998, the rate of rape and attempted rape of girls aged 0–17 years reported to the South African Police Service was 47.1 per 100 000 people. In women who reported rape, 85% of these took place in children aged 10–14 years and 15% between five and nine years of age (Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga & Bradshaw, 2002). The number of rapes per capita in the country appears to be on the rise and children are often the victims (Martin, 2002). Not only is the risk for psychopathology

increased, but a dose-response relationship has been found with high levels of childhood sexual assault more predictive of PTSD than lower levels of abuse (Carey et al., 2008). Child rape has also been shown to increase the risk of HIV-1 transmission, unsafe sexual practices during later years (including having multiple partners), participation in sex work and increase in risk of rape in adulthood. Studies in the USA suggest that victims of childhood rape who disclose their victimisation soon after it occurs are at lower risk for later psychosocial difficulties relative to those who delay disclosure or never disclose (Ruggiero et al., 2004). Long-term consequences of childhood sexual intimidation are:

- PTSD
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Suicidality
- Alcohol and drug dependency
- Violent behaviour
- Physical health problems (for example, gastrointestinal and gynaecological problems) (Caffo & Belaise, 2003).

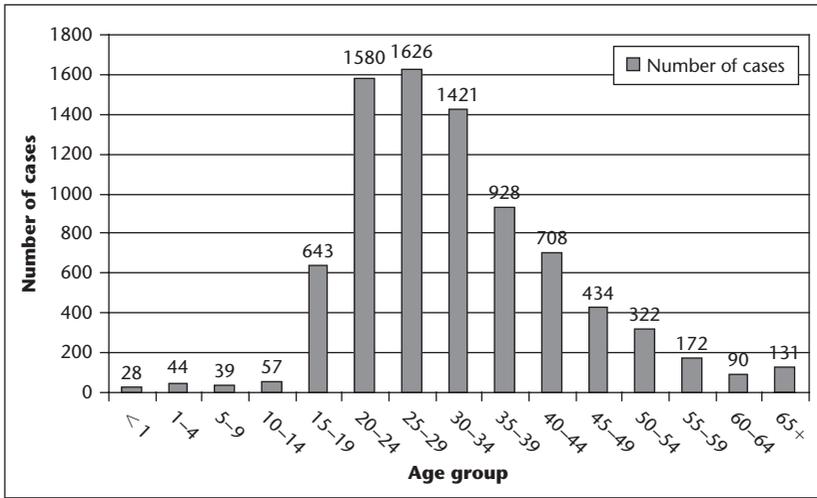
Sexually abused girls may be at greater risk of PTSD than boys (Carey et al., 2008), although this finding has not consistently been replicated in other local studies (Seedat et al., 2000; Seedat et al., 2004). Whether the apparent gender difference observed in some studies represent underlying neurodevelopmental, neurophysiological or neuroendocrine differences giving rise to differences in symptom expression has yet to be determined.

Other forms of victimisation, such as dating violence, have also been associated with post-traumatic stress disorder and major depressive disorder, in addition to a host of other adverse sequelae such as abnormal eating behaviours (dieting and/or binge and purge behaviours), cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption, drug use, suicidal thoughts and poorer self-esteem (Ackard, Neumark-Sztainer & Hannan, 2003; Wolitzky-Taylor et al., 2008), although much of this work originates from Europe and the United States. The experience of dating violence also exposes the youth to other health risks such as engagement in risk behaviours that place them at risk for pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and HIV and AIDS during adolescence. Locally, there is evidence to suggest that physical assault and forced sex is a frequent occurrence for young women in dating relationships (Swart & Seedat, 1999). One study found that approximately

half of the male adolescents who were surveyed, and just over half of the surveyed females, reported involvement in a physically violent dating relationship either as a perpetrator and/or victim, and that there was a clear association between physical violence and sexual coercion (Swart, Seedat, Stevens & Ricardo, 2002).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is another common form of violence with a broad array of negative mental and physical health outcomes. A study of sexually active female South Africans aged 15–26 living in rural areas found that about 26.6% had experienced more than one episode of physical or sexual IPV and 12.4% had HIV (Jewkes et al., 2006). Factors that were significantly associated with HIV infection included more sexual partners, more educated partners, a higher frequency of sex and a wider age gap between women and their partners. Children who live in households fraught with violence and witness the battering of their mothers suffer similar longer term psychiatric and physical consequences to those who are direct victims of abuse (Campbell & Lewandowski, 1997). Childhood witnessing of IPV has been reported in about a quarter of South African men and at least a third of women (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Jewkes, Penn-Kekana, Levin, Ratsaka & Schrieber, 2001). Childhood exposure to domestic violence (witnessing a mother being abused) is a strong predictor of men's later use of violence in adulthood, and is associated with engaging in several types of violent behaviour, such as using violence against an intimate partner, engaging in violence at work and in the community, being arrested as a result of both violent actions and antisocial behaviour, and being arrested for possession of an illegal firearm.

Homicide/violence is one of the leading causes of premature mortality in South Africa, accounting for 12% of all deaths (Bradshaw et al., 2003). Health statistics from various parts of the world confirm that homicide/violence is the leading cause of mortality for young people, but especially for young males (Blum & Nelson-Mmari, 2004). The National Injury Mortality Surveillance System, currently the most comprehensive source of data on fatal injuries in South Africa, demonstrates the extent of violence and injury and its strong relationship with age and gender. More than half of all individuals between the ages of 15 and 35 years, who died as a result of non-natural causes in 2005, were the victims of violence (Prinsloo, Seedat & Kotzenberg, 2007). Youths aged 15–24 years (52.4%) and 25–34 years (48.8%) together account for over 90% of deaths due to homicide (Prinsloo et al., 2007). As Figure 4.7 illustrates, homicide rates rise sharply from 15 years of age, peaking in the 25–29 year age group, and gradually decline thereafter. Death



**Figure 4.7: Violence/homicide by age group (n=8 223)**

Source: Prinsloo et al., 2007

from non-natural causes, particularly homicide, is a male phenomenon in South Africa, with males accounting for four fifths of non-natural deaths (Prinsloo et al., 2007).

The disproportionate share of deaths from violence and other non-natural causes among the youth has lifelong repercussions for the individual and society at large. Apart from the premature loss of human life, young peoples’ experiences of violence impact on their psychological and physical development and may give rise to:

- Depression
- Feelings of isolation and sadness
- Lack of interest in school
- Social exclusion
- Involvement in violent behaviour (Burton, 2005; Menard, 2002).

Compared to non-victims, young people who have been victims of violence are more likely to experience violence later in life and are at greater risk of becoming perpetrators of violence (Menard, 2002). This is particularly pertinent in the South African context where a large proportion of the youth still reside in poverty-stricken homes and communities, and as a result do not have access to mental health support services following violent experiences (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

## **Civic participation**

Many of the critical decisions about life and the direction for the future are taken during the youthful years. Young people decide whether to further their education, what job best suits their skill and their passion, and when and with whom to begin sexual relationships and form families. It is also a time when values, beliefs and commitments are established. While families play a role in identity formation and decision-making, other institutions – school, workplaces, religious institutions and civic organisations – also play a role in shaping this ideology (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). As young people engage in the process of defining their personal values and their world view, they begin to encounter and contend with societal issues.

Young people's formative experience with citizenship issues often entrenches how they will engage in society in their adult life (World Bank, 2006). But scholarly interest in youth citizenship is not limited to adult political and social outcomes. Active engagement early on is regarded as the most powerful trigger for development (Pittman et al., 2003). When the youth take on active roles in community structures, they develop a sense of purpose and belonging to institutions outside of the family (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). These engagements are not only important for psychosocial development, such as better decision-making and negotiation skills (Emmett, 2004), they are also critical for building their stock of social capital (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). The youth start to build connections outside the family and through these networks gain access to information, resources, opportunities and social support important for their health, education, economic and family outcomes (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005).

Traditionally, civic participation has been defined by participation in democratic structures of governance (as measured by voting). Data from South Africa shows that while South Africans remain highly politically conscious, low percentages of young people participate in national elections (44.5%) (Presidency, 2006) or register to vote for local government elections (49%) (Kivulu & Langtry, 2005). This is a dramatic change from the 1994 general election, and to a lesser extent, the 1995 local government elections. In 1994, 93% of young people voted in the historic first democratic elections (Jennings, Everatt & Masebe, 1998). The first democratic local government elections were held in 1995, and in these elections, only 57% of eligible young people voted. Of these, 26% did not vote for technical reasons, such as not having an

identity document, not understanding the need to register (the 1994 elections did not have a registration requirement), or not knowing where to vote, while the remainder apparently did not vote because they did not understand the purpose of these elections, or did not deem them important (Jennings et al., 1998).

However, global trends show declining political participation by young people more so now than among previous generations and these trends have therefore called into question this narrow definition of citizenship (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Yet in South Africa, young people also tend to have low participation in traditional social activities. In 2003, over two-thirds of the youth did not participate in community sports teams, community society or clubs and civic or community organisations (Richter et al., 2005).

The one area where the youth do appear to participate is in faith-based activities. While it would be easy to dismiss contemporary youth as apathetic, individualistic and disinterested on the basis of their civic participation, several studies consistently show that the current generation of youths in South Africa hold high moral values (Centre for Development and Enterprise, 2008); are most optimistic about the future of the country, display high levels of altruism (Emmett, 2004) and volunteerism (Perold, Carapinha & Mohamed, 2006); and report high rates of participation in religious services. Over two-thirds of respondents in the Status of Youth Report 2003 indicated that religion was important or very important to them and that they attend religious services regularly (Richter et al., 2005).

The shift away from political participation to other forms may reflect a broader shift of focus in South Africa. As there is a broad national shift away from attaining political rights to meeting developmental needs, so too is the focus of youth organisations and of young people changing. Issue-based and voluntary participation, as opposed to political and formal membership (Richter et al., 2005), characterises a generation of people focused on matters that affect them directly. Youth, both locally and internationally, can be found at the forefront of environmental activism and protests for service delivery (World Bank, 2006). In fact, 70% of the membership of the Treatment Action Campaign in South Africa, lobbying for access to HIV treatment, is between 14 and 24 years of age (Friedman & Mottiar, 2005). The channels through which young people engage in society may also be shifting. As the primary users of technology, we can no longer overlook the power of the Internet, texting, chat rooms, blogs and social networking in capturing young voices (Richter & Panday, 2007).

Citizenship exists on a continuum – at one extreme is the ability to exercise voice through social and political structures and at the other is social exclusion because of the inability to access political, social and economic systems of society (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005; World Bank, 2006). Youth participation research has been overly focused on gaining access to political processes, neglecting the importance of access to educational, social and economic systems, particularly during the transition to adulthood (United Nations, 2007). Young people's non-participation in voting and disengagement from civic structures so early in our democracy may be a form of protest against the high levels of marginalisation that they experience, poor delivery on post-apartheid promises and few opportunities to belong to legitimate systems. Political participation may be compromised by the failure to offer social and economic protection to young people. But identity formation is not placed on hold until better conditions prevail; a negatively valued identity is better than no identity. When space is not available for the youth to associate with formal institutions, they will find identity, purpose and meaning in antisocial structures (World Bank, 2006).

## CONCLUSION

Positive youth development happens when the youth are socially embedded in families and systems that support and promote their development. Even when some of these experiences are less than ideal, the social safety net provided by families and communities can still lead to positive outcomes. But when barriers in the home and within systems overwhelmingly supersede opportunities over a sustained period of time, the outcomes begin to turn negative. In contexts of chronic unemployment, poverty and palpable risk, the best efforts of families alone will not allow young people to reach their full potential (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). Key institutions – homes, schools, workplaces, health systems and civil society – must share the responsibility to help the youth navigate this stage of life.

Yet indicators on youth development in South Africa paint a picture of extremely tenuous and differentiated relationships with these institutions. Access to education has improved dramatically over the past 30 years, particularly to the benefit of disadvantaged groups. However, the academic competencies and capabilities offered by education, particularly to African youth, are not enough to provide a springboard into the world of work or the social protection required against a number of risk behaviours. Unemployment has reached crisis proportions, particularly among African

youth. Without the requisite skills and experience, connections through social networks, and the financial means to search for work, the youth take an inordinately long time to enter the labour market and, understandably so, many give up trying. What work they are able to find is undervaluing, as it is temporary, low-paid and of poor quality, trapping them in the ranks of the working poor.

Young people's school-to-work transition fractures early on, leaving not only psychological scars but profoundly influencing the outcomes of the remaining transitions. When asked what it means to be out-of-school or out-of-work, the self-deprecation among the youth is harsh. Young people label themselves as outcasts, rejects, losers and failures and describe a life of regret, dependency and of daily hustle to get by (Youth Policy Initiative Team, 2007a; Youth Policy Initiative Team, 2007b). Within such contexts, HIV, violence, substance abuse, early pregnancy and mental ill-health – all preventable forms of morbidity and mortality – are stacking overlapping levels of risk and robbing the youth of their most vital years and compromising human capital formation in the country. Poverty, unemployment and incomplete education do not cause HIV, early pregnancy, substance abuse or violence. But they certainly generate the levels of social exclusion, disconnectedness, frustration and powerlessness, as well as the devaluation and uncertainty about the future in which these risk behaviours flourish (Krug et al., 2002; Ward, 2007).

Despite the levels of moral panic in the early 90s and the vibrancy of the youth sector during this time, South Africa missed the opportunity to systematically address the high levels of marginalisation among young people. Yesterday's 'young lions' – with delayed education, high unemployment and a violent repertoire – are today's parents (Kipperberg, 2007). In many respects both the scale and depth of marginalisation has grown and is replicating itself in the current generation of youth. What will change the life course of the youth in South Africa? Both the Panel on Transition to Adulthood in Developing Countries (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005) and the 2007 World Development Report (World Bank, 2006) argue for supporting the natural course of development by expanding the scope and quality of first *opportunities* available to young people (such as sound education and the resources to enter work life) and, particularly, growing their *capabilities* to make informed choices. The youth need more than information to make choices; they need resources to gain an educational and economic footing, and they need behavioural and critical thinking skills to process and act on information made available to them.

But too many young people, particularly in developing countries, have negative outcomes because they fail to enter mainstream systems or fall out prematurely. The World Development Report (World Bank, 2006) strongly advocates the creation of *second chance* opportunities to assist the youth in recovering from negative experiences. Second chances include a diversity of opportunities, from alternative schooling for those who are too old-for-grade, to diversion from the juvenile justice system instead of imprisonment. Remediation is controversial, costly and difficult to achieve, but far outweighs the costs to a society of lost human capital potential. When second chances are well targeted to those who need them the most, are co-ordinated with mainstream systems to facilitate re-integration, and balance rehabilitation with accountability, programmes have better chances of success (World Bank, 2006). Both the scale of marginalisation and the absence of social safety nets for vulnerable youth in South Africa have motivated a shift in the focus of the second generation youth policy in the country.

While the first generation policy created an enabling environment for all young people, the second generation youth policy proposes a twin focus:

- 1) Strengthening mainstream systems to prevent recurring disaffection
- 2) Providing second chance programmes for youth who have become marginalised.

What are some of the specific ways in which this strengthening and provision of opportunities might take place?

While the doors of learning have been opened to more young people than ever before, many of them exit the system prematurely and many more without the requisite basic skills to engage productively in society. South Africa's focus on education has shifted towards quality and management, but given that less than half of its entrants are able to reach Grade 12, equal attention needs to be paid to the quantity of education. An education system that has to create second chances for almost half of its entrants needs to strengthen investment in alternative pathways. This needs to be matched by systematic analysis of why, in an environment of substantive investment in mainstream education (education is the second largest budgetary item in South Africa), the system is only able to graduate between a third and half of its entrants.

The persistent high rates of youth unemployment in South Africa have made unemployment a peculiarly youthful problem. A recent review of labour market interventions reported that youth employment is a definitive focus of government, business and civil society (Centre for Development

and Enterprise, 2008). Initiatives are taking the form of job creation (for example, the *Expanded Public Works Programme*), skills development (for example, learnerships, internships and National Youth Service) and business development programmes (for example, entrepreneurship programmes). However, the many and diverse interventions, their small scale and lack of measurable outcomes and independent evaluation, mean that substantive resources are being spent on creating few jobs with little impact on youth unemployment. A financial and cost-effective audit of youth employment programmes is required to identify gaps (such as assisting young people with the cost of the job search) and to scale-up those initiatives that have proven to be effective in offering quality training and in creating sustainable jobs. Unemployment leaves time hanging heavily on young people's hands, and in an environment where crime may be perceived to pay (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009), it creates a vacuum that may too easily be filled by violent and criminal acts.

In terms of health, over five decades of investment in public health research has shown that behaviour is the result of a complex interplay of factors. It is as much determined by individual choices as it is by relationships with others and the context in which young people live. Interventions focused on individuals have been helpful in shifting knowledge and attitudes, but are rarely successful in changing behaviour. Comprehensive approaches that shift the emphasis away from the individual to the relational (for example, partners, peers and families) and structural levels (for example, poverty, unemployment and educational attainment), where risk is generated, are more likely to produce sustained behaviour change. In fact, for some behaviours, such as those relevant to reproductive health, the most effective strategies may lie outside of the health sector (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005). For instance, research both locally (Harrison, 2008b) and internationally (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005) has shown that girls within the schooling system are less likely to have unprotected sex than girls outside of the system. Hence, expanding opportunities for young girls to stay in school may be a more effective intervention to prevent teenage pregnancy and HIV and AIDS than health-focused interventions alone.

Small-scale, isolated interventions will not turn the tide on the HIV epidemic or other health-related behaviours. To produce a generational shift in behaviour, sufficiently large numbers of people need to change their behaviour radically enough and for long enough that this necessary shift can be achieved (Coates, Richter & Caceres, 2008). Such an approach warrants a national response combining the strengths of biomedical, behavioural and structural interventions on a scale currently unprecedented in South Africa.

As the educational status of the youth improves, their awareness of exclusion and limited citizenship will heighten (World Bank, 2006). Political and civic engagement will be increasingly filtered through a lens of unfulfilled socio-economic rights. Interventions such as a national youth service are critical to entrench the value of the youth in community building and to offer opportunities for skills development and job creation. But a national youth service has been slow to get off the ground since it was first proposed in 1992 in response to fears of a 'lost generation'. Despite the launch of a national programme of action in 2005, small numbers (13 000) of unemployed youth are current beneficiaries of national youth service (National Youth Service, 2008). To promote social cohesion, small, local efforts must be interwoven into government-wide initiatives to reach a critical mass of youth.

But the re-orientation of policy or investment of resources alone will not kick-start youth development in South Africa. When young people and their families are able to live a life of value and with meaning (National Research Council & Institutes of Medicine, 2005; Sen, 1997; World Bank, 2006), the impetus will be created for them to become protectors of and advocates for their own development (World Bank, 2006).

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# Chapter Five



## PREVENTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH VIOLENCE IN THE EARLY YEARS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICAN PRACTICE

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This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Alan Flisher, our colleague, friend and mentor, who passed away prior to the publication of this book.

### INTRODUCTION

There is an overwhelming consensus in other chapters in this book that youth crime and violence constitute significant challenges in South Africa (see, for example, Chapters 1 and 3). However, opinions diverge when considering the issue of what should be done to address these challenges. Part of the reason, as noted in Chapter 1, is that there is a dearth of evaluated violence prevention programmes in South Africa. When preparing this contribution, we were unable to locate any local violence prevention programmes that have been shown to be effective or efficacious for the early years (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004; Parker, Dawes & Farr, 2004; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2007). Only one South African intervention to reduce aggressive behaviour in preschoolers, using a control group design, could be located (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). It was based on the approach developed by Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) and reduced aggressive behaviour in the intervention group. The lack of other South African intervention studies with appropriate designs points to a major gap in the local evidence base.

In this chapter we sketch the evidence for effective prevention in the early years (ages 0–9 years), in two primary sites of socialisation: the family and the school. As the evidence base from South Africa is inadequate, we draw

on the experience of high-income countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. In the final section, we draw on two South African intervention programmes, with a view to informing a way forward in this context. Because the focus is on prevention, treatment interventions are excluded. We do not repeat the literature on developmental pathways to youth violence here, which is covered in Chapter 3.

## DEFINING TERMS

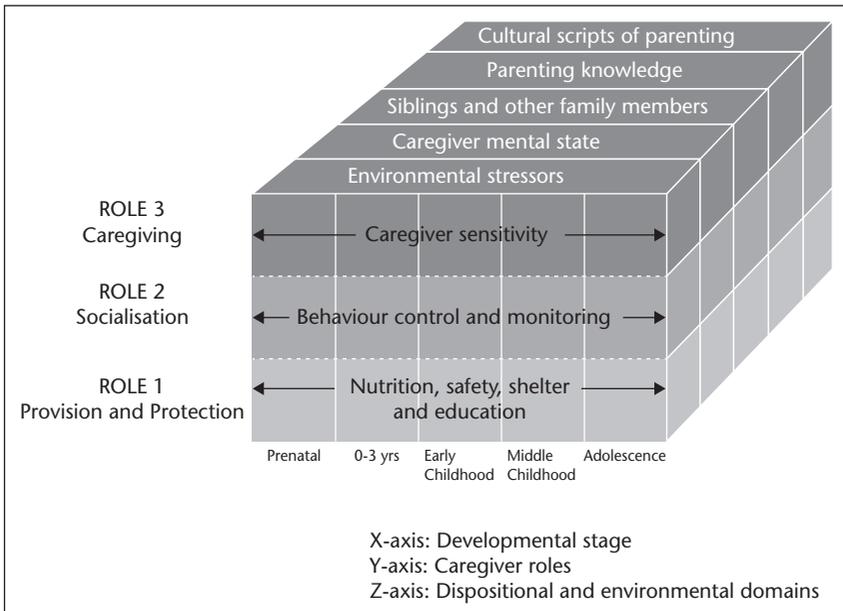
The primary focus of this chapter is on the preschool years. In the child development literature, aggression refers to acts where there is the *intention* to harm. It is of interest that the literature on the preschool child commonly refers to *aggressive* behaviour rather than *violence*, a term more typically associated with adolescents and youths. For present purposes, the instrumental, bullying and reactive forms of interpersonal aggression in childhood are viewed as being of the same family of behaviours as interpersonal violence.

## A MATRIX APPROACH TO INTERVENTION

The matrix in Figure 5.1 presents an integrated framework for understanding key risk factors and opportunities for intervention across the lifespan (Rosenberg & Knox, 2005). It provides a heuristic for integrating what we know about child development (X-axis) with caregiver roles (Y-axis) and dispositional and environmental factors (Z-axis). While caregiver roles are primarily the function of parents or other primary caregivers (particularly in the early period), other family members (including siblings) and (later) educators and peers also play critical roles. The dotted line along the X-axis depicts the fluidity of these roles across childhood and the fact that, for instance, while parental sensitivity and mutual regulation are separated in the diagram for heuristic purposes, they are in fact part and parcel of the same parental function.

### Caregiving roles

In the first instance, caregivers provide for the child's basic needs in terms of *provision and protection* (Role 1 on the matrix). At the most basic physiological level, recent evidence indicates that prenatal and early childhood malnutrition is a risk factor for aggression (Neugebauer, Hoek & Susser, 1999; Liu, Raine, Venables & Mednick, 2004). In South Africa, it is estimated that 25.5% of children under four years and 21% of those between four and six years were



**Figure 5.1: Youth violence prevention matrix**

Source: Adapted from Rosenberg & Knox, 2005

stunted according to a 1999 survey (Labadarios et al., 2005), rendering them vulnerable for developing aggressive traits.

Parents who physically abuse their children are establishing the basis for emotional dysregulation, hypervigilance and aggression, particularly among boys (Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1990; Finkelhor, 2008; Lansford et al., 2007; Maas, Herrenkohl & Sousa, 2008). In South Africa maltreatment rates are very high (Dawes & Ward, 2008). Improving child protection is therefore an important intervention for preventing the development of violent behaviour. Violent conflict between parents is associated with aggression in middle childhood (Osofsky, 1995). In South Africa, at least 25% of children are likely to be exposed to violence in the home (Dawes & Ward, 2008). Addressing the needs of these vulnerable families clearly has implications for violence prevention in the next generation.

Parents (and other intimates) play a crucial role in the regulation of early behaviour, which is an aspect of *socialisation* (Role 2). According to Coercion Theory (Granic & Patterson, 2006), children’s behaviour is both a response to that of other family members, as well as a trigger for their behaviours (Patterson, 1982). Granic and Patterson (2006) view the child as being trained

to be coercive, but at the same time the caregiver is being trained by the child to respond to this behaviour, illustrating the bi-directional nature of interaction between caregivers and their children. The more a particular form of negative interaction is reinforced across the child's development, the more likely it is that it will then become the model on which future interactions are based. With regard to aggressive behaviour, the ever-increasing escalation of the child's opposition to parental demands for compliance ultimately results in parental capitulation. Harsh or intrusive parenting and the consequent child withdrawal or rebellion is another example. This form of parenting often has the goal of halting defiant behaviour (for example, a tantrum). Ironically, this form of parenting does not promote positive behaviour, but obstructs the development of prosocial skills, and is likely to result in aggressive behaviour (Dodge, 2001; Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001). This is not simply an outcome of learning and imitation. Crick and Dodge (1994) have shown that very harsh discipline practices interfere with children's social information processing. They misinterpret interactions with others as hostile and intended to hurt them. Harsh parenting is not uncommon in South Africa where a national parent survey showed that 33% used a belt or some other object to discipline their children. The modal age for this treatment was four years old (Dawes, De Sas Kroppiwnicki, Kafaar & Richter, 2005).

The child-rearing context plays an important role in parental response. Attempts at increased monitoring in order to protect the child from dangerous environments or from associating with an 'inappropriate peer group', often result in the escalation of the harsh and coercive aspects of caregiving (Beyers, Bates, Pettit & Dodge, 2003). Unfortunately, ensuring that monitoring is carried out in a sensitive and appropriate and yet firm manner is not easy.

Even if the provision and protection and socialisation roles are fulfilled to a sufficient degree, this will not ensure optimum developmental outcomes. *Quality of caregiving* (Role 3) is also necessary. Specifically, caregiving should be sensitive, responsive and engaged (Olds et al., 1999).

## **Dispositional and environmental domains**

It is crucial to avoid locating all later violence in early parent-child or caregiver-child interactions. Children living in areas of high adversity that characterise many low- and middle-income countries (LAMICs), such as South Africa, are exposed to many *environmental stressors* including

poverty, domestic violence and maltreatment, all of which are associated with adverse outcomes (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). *Caregiver mental state* can also be negatively affected by environmental stressors. For example, maternal depression impacts on the relationship between mother and infant (Cooper et al., 1999) and resultant socio-emotional difficulties may be evident in later development. There is also evidence that maternal depression is associated with coercive parenting (Tomlinson, Cooper & Murray, 2005). Therefore, it is important to address caregivers' emotional difficulties as a route to preventing externalising behaviour in children, particularly in high-risk environments.

*Siblings and other family members* also constitute an important dispositional and environmental domain. For example, regardless of their social status, most children have siblings. Relationships with siblings can include conflict, rivalry or negative role models and the outcome for the child can include both externalising and internalising symptoms (Pike, Coldwell & Dunn, 2005; Richmond, Stocker & Rienks, 2005). Equally important is that positive sibling relationships can be protective for children exposed to stressors, especially in homes characterised by parental conflict (Gass, Jenkins & Dunn, 2007; Jenkins & Smith, 1990). Thus it is important that when designing interventions, consideration should be given to strengthening relationships between siblings with a view to reducing the effects of adverse experiences (Gass et al., 2007). Also, as noted, Dunn's (1988) studies revealed that sibling conflict is a source for learning aggressive forms of interaction.

An important reason that many parents are not able to fulfil their parenting roles is a lack of *parenting knowledge* about appropriate parenting strategies. Such lack is most likely to occur in circumstances of migration, urbanisation and social instability, where access to sources of information from the extended family and older generations is limited.

Finally, any discussion of parenting must be culturally situated. The work on early parenting and violence prevention has its roots in modern Western societies. *Cultural scripts for parenting* structure the way in which children are raised (for example, orientations to physical discipline), and the values placed on child qualities such as obedience and respect, and adult qualities such as sensitivity and responsiveness (LeVine et al., 1994). Parenting interventions need to be sensitive to local practices (Alkon, Tschann, Ruane, Wolff & Hittner, 2001; Dodge, 2001) and where the introduced programme is too much at variance with the beliefs and practices of recipients, successful implementation will be a challenge (Dawes & Cairns, 1998).

## Developmental stages

Aggression is normally defined by the act of causing pain or harm. However, not all interpersonal acts that cause hurt are intended. There is no true intention when an infant thrashes about in distress and kicks a parent, or when a baby bites her mother's breast. Unfortunately, some parents interpret these acts as intentional and they can result in harsh punishment. Children do develop the capacity for *intentionally harmful behaviour* once they have the capacity to understand cause-effect relationships in social situations. This occurs in the second year of life. Aggression in this period is commonly classified as *hostile* or *instrumental*. The former refers to conduct in which the goal of the child's behaviour is to cause hurt. In the latter case, aggression is used (hence *instrumental*) to achieve another goal, such as obtaining a toy from another child (Hartup, 1974). Dunn's (1988) research showed that as children begin to develop a sense of self and ownership towards the end of their second year, instrumental aggression increases. It is also evident that as their socialisation process proceeds, girls begin to express aggression relationally, while boys continue to use overt displays of aggression. In the preschool years, children may also use *reactive aggression* in response to another child's action (for example, bumping another by mistake or intentionally), or *bullying aggression* (an unprovoked attack) (Weiss, Dodge, Bates & Pettit, 1992).

As the child moves out of toddlerhood into the preschool period (three to four years), opportunities for learning and internalising scripts (Nelson, 1986), for interpersonal relationships, sharing and conflict, are present. In this period, parents play a key role in mediating the influences or sources of learning about the appropriateness or otherwise of aggression. For example, parents may approve or reject the aggressive behaviour of others the child has observed, providing parameters for the child's own response in similar circumstances. Their role as moderators of the child's aggressive behaviour is evident in approaches to punishment. As we have noted, parents who use harsh discipline have children who display higher frequencies of aggression. Beyond the home, if the child attends a crèche or a preschool, this is another setting within which aggressive conduct may be socialised. The results for the National Institute for Child Development's study on the effects of early childcare has shown that children who spend more time in lower quality centre-based care are likely to display more educator-reported externalising difficulties (Belsky et al., 2007).

In the preschool years, aggression and other forms of antisocial behaviour tend to co-occur and this becomes more evident as the child moves into

school. Chapter 3 in this book describes pathways in the development of aggression from early childhood through to adulthood and identifies the key moderating and mediating factors at play. Understanding them provides important opportunities for preventive intervention.

There is considerable variation in the risks for the development of aggression that young children are exposed to. In early childhood, the family is the primary source of risk and it is mainly at this level that preventive interventions are appropriate. If a crèche or preschool setting is attended, then this becomes another site within which prevention opportunities exist. In South Africa, the home is more likely to be the primary source of risk, since less than 20% of children attend a preschool (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008). As children increasingly attend Grade R (the year prior to Grade 1) from the age of five, this is important to consider, as universal interventions become increasingly possible.

In what follows, we present the evidence for *prevention* of early aggressive behaviour. We do *not* consider treatments for clinical populations of preschool children with aggressive behaviour problems.

### **EXAMPLES OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTIONS FROM HIGH-INCOME COUNTRIES**

Webster-Stratton and Taylor (2001) have argued that early intervention is imperative in order to ‘nip problems in the bud ... before they become a cascade of risk factors’ (p. 167). Given the multiple developmental pathways involved, interventions must either deal simultaneously with multiple risk factors, or alternatively ‘focus on specific children, based on the assessment and matching of an intervention to a child’s needs’ (Dodge, 2001, p. 65). It is necessary to take into account both mediating and moderating influences. An example of a mediator of the development of violent conduct would be the cognitions, emotions and hypervigilance of the abused children that render them more likely to be hostile and aggressive in response to the (innocent) behaviour of other children (reactive aggression). Apart from addressing harsh parenting and preventing abuse in the child’s home, it would be necessary to assist the child towards more appropriate cognitions and realistic appraisals of threat. Aggressive children who grow up in dangerous areas, and whose behaviour is not well monitored by their parents, are likely to become more aggressive over the course of development. The intervention implication is both to improve parental management and reduce the child’s exposure to aggression as far as possible.

Many preventive interventions in this field focus on changing parenting and strengthening family functioning. In her 1999 report, Kumpfer provides a useful overview of North American interventions for the prevention of delinquency.

She distinguishes between three types of programmes:

- 1) Exemplary (true experimental evaluation designs with randomised assignment, controls and positive outcomes)
- 2) Model (experimental and quasi-experimental designs with positive outcomes)
- 3) Promising (non-experimental but with positive process evaluation data).

Early preventive interventions that receive this stamp of approval include the *Incredible Years* (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001) and the *Prenatal & Early Childhood Nurse Home Visitation* programme (Olds et al., 1998a). Parenting programmes rated as 'Model' include the *Parents Anonymous* intervention to prevent child physical abuse and reduce harsh parenting (Lieber & Baker, 1977; National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2007).

In the following discussion we focus on the infancy and toddlerhood, and early childhood developmental stages (Figure 5.1), as these are when intervention effects might be expected to have maximum long-term impact. It will be evident that effective early interventions are most likely to contain several strategies involving the child, the caregiver and other actors. Interventions for children may not in the first instance focus on aggressive behaviour but, for example, on building the early cognitive, language and numeracy competencies that make it less likely that the child will have difficulty coping at school and be at risk for poor performance and drop out (as in the Perry preschool project; Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barnett, Epstein & Weikhart, 1984).

### **Infancy/toddler stage**

A key focus of interventions at this stage in life is the child's relationship with the mother. Young mothers with few supports and those with depressive symptoms and substance abuse disorders are common intervention targets. The programme theory is that poor maternal well-being is associated with intrusive and insensitive mother-infant interaction and may also be associated with abuse and neglect. Interventions should provide support to

the mother (to address her psychological difficulties), while also working to increase maternal sensitivity and responsiveness.

While this is not always possible, emerging evidence indicates that it is best to commence interventions with vulnerable mothers during pregnancy and then continue the inputs after birth (Olds, 2002). For example, Fraser, Armstrong, Morris and Dadds (2000) showed that while a postnatal intervention reduced the probability of child abuse, it did not have a positive impact on parenting stress or ability.

Early interventions to improve children's earliest relationship environment have a long history. Their origins lie in Bowlby's (1951) work with emotionally deprived children after World War II. Bowlby asserted a link between antisocial behaviour and early family disruption that has subsequently been confirmed (Murray & Farrington, 2005). An exhaustive review of interventions is not within the scope of this chapter, but we provide a snapshot of key examples.

The predominant form of intervention for at-risk caregivers in the neonatal and infant period is the home visitation programme provided during some (or all) of the child's first two years of life by trained personnel, who may or may not be professionals. These exemplary programmes (in Kumpfer's schema) have generally been offered to specific at-risk groups, such as single mothers, parents at risk for maltreatment (Olds, Henderson, Chamberlin & Tatelbaum, 1986) or suffering from substance abuse. St. Pierre and Layzer (1999) describe home visitation programmes as 'two generational', in that both children and parents may benefit from the intervention. In terms of our matrix (see Figure 5.1), early home visitation is one of few intervention models that addresses all three caregiver roles. It covers early child health, maternal health, provision of adequate early nutrition for the infant, as well as early caregiving. Emotional support is also provided (Bilukha et al., 2005).

Olds and colleagues have, over the course of 20 years, conducted a series of trials examining the impact of a programme of prenatal and early childhood home visitation, in order to improve child and maternal health problems (Olds et al., 1998a). Randomised trials have been conducted in various parts of the United States. The original study (the Elmira Trial) showed promise in reducing child injury and child abuse, reducing government expenditure and improving maternal life course (Olds et al., 1998a). The *model of Olds and colleagues* is noted for its intensity and dose level. Mothers are enrolled through the third trimester and visits occur once a week in the first month after enrolment. Then there are fortnightly visits until the birth of the infant (Olds et al., 1998a). Following the birth of the infant there are weekly visits

until the infant is six weeks old; fortnightly visits until 21 months and then monthly until 24 months. Visits are approximately 90 minutes in duration.

For the purposes of this chapter, we focus on the New York trial as it has produced the most powerful effects on reducing child criminal and antisocial behaviour. Participants were recruited according to one of four treatment conditions. Families in the *first* treatment group were provided with sensory and developmental screening for their children at 12 and 24 months of age. Treatment group *two* included the same sensory and developmental screening as in treatment condition one, as well as free transportation to all prenatal and well baby visits (until the child was two years of age). The *third* treatment group was provided the same conditions as women in treatment group two, as well as nurse home visitation during pregnancy. Treatment condition *four* included all the ingredients of the other three interventions, as well as nurse home visitation until the child was two years old. The content of the nurse home visiting programme promotes three aspects of maternal functioning – the promotion of positive health-related behaviours; competent care of children; and maternal personal development (Roles 1, 2 and 3 in Figure 5.1; Table 5.1).

At adolescence, children whose mothers participated in treatment condition *four* had fewer episodes of running away from home, fewer arrests and convictions and fewer violations of probation than did adolescents in the comparison groups (Olds et al., 1998b). Smoking, alcohol use and the number of sexual partners was also reduced in this treatment group. Consistent with other findings on the benefits of early intervention being greatest among families most at-risk (Brooks-Gunn, Gross, Kraemer, Spiker & Shapiro, 1992), in the Olds study, children born to unmarried women of low socio-economic status benefited most (Olds et al., 1998b). Olds et al. (1998b) argue that their programme is effective in addressing maternal harsh, punitive and neglectful parenting early in the child's development, thus reducing the risk of early-onset antisocial behaviour (Moffitt, Caspi, Dickson, Silva & Stanton, 1996).

Another comprehensive early intervention is the *Syracuse Family Development Research* programme. Mothers were recruited during pregnancy and provided weekly help with health, child-rearing, nutrition as well as free full-time day care once the child was born and continuing until the child turned five. Compared to a matched control group, treated children had significantly fewer referrals to the juvenile justice system than did control children at a 10-year follow-up (Lally, Mangione & Honig, 1988). Clearly successful, it must be borne in mind that these interventions were delivered at high dose and under conditions of strict adherence to a manual.

Given South African resource constraints, the direct transfer of programmes at this level of sophistication to significant numbers of at-risk caregivers is unlikely. However, good outcomes can be achieved in programmes of shorter duration than those described here. For example, a randomised control trial reported by Armstrong, Fraser, Dadds and Morris (1999) showed that an intensive visitation programme implemented for six weeks postpartum could achieve significant reductions in maternal depression as well as improvements in mothers' experience of parenting, and mother-infant interactions and infant attachment.

A pioneering South African programme, the *Perinatal Mental Health Project* at the University of Cape Town, provides counselling support to depressed women in poor communities prior to giving birth (<http://www.psychiatry.uct.ac.za/pmhp/>). By the end of 2008, more than 5 000 pregnant women had been offered antenatal screening for psychological distress. Of those screened, 33% qualified for referral. Counselling services are provided to deal with problems ranging from the need for primary support such as social grants, to depression and other psychological problems. Clients attend two to three sessions on average and a limited postnatal follow-up is provided. The programme remains to be evaluated and measures of parent-child interaction are not currently undertaken. However, programmes of this nature have the potential to deliver cost-effective preventive mental health services that benefit the mother and have the secondary effect of reducing the risk of poor early mother-child relationships.

## Early and middle childhood

Two United States preschool interventions, the Abecedarian and Perry High Scope projects, have tracked children over a period of 30 years. Both were randomised trials designed to test the effects of interventions on cognitive, academic and socio-emotional outcomes for children in disadvantaged families, and both have included long-term follow-up of school achievement and law-breaking among other variables. The *Abecedarian* programme is regarded as having the most comprehensive intervention and best research design. It included a mix of home visits and quality early care and preschool. The *Perry High Scope* was primarily a quality nursery school project with some home-visiting starting at age three or four years. Interestingly, the findings differ. At age 21, the Abecedarian group performed better than controls in education and social adjustment. However, the programme had no effect on law-breaking. The Perry experimental data showed that those

who received the intervention were *less* likely to have been in trouble with the law by the age of 19 years (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Schweinhart, Barnes & Weikart, 1993). Even so, we need to be cautious in reflecting on this success. What is often not reported is that almost one third of the children who participated in the Perry programme, who could be followed up, were later arrested and a third dropped out of school (Penn, 2005). Nonetheless, they did better than controls. This serves to illustrate the importance of having control groups in intervention studies. If a control group had been absent, it is probable that the effectiveness of the intervention would have been underestimated.

A further example is the *Montreal Longitudinal Study*. Unlike the previous two examples, social and personal skills as well as problem-solving skills were targeted. The parents were involved in an educator-directed programme on child development. Parents also attended parent-effectiveness workshops (Pagani, Tremblay, Vitaro & Parent, 1998). Self-reported delinquency at age 12 in children without perinatal complications was half of that in the control group (Pagani et al., 1998). Note that there was no independent validation of the children's self-reports, but the substantial difference is very promising.

Another set of interventions has a much more specific focus on preschool and children in the first grades of primary school who already display externalising difficulties. They include child training (Tremblay, Pagani-Kurtz, Mâsse, Vitaro & Pihl, 1995), parent training (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997), educator training (Pagani et al., 1998) or a combination of the three (Hawkins, Von Cleve & Catalano, 1991).

An example of an approach focusing on the child is the *PATHS* (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) model, which draws on neuro-cognitive models of development that focus on how language, behaviour, cognition and emotions are integrated during the life course (the Affective-Behavioural-Cognitive-Dynamic, ABCD model of development; Greenberg, 2006; Greenberg & Kusche, 1993). The ABCD model describes how children develop emotionally before they attain cognitive competence. The concepts of vertical control and the verbal processing of action are central to the theoretical understanding that underpins the model. Through instruction and lessons that use a variety of cognitive-behavioural techniques appropriate to children between the ages of four and 11 years, the *PATHS* model attempts to teach children the processes of vertical control (Greenberg, 2006). Providing opportunities for practising conscious strategies for self-control are central. The verbal identification and labelling of feelings is encouraged by way of the children using 'feeling faces' to identify their own feelings and those of others.

Experimentally tested, the PATHS intervention has been found to reduce externalising behaviour and improve social and emotional competence (Greenberg, 2006). Greenberg (2006) argues that the PATHS model is successful because it promotes improved emotion regulation and planning skills, and since children develop more effective inhibitory control they become less impulsive.

One of the shortcomings of 'stand alone' parent training, is that improvements in child behaviour in the home context may not be generalised to other settings – most notably at school (Webster-Stratton, Reid & Hammond, 2001). As a consequence, it is important to train children with deficits in social skills, anger management and problem-solving in a direct and multimodal interactive manner, in order to improve these capacities (Role 2). The underpinning of this approach is research showing how children with conduct problems experience cognitive and behavioural deficits with their peer group (Coie & Dodge, 1998). The *Webster-Stratton Incredible Years* model intervenes at the level of the parents (Role 3), as well as the child. Interventions are designed to be developmentally appropriate using performance-based approaches, such as videotape modelling, based on the understanding that younger children would have more difficulties with a cognitive or predominantly verbal approach (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). The programme makes use of videotape vignettes depicting real-life situations, such as a lack of social skills, loneliness, how to make friends and how to limit negative attributions. An additional element of the programme that attempts to harness the imagination of young children is the use of life-size puppets, such as dinosaurs, to represent the real-life problems of the children. This aspect of the child training programme is named Dinosaur School. At Dinosaur School children are shown videos of children receiving rewards for co-operation and going to Time Out for expressions of aggression. The programme makes use of group work in order to assist children in having a collaborative experience of dealing with conflict and other difficulties (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). In keeping with the principle of ensuring developmental appropriateness, specific strategies are included to ensure that the intervention maintained the interest of the children (in light of their easy distractibility), kept them motivated and acknowledged that they have fewer organising skills (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). In the parent groups, 10–12 parents met weekly for two hours for a period of between 22–24 weeks. The content of the parent training component of the programme is predominantly video-based training using 17 programmes on parenting and interpersonal skills (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997).

The therapists in the Webster-Stratton approach were all clinicians with a Masters degree or a doctoral degree in a mental health-related field and were also highly experienced. This of course does pose challenges for a low-resource setting. However, the Incredible Years intervention has recently been used with demonstrated effectiveness in some communities involved with the United Kingdom *Sure Start* intervention, designed to improve child outcomes in disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Hutchings et al., 2007).

When comparing parent training to child training and to a combination of the two, Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) have shown that all are effective but with respect to different domains. So, for instance, while parent training is superior to child training alone in altering both child and parenting behaviour, child problem-solving and conflict-management skills were improved more by child training than parent training interventions (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). While there was some marginal benefit for combined parent and child training over either on their own, neither single interventions nor a combination produced any improvement in the behaviour of children in the school setting (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1997). It is likely that interventions targeting older school-going children must include an educator component as well as parent and child training. Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) argue that despite the relative superiority of combining parent and child training, child training programmes should still be offered on their own, as some parents will simply not participate in any form of parent training.

Schools provide good sites for involving parents in universal prevention programmes aimed at improving parenting and reducing child problem behaviours. One of the better examples of parent-focused programmes delivered from the school is the *Social Development Model* of Hawkins et al. (1991). The programme comprised parent training, educator training and skills training designed to improve attachment to parents and the school, as well as interpersonal problem-solving. Parents were trained to notice socially desirable behaviour, and educators were trained in classroom management and how to reward prosocial behaviour (Hawkins et al., 1991). Children in the experimental group were less aggressive than control peers 18 months later; less likely to have initiated delinquent acts at Grade 5 and Grade 6 follow-up; and at age 18 admitted to less violence, less alcohol abuse and fewer sexual partners (Hawkins et al., 1991).

The *Montreal Longitudinal School-based Project* (Tremblay et al., 1995) also involved parents, training them to provide consistent rewards and penalties for their children, using the conceptual framework of Patterson (1982).

Their children, six-year-old boys, received a two-year school-based intervention to improve social skills and problem-solving. At the age of 12 years, boys in the intervention group were less likely to have committed theft and were less likely to get into fights (Tremblay et al., 1995). At the age of 15 years, there was less self-reported delinquency among boys in the intervention group and differences in antisocial behaviour increased as the follow-up progressed (Farrington & Welsh, 1999).

The *Fast Track* programme in the United States targets children from Grade 1 and intervenes directly with the child, the school context and the family. Randomised trials have shown it to be effective in reducing conduct problems in children, results that hold through adolescence. Among the ingredients is parent training supported by home visits. Parent training groups teach parents behaviour management and children receive social skills training (Bierman, Greenberg & Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1996; Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 2002).

Developed in Australia, the *Triple P* (Positive Parenting Program) intervention provides parents with strategies towards their competence and confidence in raising children (Sanders, 2003). It has various levels and components, and can be delivered as a universal package to all parents. With more intensive delivery Triple P can be adapted to support parents whose children have behaviour problems. The theoretical underpinning is the social learning model of parent-child interaction and a social information-processing model (Bandura, 1977), which emphasises the bi-directionality of interactions between caregivers and their children (Patterson, 1982).

Triple P teaches parents how to use naturally occurring daily interactions between themselves and their children to teach developmental competency (Sanders, 2003). It directly targets parental attributions, and in so doing, encourages alternative social explanations for their child's behaviour. The programme trains parents to use positive child management skills in order to break cycles of the child's opposition to parental demands and the consequent escalation of coercive parenting.

Several principles guide implementation of this programme. The first is the inclusion of a comprehensive media strategy. According to Sanders (2003), the pervasiveness of television in the lives of people presents an opportunity to reach parents at scale. He argues that when parents are able to make a behavioural change based on watching a television show, it is more likely that they will ascribe it to themselves and their own agency. He concedes that the upfront costs of establishing a media-based intervention may be substantial, but argues that this might be justified given the potential reach of such

projects. Second, Triple P seeks to enhance the capacity of the primary care services to support parents (primary care staff are the main delivery agents). Third, Triple P is designed to provide universal parenting programmes targeted at developmentally sensitive transition points – such as for children as they enter their first year of school. The fourth principle is the development of more intensive interventions for families at high risk. Principle five is the importance of implementing interventions that assist parents in managing work and family responsibilities; and principle six promotes better teamwork in parenting as one method to avoid parental conflict. Helping parents manage their own distress (principle seven) through an integrated parenting and brief cognitive intervention for parents with depression, has also shown to be more effective than parent training alone (Sanders & McFarland, 2000). Ensuring that the intervention is culturally and linguistically appropriate to all recipients is what guides principle eight in the Triple P programme. The final two principles are to ensure adequate dissemination and quality assurance, and being aware of the political context within which parenting interventions occur.

An evaluation of brief primary care setting interventions (consisting of four two-hour group sessions facilitated by nurses, plus four telephone follow-up consultations), has shown that Triple P is effective in reducing conduct problems among disadvantaged families (Sanders, 2003). One of the limitations of the evidence for Triple P is that many of the measured outcomes are based on maternal reports of child behaviour, or shifts, for example, in maternal attributions of the behaviour of their children (Sanders, 2003).

Parent reports on attitudes and behaviour have questionable public health significance and should be interpreted with caution (Olds, Sadler & Kitzman, 2007), because they are not necessarily correlated with actual changes in the desired outcome behaviour. For example, a recent cluster randomised trial showed that a parenting programme had *no* effect on child behaviour or parenting. However, according to self-reports provided by the very same parents, they rated their parenting as *less harsh/abusive* following the intervention – clearly at odds with the more objective observations of the study team (Hiscock et al., 2008).

The final example to be discussed is the *Parents Anonymous* programme. This is the oldest national (USA) child abuse prevention organisation. It aims to reduce child abuse by getting parents involved in and leading support groups. Weekly meetings are held for parents and children, and are led by parents and professionally trained facilitators. Parents meet while children engage in specialised programmes to foster health, growth and development.

There are also 24-hour telephone help-lines. The American programme has been evaluated on a number of occasions (see Behaviour Associates, 1976; Kumpfer, 1999; Lieber & Baker, 1977). A recent national outcome evaluation (but with *no* control group) found that the programme reduced the risks of physical abuse and improved parenting styles (National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 2007). However, it is important to note that:

- The findings are based on parental *self-report* measures (problematic as we noted previously), including the Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (Straus, Hamby, Finkelhor, Moore & Runyan, 1998), and *not* independent observations (for example, clinic reports)
- Like many other interventions, parents with substance abuse problems and those ordered by the courts show least self-reported improvement.

While the programme does not have the reduction of child conduct problems as its primary focus, support groups together with parenting advice are likely to reduce the harsh parenting that is associated with physical abuse. Cessation of abuse is likely to reduce the probability that the affected child will develop serious conduct problems (we noted this link above).

There is a *South African Parents Anonymous* programme based in Cape Town. While the South African chapter has not yet been evaluated, the programme has received very positive feedback from participants and could be a promising community-based and managed intervention to support parents living in disadvantaged communities. Its potential may lie in providing support to stressed parents and improving their capacity to cope with children under demanding circumstances. This said, evidence is needed to establish its effects on preventing or reducing the development of aggressive and antisocial behaviour in young children.

The programmes surveyed provide clear evidence that vulnerable caregivers can be supported to improve parenting with the goal of reducing one source of risk for the development of violent behaviour in their offspring. In addition, preschool programmes that do not have violence prevention as their central focus, nonetheless equip young children with skills that enable them to benefit from school, not drop out and avoid a pathway into juvenile crime. A range of early violence prevention programmes have been shown to ameliorate behaviour problems through a mix of child-, school- and parent-focused interventions.

Virtually all the examples cited thus far, with the exception of Triple P and Parents Anonymous, are drawn from sophisticated, intensive and rather costly interventions. We turn now to discuss the only South African example

that we are aware of, which was specifically designed to provide an early intervention violence prevention programme for young children and that was evaluated using a quasi-experimental design. Thereafter we discuss the Khayelitsha mother-infant intervention that was not designed with violence prevention in mind, but nonetheless has strong implications for the field. The intervention targets the early interaction behaviours such as coercive parenting that have been found to relate to later antisocial behaviour (Granic & Patterson, 2006). It provides a good example of what is possible in building an evidence base for intervention in a South African context.

## **EXAMPLES OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA**

### **The Community Psychological Empowerment Services (COPEs) project**

*COPEs* was an initiative implemented at preschool level in Lavender Hill, a working-class community in Cape Town. Lavender Hill is characterised by high levels of social adversity, gangsterism, domestic violence and unemployment (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). The project was initiated in order to address behavioural problems identified in a number of preschools in the area. Behaviours included aggression, enuresis, sexually provocative behaviour and excessive fearfulness. *COPEs* used the intervention model developed by Webster-Stratton and Hammond (1997) to intervene at a number of different levels (Roles 1 and 3). *COPEs* aimed to reduce the levels of aggressive behaviour among preschool children by increasing their positive behaviour, assisting educators to set limits non-punitively, and in so doing, improve their subjective feeling of competency, and to increase the competency of parents in setting limits and encouraging positive behaviour.

The *COPEs* intervention comprised a two-week assessment phase, an intervention and a follow-up evaluation two weeks later. Groups of parents, educators and children met in parallel over the course of eight weeks. The parent training group used video material as in the parenting programme of Webster-Stratton, as well as locally developed materials aimed at teaching parenting skills, helping parents be more empathic towards their children, and in so doing, also helping them understand their child's behaviour (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). The educators' groups aimed to teach educators behaviour modification principles in order to set limits non-punitively, to assist educators in thinking critically in order to better understand the factors underlying disruptive behaviour and to help educators to lower their levels

of stress. As a result of the very different developmental level of children in the Lavender Hill community as compared to the American counterparts, Petersen and Carolissen (2000) make the point that the Webster-Stratton material had to be substantially adapted for the children's groups (although it remained relevant for the parent groups). Children's groups attempted to introduce preschool children to rules and consequences, including rewards for positive behaviour, the teaching of social and behavioural skills, teaching anger management skills and helping children to identify feelings in themselves and others (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000).

COPES was a laudable attempt at implementing a multimodal intervention (school, parent and child) in a context of high adversity. Its community-based nature coupled with careful planning, assessment and implementation are considerable strengths. Unfortunately, the nature of its design and evaluation makes any conclusion about efficacy or effectiveness difficult. There are no independent measures of child aggressive behaviour, and the only outcome measures at the level of educators and parents are by parents and educators themselves, the actual recipients of the intervention. Feeling more competent at child management is not indicative of any change in child behaviour management in practice, and even if it were, without any independent measures of improved child behaviour in school, we are not in a position to come to any definitive conclusion about intervention efficacy. There are also no details about baseline differences between the matched schools in the intervention and the comparison groups. In the absence of any randomisation there is no way of determining whether reported differences are due to the intervention or to pre-existing differences between schools. As a case study, the COPES intervention does provide some insight into the process of implementing a multimodal intervention in a context of high adversity, and may provide some useful guidelines for future interventions. However, without any independent observations, objective measures, or any data to suggest that the findings were not simply due to reporting bias or pre-existing differences between schools, it is not possible to draw any meaningful conclusions about programme efficacy.

Nonetheless, it points to the very real possibility of testing and implementing violence prevention initiatives with young children in South Africa.

### **The Khayelitsha mother-infant intervention**

This intervention, while not primarily directed at violence prevention, is the first, intensive, early home-visiting programme using a randomised

controlled trial design in South Africa. It targets early interaction behaviours including coercive parenting that has been found to relate to later antisocial behaviour (Granic & Patterson, 2006). Several trials of early interventions aimed at improving maternal sensitivity (Role 3 on the matrix), and reducing infant attachment insecurity have been conducted. A meta-analysis of 70 intervention studies shows that both maternal sensitivity and infant attachment security were improved (Bakermans-Kranenburg, Van IZendoorn & Juffer, 2003).

A pilot intervention in Khayelitsha found that compared to women not receiving an intervention, those who had home visits from trained mothers from the community were found at six months postpartum to be more sensitive in engagement with their infants and to express more positive affect (Cooper et al., 2002). Thereafter, a randomised controlled trial was undertaken in the same area to test an intervention designed to encourage mothers to engage in sensitive, responsive interactions with their infants. The intervention was delivered by women resident in Khayelitsha with no formal specialist qualifications. They were trained in basic parenting and counselling skills, as well as in the specific mother-infant intervention to be tested. The intervention was delivered in participants' homes in hour-long sessions and comprised 16 sessions in total, ending at six months postpartum. The intervention was associated with significant benefit to the mother-infant relationship. At both six and 12 months, compared to control mothers, mothers in the intervention group were significantly more sensitive and less intrusive in their interactions with their infants (Cooper et al., 2009). The intervention was also associated with a higher rate of secure infant attachments at 18 months. The intervention also reduced maternal intrusive and coercive behaviour (Cooper et al., 2009), one of the aspects of maternal and child behaviour related to early-onset externalising behaviour (Moffitt, 1993).

The attachment finding is crucial in that, as Fonagy (2004) argues, socialisation to inhibit natural aggression occurs through the development of self-control. Self-control in turn requires the development of symbolisation, which itself develops as a function of the mother-child relationship (Role 3). For Fonagy (2004), a poorly functioning attachment system is therefore likely to be instrumental in the development of later aggression and violence. Negative attachment experiences are centrally implicated in the development of a sense of self and the processing of social interactions (Bradshaw & Garbarino, 2004). Other investigators (Dodge et al., 1990) have proposed that social information-processing biases may lead to an increase in violent

behaviour that is congruent with the attachment research. Aggressive children are hypersensitive to threat, falsely attributing hostility to the action of others, and overlooking other more benign contextual factors (an accidental collision for instance) that may more readily explain the behaviour of another (Crick & Dodge, 1994).

Bradshaw and Garbarino (2004) argue that successful prevention initiatives such as the Olds programme that target early maternal sensitivity and the early caregiver-child relationship, influence social-cognitive processes. It is the intention to follow these children to establish whether the improvements in the mother-infant relationship do indeed result in reduced levels of aggression at age seven to eight years.

The Khayelitsha study demonstrates that trained lay persons can be effective change agents, that a programme of relatively limited intensity (compared, for example, to the Olds programme) can produce gains in a key aspect of early development. Also, that a rigorous test of a community-based intervention is entirely possible in a South African context.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION**

A considerable evidence base exists for the benefits of a variety of interventions in different contexts that prevent the later onset of youth violence. Common themes include the preponderance of evidence from rich countries; the use of professionals; high levels of dose and intervention duration; and the benefits of a multimodal approach. Based on the interventions discussed above, we have derived a number of guiding principles for intervention implementation, which we present here.

*Intervene early.* Bullis and Walker (1994) have shown how, if aggressive problems in young children are not adequately addressed before the age of eight, they become increasingly less responsive to intervention and more likely to become chronic (Webster-Stratton & Taylor, 2001). Campbell (1990) has demonstrated that 50% of violent adolescents can be identified by the age of six, while Tremblay (2006) has argued convincingly that the genesis of later offending lies in the 'aggressive behaviour' of two- to three-year-olds. Thus there is substantial evidence that interventions that target younger age groups are likely to be more successful than those that target older age groups.

*Ground interventions in theory and epidemiology.* Olds, Sadler and Kitzman (2007) have convincingly shown how intervention development is improved if interventions are grounded in theory and epidemiology. Furthermore, the

Table 5.1: Interventions and the matrix

	Roles			Dispositional and environmental domains				
	Provision and Protection	Socialisation	Caregiving	Environmental stressors	Caregiver mental state	Siblings and other family members	Parenting knowledge	Cultural scripts of parenting
Home visitation (Olds et al.)	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Syracuse Family Development Research Programme	X	X	X	X			X	
Abecedarian and Perry High Scope Projects		X	X	X			X	
Montreal Longitudinal Study		X	X		X		X	
PATHS		X			X		X	
Webster-Stratton model		X	X		X		X	
Social Development Model	X	X	X				X	
Fast Track		X	X				X	
Triple P		X	X		X		X	X
Parents Anonymous		X	X	X	X		X	X
COPEs		X	X	X	X		X	X
Khayelitsha mother-infant intervention	X	X	X	X	X		X	X

theory must be explicitly linked to both the content of the intervention as well as the measured outcomes, rather than lip-service being paid to theoretical foundation.

*Use appropriate staff.* Olds, Sadler and Kitzman (2007) state that, of all the early parenting interventions that they considered (and they considered only RCTs – randomised controlled trials), the programmes that sent nurses into the homes of high-risk families had the strongest evidence of efficacy and effectiveness. They argue that the reason for this success is because nurses are respected and their input valued at this time in the life cycle. We would argue that this is to some extent an American phenomenon and that the long history of the use of community workers and primary health workers in low- and middle-income countries, as well as recent evidence, suggests that paraprofessionals can be used effectively (Rahman, Malik, Sikander, Roberts & Creed, 2008).

*Ensure adequate dose.* As has already been stated, the programme of Olds and colleagues is noted for its intensity and dose level with participants receiving over 50 home visits. In resource-constrained settings this level of intensity is simply not an option in any cost-effective manner. However, evidence is required to establish whether similar effects can be obtained using paraprofessionals and with fewer visits.

*Integrate into other services along a continuum of care.* Given the burden of disease in South Africa, it is unlikely that the government (even in the context of extremely high levels of violence) is going to invest heavily in universal stand-alone violence prevention programmes. The challenge for behavioural scientists in South Africa is to establish the extent to which interventions can be integrated into other programmes along the continuum of care, such as the public works programme of community health workers in the area of HIV prevention, child survival, Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (an established programme to prevent HIV infection being passed from mother to child during birth), and others.

*Adopt multimodal interventions and the appropriate balance between universal versus targeted interventions.* Tremblay (2006) argues that programmes should be universal during pregnancy and early childhood, while there should be more focused interventions for toddlers and young children who appear to be on a chronic trajectory of physical aggressiveness. During pregnancy and the early neonatal and infancy period, home visiting is the intervention of choice. For scientific purposes and in order to establish the evidence base for the intervention, Tremblay (2006) argues that interventions should be tested in all environments – from the family

and day care, to school and the workplace. Preschool and school-based interventions must be multimodal in nature and include parent, child and educator training.

*Design interventions using the best available evidence.* In poor countries a lack of resources reduces the chances of conducting RCTs and effectiveness studies. Nonetheless, effective youth violence prevention is a pressing need. For this reason alone, it is imperative that the scientific community is provided with the resources to test interventions for local conditions. However, it is the NGO community that implements these programmes. There is no likelihood that they will be able to use sophisticated scientific tests to test the efficacy of their interventions. Nonetheless, we emphasise the importance of their implementing interventions with fidelity and based on available evidence (that is, knowledge of the relevant literature) – even if this is drawn from studies conducted elsewhere. NGOs should also strive to monitor programme implementation, and to establish their own evidence base by subjecting interventions to evaluation.

Lipsey and Cordray (2000) make sound points in regard to the practical challenges of implementing RCTs as designed, even in well-resourced settings. They note that while ideal experimental design is to be encouraged, due to practical circumstances in the field, there is normally little control over a range of variables that are likely to have an influence on the intended outcomes. Thus, it could be argued that in resource-constrained settings, and where the imperative to intervene given the levels of adversity is high, that the implementation of RCTs (or quasi-experiments) with a longitudinal follow-up is a luxury.

However, an alternative argument is that if resources are scarce, having a good evidence base, and using interventions of known efficacy and effectiveness is, in some ways, even more important than in wealthy countries. In light of the costly nature of early intervention and in a context of competing demands for resources, it becomes imperative to make strategic decisions as to how these resources should be used. There are even ethical issues at stake here. We would argue that it is indeed unethical to use scarce resources to implement interventions of unknown effectiveness.

Elliott and Tolan have correctly stated that ‘doing something is not always better than doing nothing’ (1999, p. 16). South Africa’s non-government sector fulfils a crucial role in providing services where government has limited reach or capacity (rural areas), or where the government has ideologically been reluctant to intervene (until recently the provision of antiretroviral therapy). However, the sector is also replete with examples of interventions

that, while attempting to address significant social problems, do so without an evidence base or any controlled evaluation. A significant danger is that they run the risk of lulling policymakers into falsely believing that the problem is being addressed (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). The fact that none of the 12 violence prevention programmes considered by Parker, Dawes and Farr (2004) employed a randomised controlled trial nor any form of experimental design, is evidence of a major limitation. Furthermore, a number did not build their programmes on an existing evidence base for effectiveness.

In addition, there is evidence of how some interventions may in fact do more harm than good (Catalano, Arthur, Hawkins, Berglund & Olson, 1998). It is possible, for example, that in the context of an intervention programme that attempts to prevent child abuse, overburdened government social workers may choose not to intervene with a particular family on the basis that 'something is already being done'. If the intervention programme is of poor design and quality and is in fact not 'preventing the abuse', this has significant implications for the child at risk – and may even compound the effects of the abuse.

A final danger of implementing early intervention programmes that are poorly conceptualised and implemented is that as their ineffectiveness becomes widely known, the very notion of early intervention becomes tainted. Olds et al. (1998c) argue that if programmes are implemented in a poor fashion, it is possible that policy groups and government may become cynical about the value of social science in delivering what it promises, when in fact the failure is rather due to the lack of a scientific approach to the problem.

## CONCLUSION

There is a growing evidence base about the effectiveness of specific interventions involving early intervention, home visitation and parent and child training. Our responsibility in South Africa is to design programmes using the best available evidence, measure inputs and outcomes as objectively as is possible, and combine process and outcome evaluation methods to establish their effects (Farrington & Welsh, 1999; Lipsey & Cordray, 2000). This costs money, but deployment of untested or ineffective interventions result in a much greater social and financial cost.

We believe that local researchers and programmes have a responsibility to investigate the extent to which their interventions are effective. Indeed, continually replicating interventions of unknown effectiveness can be not only a waste of precious resources but can be harmful. One way to prevent

this occurring is to build partnerships between service providers and researchers, with the expressed intention of strengthening the evidence base for early interventions to prevent the development of violent conduct. The Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005 as Amended) provides an opportunity to develop appropriate interventions. One of the interesting features of the Act, and an advance on its predecessor, is its recognition of the importance of early intervention and preventive services to vulnerable families and children, including interventions to improve parenting skills and non-violent discipline (Section 144(1) of the Act).

A major challenge in providing the legislated services is the sheer scale of family vulnerability (Proudlock, Dutschke, Jamieson, Monson & Smith, 2008; Streak, Yu & Van den Berg, 2008). Aggressive behaviour does not stand alone in these families and vulnerabilities extend way beyond parenting skills. The need to support vulnerable families is significant, but the professional social worker supply is simply not sufficient (Barberton, 2006). In order to extend the range of personnel available to provide support to vulnerable families, we have to think out of the professional box. Innovative approaches to service delivery by paraprofessionals trained in home visitation, counselling and crisis intervention, is needed to supplement scarce social worker resources. These are present in South Africa as illustrated in the Khayelitsha programme described (Cooper et al., 2009). There are a number of other examples including the Parent Centre based in Cape Town (<http://www.theparentcentre.org.za>), which seeks to improve parenting and the Perinatal Mental Health Project noted previously (<http://www.psychiatry.uct.ac.za/pmhp/>).

The limited evidence base on interventions staffed by non-professionals in South Africa provides an opportunity to investigate whether it is possible to obtain changes in parenting of young children at risk for the development of violent conduct, with affordable interventions that are well supervised, and retain the core effective ingredients of the 'Rolls Royce' programmes, but that are adapted to local conditions and new populations (Green, 2001; Lee, 2008; Wandersman, 2003a, 2003b). This theme is explored in the concluding section of the book.

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# Chapter Six



## SCHOOL-BASED YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS

*Anik Gevers & Alan J. Flisher*

This chapter is dedicated to the memory of Alan Flisher, with thanks for wonderful mentorship. Alan passed away before this chapter was published.

### INTRODUCTION

Ideally, schools provide youths with several benefits beyond a formal education. They facilitate optimal cognitive development and provide opportunities for developing social, emotional and cultural competencies that create a solid foundation for success in adulthood. However, these benefits are eclipsed or not fulfilled at all when schools struggle with challenges such as high levels of violence. Research evidence and the popular press have drawn attention to the high levels of violence committed by and against the youth in South African society, and specifically in and around schools, which are often not the safe havens that we idealise them to be. This challenge demands immediate intervention.

The South African Constitution sets forth that ‘a child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child’ (Section 28 of the Bill of Rights). In addition, every South African child has the right to protection from maltreatment, neglect, abuse, degradation or exploitation. These rights enshrined in the Constitution are similarly guarded by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by South Africa in 1995. However, the high levels of school violence suggest that we are not adequately protecting and promoting the best interests of children. Youth exposure either to direct or indirect physical, verbal or sexual violence or bullying at school concerns more than just the school system, because it is a human rights and public health issue that demands the attention and

resources of multiple sectors. Such collaboration is particularly important if we are to intervene successfully and prevent future school violence.

Several factors create opportunities for such violence, including lack of security and poor infrastructure, poor supervision of learners, little support or avenues for reporting violence and helping victim-survivors, and lenient or lack of policies to deal effectively with perpetrators. However, youth violence in schools merely exploits these vulnerabilities and is not caused by these weaknesses. Indeed, the aetiology of school-based violence is complex and interwoven throughout the school and its day-to-day functioning as well as several non-school, systemic and individual factors. This aetiology is important to consider, particularly when developing school violence prevention programmes. We will not provide a detailed analysis of this topic; instead, we shall outline the most common factors that play a role in the causation of school violence.

Historical legacies of violence alone do not account for the very high levels of youth violence in South African schools. Other systemic issues, including poverty and social inequality, also contribute to youth violence, as youths react to the continued experiences of disempowerment and attempt to secure some personal power in whatever arena and in whichever way that they are able. School violence is not only restricted to economically disadvantaged groups. Indeed, research evidence suggests that socio-economic status does not offer protection from violence, which, albeit in different manifestations, is prevalent in low-income and high-income schools (Burton, 2008). In addition to the struggle for scarce resources in many families and communities, levels of family violence or family involvement in crime and leisure boredom contribute to school violence as the school, home and community contexts are mutually influential (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000; Caldwell et al., 2004). Also problematic is the lack of adequate services for victims and perpetrators of violence and their families. By not appropriately addressing trauma with victim-survivors and their families, and also not effectively addressing violent behaviour with perpetrators, the behaviour is not remediated and the cycle of violence from childhood through adulthood at various levels of society is perpetuated. High levels of substance abuse also play a role in violent behaviour (Champion et al., 2004; Champion, Wagoner, Song, Brown & Wolfson, 2008; Dunkle et al., 2006). Several school factors also play a role in the aetiology of youth violence and these will be discussed later in the chapter. It is perhaps not surprising that youths resort to violence given the lessons they learn within their own neighbourhoods, communities and country where violence has become a norm (Burton, 2008).

At the individual level, the youth's personality and ability factors need to be considered as contributory factors to youth violence (Burton, 2008). These individual factors are in turn adversely affected by contexts in which youths live. Each of the aetiological factors discussed do not alone predict school violence. It is the interactions between individual and environmental factors that contribute to the widespread problem of youth violence in South African schools.

This chapter will focus on primary school (Grade 1 to Grade 7) and secondary school (Grade 8 to Grade 12) violence by providing a summary of the nature and extent of violence in South African schools, and then discuss the common outcomes of exposure to such violence. Following the presentation of a rationale for school-based interventions, we will discuss general characteristics of successful school-based interventions and describe several South African programmes that address the problem of school violence.

## VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

In contravention of the nation's commitments to uphold the rights of all children to learn in a safe environment, South African children are exposed to high levels of violence within their school contexts in addition to the high levels of violence in South African homes and communities. School-related violence is often perpetrated by fellow learners or school staff, and at times perpetrators from the community or other schools enter the school specifically to commit violent acts. This violence takes many forms, including corporal punishment, bullying, gang-related behaviour, sexual abuse, physical assault, verbal abuse, theft, robbery and threats. Not only does school violence take many forms, it can also have different functions, including establishing a social hierarchy, retaliating against a perceived wrongdoing, or disciplining transgressions (Burnett, 1998).

### Overview

During the National Schools Violence Study, 12 794 learners, 260 school principals and 521 educators across South Africa were interviewed about violence in schools (Burton, 2008). Primary (n=120) and secondary (n=140) schools in metro (22.8% primary, 21.5% secondary), urban (29.9% primary, 45.9% secondary) and rural (47.2% primary, 32.6% secondary) areas in all nine provinces participated and learners (53% attending secondary school) from every grade in each school were recruited for the structured interviews. The

study found that 15.3% of school learners in South Africa reported experiencing some form of violence at school in the last 12 months. This violence took the form of threats (12.8%), physical assaults (5.8%), sexual assaults (2.3%), robbery (4.6%), theft (25.9%) or bullying (12%). Except for physical assaults, all of these violent acts are more likely to occur at the higher levels of secondary school than more junior levels. Respondents in this study reported that their experiences of violence in the school were not isolated, but that the perpetrators were most often known to them and that violent victimisation occurred several times. Exacerbating this situation is the availability of weapons, alcohol and drugs within the school and community settings (Burton, 2008). Schools have come to reflect the high levels of violence in South African society.

Learners report fearing specific locations in their schools – the most feared are the toilets for both male and female learners (Burton, 2008). However, the most common site of violence in schools is classrooms, particularly those in which learners are left unsupervised (Burton, 2008). Other areas that learners fear are open areas or playing fields and sports fields. These areas are often not well supervised, creating opportunities for violent victimisation (Burton, 2008). Also part of the school context is the twice-daily trip between the youth's home and school. This trip makes youths particularly vulnerable, as they often have to use public transport or walk without an adult chaperone, and 14.3% of learners, particularly girls, admitted to fearing this trip (Burton, 2008). Little is known about violent victimisation on this trip, because it is often not considered in school violence research and is not differentiated in studies on community violence. Nevertheless, it is a venue of youth violence and as it affects school attendance and academic performance, it should be considered part of the concept of school violence.

## **Specific types of violence**

Specific types of violence, namely bullying, gang activity, educator-on-learner abuse and sexual violence, disproportionately afflict the school-going youth population in South Africa, and thus we give them additional attention here.

### ***Bullying***

Bullying, which encompasses repeated negative physical or psychological actions by an individual or group of individuals, is an international problem. Results from self-report questionnaires completed by Grade 8 learners in Cape Town indicated that 52% of boys and 37% of girls were involved in bullying during the past year (Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard

& King, 2008). Data from a self-report survey completed by Grade 8 and Grade 11 learners in Cape Town and Durban shows that 36.3% of these students were involved in bullying within the past 12 months (Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007). These youths could be further classified into one of three categories:

- Bullies (8.2%)
- Victims (19.3%)
- Bully-victims (8.7%).

Among a sample of Grade 11 learners in the Eastern Cape who completed self-report questionnaires of their bullying-related behaviour and experiences during the past year, 3.9% were found to be bullies, 16.5% were found to be victims and 5.5% were bully-victims (Mlisa, Ward, Flisher & Lombard, 2008). Generally, higher rates of involvement in bullying were found among younger students and males (Liang et al., 2007; Townsend et al., 2008).

Research has identified that there are several other roles that youths can fill within bullying interactions, including that of ringleader, follower or reinforcer, as well as being an outsider or a defender such that, within a school system, it is likely that most children will become involved with bullying in some way (Smith, 2004). Involvement in bullying has been linked with school dropout. Specifically, female students who drop out of high school were more likely to be bully-victims before dropping out of school (Townsend et al., 2008). Among male dropouts, significantly more of those students who dropped out of high school than those who stayed were bullies or bully-victims while at school (Townsend et al., 2008).

Other adverse outcomes have also been associated with bullying. For example, bullies have been found to be more likely to be involved in violent, antisocial and risk behaviours than those youths not involved in bullying at all (Liang et al., 2007). Bully-victims had similar risk profiles as the bullies, although they also shared some levels of risk behaviour and violence with the victims (Liang et al., 2007).

### ***Gang activity***

Focus group discussions with Cape Town high-school learners indicated that schools are a vulnerable site for gang activity, particularly in the Cape Town area (Bility, 1999). Student reports indicated that males starting high school are the primary targets for gang recruiting. However, initiation into gang activity often begins at the primary school level. Students described that in

addition to the formal gangs that are usually run by adults, some friendship groups among the youth develop into informal gangs in schools.

Both formal and informal gangs are disruptive in schools for a variety of reasons:

- They conduct their gang business (bullying or intimidation, drug peddling, obtaining or selling stolen property, or prostitution) on school property
- Or they demand payment from non-members in exchange for momentary safety from gang violence
- Or they force school closure with threats or acts of vandalism and other violence against staff and/or learners (Bility, 1999).

Much gang activity takes place around the toilets, particularly drug dealing, and gang members are prone to assault those students who innocently arrive in this area and who have no intention of becoming involved in these activities (Burnett, 1998; Burton, 2008). Most gangs have antisocial values, and violence plays a predominant role in gang activity within the gang, between gangs and within communities. Youths are drawn to this sub-culture that offers them an attractive alternative to the mainstream society in which they are largely disempowered (Bility, 1999). Not only are the youth gang members socialised into a violent lifestyle, but this choice encourages a continuation of high levels of youth violence and, through gang status, a glorification of such a lifestyle among many children. Furthermore, gang activity in and around schools continues to disrupt the schooling of South African youth.

### ***Educator-on-learner violence***

In the context of school violence, educators do not only fill the roles of preventing violence and intervening after violence has occurred. In some cases, educators also perpetrate various forms of violence against learners. Principals at two out of every five schools reported known incidents of educator-on-learner verbal abuse, and principals at one out of every four schools reported educator-perpetrated physical abuse of learners (Burton, 2008). The extent of such violence is largely unknown, because the above-mentioned respondents only admitted to knowledge of several such incidents, but provided no more detail. Similar to learner-perpetrated school violence, schools generally do not keep detailed records concerning educator-perpetrated violence. Given that principals and learners report that educator-perpetrated violence has occurred on more than one occasion, it

can be acknowledged as a concern and additional research should explore the issue. Although not much is known about educator-perpetrated violence in schools, evidence is being pieced together, particularly from learner reports.

Most commonly, educators use corporal punishment to discipline learners even though this form of punishment violates South African legislation (Burton, 2008). The majority of primary school learners (70.1%) and almost half (47.5%) of secondary school learners reported experiencing corporal punishment delivered by an educator or principal (Burton, 2008). Educators using corporal punishment justify this method by maintaining that no other method of discipline and control is effective (Burton, 2008). There is a strong correlation between the levels of corporal punishment used in a school and the levels of learner violence in the same school, but no causal direction for this relationship has been established (Burton, 2008). In addition to this physical violence, educators have also been implicated in verbal abuse, such as shaming, humiliating or yelling at learners, particularly in group situations. In 5.8% of thefts, 5% of threats and 4.6% of robberies, learners identified educators as the perpetrators (Pelser, 2008), indicating that educators are involved in several types of school violence as perpetrators.

Also concerning are the so-called 'love relationships' between educators and learners that are most often initiated by educators (Burton, 2008). Prevalence data is difficult to ascertain given the high level of secrecy around these relationships. However, such relationships are common enough to enter into youths' discourse and awareness of violence in the school context. Educator-perpetrated sexual abuse does not only occur in the context of relationships, but various forms of sexual abuse against learners take place in schools (Burton, 2008; Pelser, 2008). Regardless of whether these relationships are consensual or not, they are unethical and a violent act against the learner in the relationship as well as those at risk for being lured or coerced into such relationships, and these relationships should not be tolerated by the school administration (Pelser, 2008). These examples discuss direct forms of violence perpetrated by educators, but we contend that educators who do not prevent or intervene in school violence condone it through their silence and inaction, which is in itself a contribution to school and youth violence in South Africa.

### ***Sexual violence***

Violence is woven throughout social relations between boys and girls even at very young ages (Bhana, 2005). This violence is, at least in part, a manifestation of the social constructions of masculinity and femininity

together with the gender inequality, which affords males more power than females (Bhana, 2005). This gendered violence often takes the form of sexual violence and rates of sexual violence in South Africa are among the highest in the world. Although the Department of Education does not collect data specifically on sexual violence in schools, researchers have documented that such violence occurs within schools around the country (Burton, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2001). Young girls are often the victims of various forms of sexual harassment and assaults or the threat of it in their home, community and school environments. It should be noted that although girls are most often the victims and boys most often the perpetrators of sexual violence, boys also experience sexual victimisation. Indeed, among primary school learners who reported sexual victimisation there was a larger ratio of boys than girls (Burton, 2008). Educators, other school staff, other school learners and community members are among the perpetrators of sexual violence and they often face little or no consequence of these violations even within school systems (Human Rights Watch, 2001). When male learners are the perpetrators they often act in groups, not only making it difficult for female learners to escape, but also making them vulnerable to gang rape (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Female victims often know the male learner perpetrators as friends, classmates or fellow students. In addition, high rates of violence occur within intimate relationships. In a Western Cape sample of school-going adolescents in intimate relationships, 20.7% reported perpetrating partner violence and 16.4% reported an intention to do so (Flisher, Myer, Marais, Lombard & Reddy, 2007). Although this violence encompasses any (not only sexual) violent act directed at a partner, violence within an intimate relationship may make partners acquiesce to sex with their violent partner out of fear or learned submission (Jewkes, 2002).

The National Schools Violence Study found that 3.1% of secondary school learners and 1.4% of primary school learners reported experiencing unwanted sexual contact in the past year while at school, most commonly at the toilets or in classrooms (Burnett, 1998; Burton, 2008). These figures are considered conservative not only as a result of underreporting of this type of violence, but also because respondents may not have included verbal sexual harassment, fondling or groping. In addition, these numbers exclude those students who believe they are engaging in a consensual sexual relationship even if it is violent or illegal. Furthermore, these figures include only sexual contact that occurred within the school. Researchers have documented how female learners are sexually harassed or assaulted

through sexual comments, attempts and actual groping or fondling by male learners even in full view of adults (Bhana, 2005; Burton, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2001). These adults often take no action to stop or discipline the offenders, or support the victims (Burton, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2001). This inaction suggests that the sexual behaviour is acceptable and such an attitude exacerbates the problem. Acts of sexual violence are not isolated. Half the learners who reported being victims of sexual assault also reported that they had been victimised in this way more than once (Burton, 2008). Within schools there is generally little support for the victims of sexual violence and many victims do not report these experiences for fear of further negative consequences from the perpetrator(s), fellow learners or school staff, or due to a belief or fear that they will not be believed or helped (Burton, 2008; Human Rights Watch, 2001). There are no adequate services for perpetrators of sexual violence, particularly learner-perpetrators (Human Rights Watch, 2001). This paucity of services exacerbates the problem of violence in South African schools and the adverse outcomes arising from the high levels of violence.

### **RELATIONSHIP OF VIOLENCE TO ADVERSE OUTCOMES**

School violence has a myriad negative consequences and adverse outcomes for victims and their families, perpetrators, educators and other learners. Many of these adverse outcomes have long-term and wide-ranging effects. Violence carries with it risk of both physical and psychological harm, as well as negatively impacting on youths' cognitive and social development (Burton, 2008; Ward, Flisher, Zissis, Muller & Lombard, 2001). In addition to the range of physical injuries potentially resulting from violence, sexual assault also carries the additional risks of HIV and other STDs, and pregnancy. School violence undermines youths' and educators' abilities to function healthfully both within and outside the school context (Burton, 2008).

The negative psychological sequelae of exposure to violence have been well documented. Youths who have been exposed to violence, either as witnesses or victims of violence perpetrated by either someone they know or a stranger, often experience symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression (Ward et al., 2001). Furthermore, if the violence was perpetrated by a familiar person, youths are also likely to experience anxiety (Ward et al., 2001). Youths exposed to violence are also at significantly greater risk of engaging in antisocial or delinquent

behaviour, and as adults they are more likely to become involved in criminal behaviour (Burton, 2008). Bullies are more likely than victims and youths not involved in bullying, to be involved in other violent behaviour (for example, fighting, carrying a weapon), antisocial behaviour (for example, theft, vandalism) and risk-taking behaviour (for example, walking alone, driving after using substances, being a passenger of a driver who has used substances, smoking, alcohol use and cannabis use) (Liang et al., 2007). Bully-victims differ from bullies only with their higher rate of suicidal ideation, which was at a similar level to that of victims (Liang et al., 2007). Bully-victims are also significantly more likely to engage in vandalism and suicidal behaviour than either bullies or victims (Liang et al., 2007). This information indicates the importance of providing services for both perpetrators and victims, particularly those youths who may be both perpetrating violence and victimised in other acts of violence.

The core mission of schools, to educate the youth, is undermined by violence because it interferes with youths' academic development and performance (Burton, 2008; Ward et al., 2001). Absenteeism, truancy and school dropout rates are significantly increased in schools with continuous violence (Burton, 2008; Townsend et al., 2008). Among the youth who have dropped out of school, more are likely to report involvement in bullying, particularly as bullies or bully-victims. However, no causal direction in this relationship can be deduced at this stage (Townsend et al., 2008). Victims of sexual violence also suffer disrupted schooling as they often miss a lot of school, transfer schools or drop out of school entirely (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Even if they continue to attend school, their concentration is often impaired following the sexual trauma, thus resulting in a decline in academic achievement (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

The youth attending schools where violence is common tend to have a cynical world view and are often pessimistic about their own future prospects (Bility, 1999). With such attitudes it is perhaps not surprising that these youths often make poor choices. The negative effects of school violence jeopardise youths' futures and this affects the futures of our communities and society. The youth grow up almost without any safe havens and the foundations for their adulthood are disrupted by violence. Moreover, the lack of appropriate responses to school violence merely serves to create an impression of acceptance of such behaviour. Thus, the youth learn that violence is acceptable and that there is little that can be done to challenge it. In the case of gendered violence, gender inequality is inculcated in the youth such that it is more likely to be perpetuated

throughout their adulthood, as is the general culture of violence and disrespect for human rights.

### **RATIONALE FOR INTERVENING IN SCHOOLS**

The high levels of school violence, and its negative sequelae, indicate that violence prevention interventions are urgently needed. Schools are a particularly important setting for such interventions. Indeed, school-based violence prevention can potentially address broader contexts, such as interpersonal violence, in addition to intervening on issues of violence within schools. The school environment offers ease of access to young people, with 73.6% of South Africans between the ages of five and 24 years attending an educational institution, and 90% of those aged five to 19 years doing so (Department of Education, 2007; Flisher et al., 2000). Thus, a larger proportion of the youth are likely to be exposed to a violence prevention programme within a school setting than any other formal or informal gathering place. As a powerful socialising agent, schools shape youths' lives and prepare them for adulthood through affecting their cognitive, social, emotional and cultural development. Therefore, violence prevention in this setting can have an impact even beyond the school itself.

By mobilising the existing resources of the school, interventions in this setting can be cost-effective. Even if additional resources are necessary to develop and implement an intervention, they are minimised since existing infrastructure, facilities and processes can be utilised. Indeed, the very ecology of the school environment can be an asset to violence prevention programmes if prosocial aspects of the school and the curriculum are mobilised and strengthened. The curriculum revision in 2006 mandated the inclusion of Life Orientation classes that aim to provide learners with the skills and knowledge to choose healthy lifestyles, including appropriate problem-solving, respect for others and an understanding of human rights (Department of Education website, 2008). These topics are also recommended components of violence prevention programmes (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000). School-based interventions can address the unique violence within the schools that is all too prevalent. School-based programmes have the opportunity not only to prevent violent behaviour and redress its negative consequences, but also to begin to promote health and well-being in the youth by creating a safe environment. Furthermore, the school environment can be utilised in non-traditional ways for the purpose of addressing youth violence, such as inviting parents and community members to participate in safety and

anti-violence programming. Through such programming, the school can become a symbol and leader in the community for safety and promotion of youth positive development. The school setting also provides opportunities for evaluation of interventions such that the evidence base can be built to ensure that effective programmes are implemented.

Working in schools is not without its challenges, which need to be addressed proactively to maximise the likelihood of success. Schools are not a homogeneous group and any programme and working relationship will need to bear in mind the specific context of an individual school, including resource availability, infrastructure, size, school and teaching culture, and the management and organisation of the school. Therefore, the relationship between the school stakeholders and the programme and research stakeholders is an essential foundation for any school-based interventions. This relationship needs to be open, positive and collaborative instead of defensive and oppositional. Even though both parties may agree on the goal of creating safety and preventing violence, they also have potentially different additional goals and ideas of how to achieve the common goals. Congruence between programme and school philosophies concerning violence and safety should not be assumed, but this should be a goal to establish during the process of building school-based interventions at individual schools. A positive working relationship should allow for identification of existing strengths of all parties involved, such that these can be maximised potentially with the need to rearrange systems to fit programme models. Careful discussions should focus on what is feasible and relevant within a particular school setting, such that a balance between flexibility and fidelity of programming can be achieved. Although the largest portion of government's budget is allocated to education, South African schools are facing significant resource shortages that place a very high demand on educators and other school staff as well as the infrastructure. Some schools experience greater resource challenges than others, and also there are differences between schools in how they allocate their resources and their development priorities. This situation demands careful discussions to understand a school's resource profile and how violence programming fits into the strategic plan. Creative use of existing resources, sharing resources and attaining vital resources through partnerships and strategic aid will likely be required, in order to best address youths' needs and create a healthy and safe school environment. A strong partnership will facilitate more support for and sustainability of the prevention programme, and thus this relationship is an essential foundation for the success and ultimate achievement of safety in any school.

Also important are considerations about the community within which the school is located and the families and communities where the learners live. It is important to consider both risk and protective factors related to youth violence within learners' homes and neighbourhoods. Another situation that programme specialists need to bear in mind is the school culture, including high rates of absenteeism in many schools. The argument could be made that if the school environment becomes less violent and safer, then the problems of dropout and absenteeism may decrease, and learners may become less afraid and more motivated to participate in schooling. Indeed, programmes aimed at preventing or reducing substance abuse and risky sexual behaviour have contributed to reduced dropout rates (Flisher et al., 2000). However, programme developers must take into consideration school and class attendance and norms around classroom and school behaviour. For example, programmes that require after-school activities, homework or discussion groups, may not be feasible in all schools. In addition, some schools may have violence and safety programming of some sort and learners' exposure to these interventions will impact how they respond to new or additional programming. These challenges are not insurmountable and the potential gains from implementing youth violence prevention programmes in schools suggest that these efforts would be rewarded. Although programmes have to be tailored to specific school contexts, there are some general guidelines that are useful to consider and these are discussed in this chapter.

This chapter presents an ideal perspective and we acknowledge that achieving the gold standard may not always be workable in every context. However, this information is based on what existing evidence suggests is effective and is open to revision when additional evidence becomes available. The guidelines presented here should be regarded as flexible and we urge programme developers to interpret and implement the guidelines in ways that are relevant, feasible and workable within the context of intervention.

Schools are important sites for school-related violence prevention and safety promotion, offering several opportunities for integrative programming, but also several challenges to negotiate. We surmise that such programmes have the potential to facilitate several positive secondary outcomes. That is, by creating a safer, less violent environment at school, it is plausible to expect a reduction in school dropout and also an increase in academic performance, because learners and staff will not be disrupted by violence and the negative effects of being exposed to violence. Similar to other individual and group intervention programmes, we hope that the effects of violence prevention efforts would generalise to youths' other environments. Also, the school

may become an example and inspiration for the families of learners and the community, which may experience the benefits of a decrease in school violence. Thus, school-based violence prevention has the potential to make a contribution to crime prevention on a larger scale by nurturing the youth to become prosocial members of society.

## **DEVELOPING SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS**

Although most learners report that they learn about safety in various types of school programmes (Burton, 2008), and the new Life Orientation curriculum is being implemented, the levels of violence are still high, suggesting that the current efforts are not producing the desired results. Therefore, innovative violence prevention programmes need to be developed and implemented in schools. However, there are no well-developed, evidence-based guidelines for fulfilling this need.

The implementation of effective interventions always demands careful consideration of several factors during the development phases. Given the low resources of most South African schools and the country as a whole, a thorough development phase is particularly prudent to ensure careful use of scarce resources for programmes that are most likely to be effective. Although we have empirical evidence to guide decision-making at certain points, the unique and dynamic contexts within which a particular intervention is to be implemented must be taken into consideration and drive certain decisions, especially when there is little research to provide direction on particular issues.

Countries around the world struggle with issues of school violence to various extents and various programmes and projects have been instituted to address these issues. However, the global evidence base for interventions targeting school violence at the primary and secondary school levels is under-developed. Nevertheless, we encourage researchers and practitioners alike to survey the existing work in order to inform current intervention development and implementation efforts. Indeed, several types of school violence prevention interventions have been established as efficacious and effective (for example, Howard, Flora & Griffin, 1999; Olweus, 2005). The *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (OBPP) was developed and extensively evaluated in Norway in the 1980s and again in the 1990s (see Olweus, 2005 and <http://www.olweus.org>). The successes documented among Norwegian youth were replicated among American youth when OBPP was first systematically evaluated in the USA in the mid-1990s (see Limber, 2006 for an

overview) and is currently advertised for implementation in schools around the USA (see <http://www.olweus.org>). A review of published school-based violence prevention programmes in the USA that used classroom-based intervention strategies concluded that modest effects were found in changes in learners' knowledge, attitudes, violent behaviour and prosocial behaviour (Howard, Flora & Griffin, 1999). In addition, programmes that included a focus and intervention on the broader school environment, particularly at the primary school level, were more likely to be successful in violence prevention (Howard, Flora & Griffin, 1999). However, the levels of evidence from the studies in the review vary, making comparisons and strong conclusions difficult. The review authors' conclusions are similar to the recommendations we make in this chapter with regard to encouraging multilevel (or whole-school) comprehensive programmes and outlining several common factors in successful programmes (see Box 6.1 on page 204). These factors are based on existing evidence and thus should be regarded as a working summary, and flexible guidelines that should be adapted to specific contexts and evolve as our understanding and the evidence base grows. Though we would encourage local researchers and practitioners to draw on international research and programmes, we believe that even the best interventions need to be adapted to some extent to the local context or they may not be effective. Indeed, several researchers have suggested that contextual factors, such as levels of domestic violence and hate crimes in the community, have an impact on school violence and therefore should be integrated in school violence intervention programming (Culley, Conkling, Emshoff, Blakely & Gorman 2006; Horton, 2001). The local body of research and available programmes is growing, which is an invaluable resource in addressing school violence. The following discussion offers some suggestions and topics for consideration when adapting or developing a school-based intervention for violence prevention.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) offers a useful model for youth intervention development that promotes a multisectoral approach that spans across the individual, family and interpersonal, community and policy levels (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005). School-based youth violence prevention interventions can be implemented at several levels:

- Individual (programmes that aim to change individual youths' behaviour)
- Interpersonal (programmes that aim to change the behaviour of those in the youths' immediate environment such as peers and family)

- Community (programmes that aim to change the community's behaviour, including school and school staff change)
- Policy (programmes that aim to change policies and legislation within schools, locally, nationally, or internationally).

Programmes may address only one level. However, a multilevel approach strengthens programmes as the messages are consistently and continuously delivered throughout youths' environments and are thus more likely to be adopted by the youth (Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005; Culley et al., 2006; Dawes & Donald, 2000). Furthermore, because youth violence in schools has a complex aetiology and presentation, singular approaches are unlikely to make significant, long-term impacts, as all contributory factors need to be addressed such that youth violence is no longer supported at any level, and policies and programmes actively support more prosocial norms. The composition of the programme development and implementation team may aid in creating a multilevel intervention.

A multidisciplinary team is not only likely to generate creative approaches to youth violence prevention, but team members can integrate these programmes with the various sectors they represent. The team should include representatives from all the stakeholder groups, such as school administrators, educators and learners. Particular attention needs to be given to the voices of the learners because they are most closely involved in school violence (Dawes & Donald, 2000). The team would also benefit from dialogue between researchers and practitioners in terms of consulting empirical evidence, translating this evidence into clinical action and evaluating the programme in order to continuously improve and disseminate it. Ideally, leaders from various sectors would come together to collaborate and co-ordinate efforts within the school and across sectors in school violence prevention.

It is useful to consider the characteristics of violent and non-violent schools when developing a violence prevention intervention in order to identify a particular school's strengths and vulnerabilities. Violent schools are characterised by high levels of distrust between educators and learners; high truancy rates; low learner commitment to the school; unclear and inconsistent discipline policies and procedures; high levels of physical punishment and low levels of praise or positive reinforcement; high levels of conflict among learners and between learners and educators; and learners are often low achievers and come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Burton, 2008). In contrast, effective and

appropriate classroom management; a focus on academic work; a high level of task orientation; thoughtful and effective use of praise and appropriate punishment; and high levels of student participation in the school that create and maintain a sense of belonging for all are some of the common characteristics of more successful, non-violent schools (Burton, 2008; Khan, 2008). Successful schools have strong, competent leaders who inspire all those involved with the school to make a positive contribution consistent with the central school vision and collaborate in innovative learning throughout formal and informal school activities (De Jong, 2000). A stable staff who are proactive and take responsibility for implementing the school's vision in all their activities and share good relationships between themselves and with learners will make a significant contribution to making a school successful (De Jong, 2000). Successful schools generally employ innovative and ongoing staff and learner development programming that allows for personal and professional or academic development (De Jong, 2000). The policies and procedures of successful schools are clearly communicated to the entire school community and reflect the school's vision and a learner-centred approach and staff are positive role models for and supportive of learners, particularly those experiencing any variety of difficulties (De Jong, 2000). Finally, the success of a school is greatly enhanced by having positive, reciprocal community involvement and adequate funding (De Jong, 2000). School-based violence prevention interventions should aim to minimise or eliminate risk factors as well as build assets, since a singular focus on risks is unlikely to achieve the safe, healthy and vibrant school environment that the youth should have.

School-based violence prevention programmes can take many forms. However, successful interventions for the youth share some universal characteristics. These qualities (see Box 6.1) should play a guiding role in violence prevention programme development in order to increase the likelihood of programme success. Although many prevention programmes are conducted in groups and are successful in such a format, some learners may require individual attention, so facilitators need to be aware of these unique needs of individual learners in any school (Flisher et al., 2000). Skill development is fundamental to a successful school-based intervention and such development should include both providing knowledge and practising the skills and applying them to several situations (Flisher et al., 2000).

Two other issues that demand consideration during intervention development are the approach and content of the programme. The approach continuum spans from whole-school development on the one hand to discrete

programmes on the other. Whole-school development refers to an approach that involves all aspects of a school such as learners, educators, administrators, the curriculum, policies and practices, and the structure. This approach intervenes at multiple levels of the school and can thus be considered to fulfil the PAHO model ideal of multilevel programming in adolescent health and well-being interventions. The broad goals of whole-school development are to improve the quality of the experience of people within the school and also to improve the way the school functions (De Jong, 2000). The primary concerns of the school, such as high levels of violence, are prioritised such that the actions taken will improve the school's response to these problems as well as prevent future occurrences of these problems. Whole-school development effects change in the entire school and the environment that contains the school, including all individuals and groups within these contexts and redefines the school 'as a Community Learning Centre' (Mouton, 2000, p. 134), with active positive relationships between all stakeholders within and around the school (Mouton, 2000). Such a project demands change and accountability of all people in all components of the system, such that every component co-ordinates to create and sustain the positive changes that the project aims to influence (Mouton, 2000). If external agencies are involved in the initial phases of a whole-school development project, issues of sustainability need to be carefully considered. Therefore, capacity-building should be a priority so that staff are given adequate training to continue the programmes and communities are empowered to continue building a strong, safe schooling environment (Mouton, 2000). The *Thousand Schools Project* faced significant implementation and sustainability issues (Mouton, 2000), highlighting the need for ongoing energy to implement, evaluate and modify whole-school development programmes and the importance of strong collaborations to maintain these efforts. A whole-school development project assumes an ongoing process and not a time-limited intervention, since the social system and environment of and around the school is constantly changing and the school will need to be a dynamic part, indeed a leader, within this process, which may inspire community change (De Jong, 2000). Thus, a whole-school development project introduces continuous and systematic evaluation processes into a school and the insights from these evaluations are then translated into action steps to make changes in areas that are not functioning optimally (De Jong, 2000).

Since school violence is a complex problem that involves all levels of learners and school staff as well as the school's infrastructure and policies, a multisectoral collaboration for whole-school development would be ideal and has the potential for positively influencing families and communities

and creating safety for the youth in all of these environments. However, a lack of resources or ‘buy-in’ from key stakeholders may make such an approach difficult or impossible. This case, although disappointing, is not cause to give up, because specific, independent school-based programmes have been shown to be effective in violence prevention. Discrete programmes are interventions aimed at a particular aspect of the school, such as learner programmes (for example, conflict resolution skills), educator programmes (for example, classroom management skills) or structural changes (for example, access control). Should such a programme approach be chosen, consideration should then be given to the target group. That is, will all students receive the intervention or only specific groups? Consider that if the intervention aims to increase the use of particular skills, how likely are participants to achieve this if they are only a subset of the school population who may not know of or support the use of such skills (Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004)? If learners and staff alike are included in interventions, there is more likely to be a change in the school environment as peers and educators model appropriate behaviour, reinforcing and supporting the intervention goals (Multisite Violence Prevention Project, 2004). Scheduling and location issues also need to be considered well in advance of implementation.

The content continuum spans from comprehensive programmes that address a host of risk behaviours to specific programmes that address only a particular risk behaviour (for example, peer violence). To date there is no research or peer-reviewed articles addressing this decision, even though intervention researchers make it for every project they investigate. Both types of programmes have been found to be effective in various circumstances. Although much of the local school violence literature strongly encourages comprehensive programming, there is no evidence to indicate that specific interventions are less successful.

When these two continua intersect, four conceptual quadrants are formed. Intervention programmes can be located in one of these four quadrants. The advantages and disadvantages of the type of approach and content combination need to be carefully considered (see Table 6.1). We have used this heuristic to organise discussions about school-based youth violence prevention interventions in the following section.

## **SCHOOL-BASED INTERVENTIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA**

In South Africa, youth violence in schools is a concern receiving much attention. Various efforts have been directed towards preventive interventions.

Table 6.1: Advantages and disadvantages of programme content and approaches

APPROACH	
Whole-school development	Discrete
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COMPREHENSIVE</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">CONTENT</p>	<p><i>ADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• By addressing a common aetiological factor, several problems may be averted</li> <li>• Evaluation and accountability of the programme may be enhanced because it is a contained entity</li> <li>• Simpler development and planning than a whole-school development approach</li> <li>• Schools may be more open to agencies coming in to implement such programmes rather than attempting to change everything about the school</li> </ul> <p><i>DISADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The social ecology of the school is not mobilised to engage in or support the changes that the programme is promoting</li> <li>• More resources are needed in comparison to specific programmes and additional resources may need to be accessed if the programme is not able to share resources with various school departments</li> </ul>
<p><i>ADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Several risk behaviours and their correlates are addressed at multiple levels within the school environment</li> <li>• Changes are likely to be maintained in the long term and positive behaviours become the norm as all systems implement and support the programme</li> <li>• Relevant to all participants regardless of risk status</li> </ul> <p><i>DISADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be costly</li> <li>• Demands the co-operation and buy-in of many groups</li> <li>• Change may be slow</li> <li>• Programmes may be too general and not address specific skills needed for change</li> </ul>	

APPROACH	
Discrete	Whole-school development
<p><i>ADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economical (relative to comprehensive and whole-school programmes)</li> <li>• More attractive to funders</li> <li>• More time to address a specific problem in detail and to address risk factors specific to this problem</li> <li>• Positive changes in the targeted domain are likely</li> <li>• Relatively simple to implement and evaluate</li> <li>• Short term</li> </ul> <p><i>DISADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May be missing other important problems</li> <li>• Programme may need booster sessions to maintain effects</li> </ul>	<p><i>ADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time and resources can be targeted at more proximal, rather than general, risk factors</li> <li>• Every level of the school environment joins in the effort and reflects the changes that the programme promotes</li> <li>• Change is more likely to be maintained with many systems in the school environment reflecting the changes</li> </ul> <p><i>DISADVANTAGES</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Various risk behaviours are related and by only addressing one form of risk behaviour, change may not be maintained if other systems are still supporting another risk behaviour that increases the likelihood of the target risk behaviour</li> <li>• All groups within the school have to agree with and be involved in the programme</li> </ul>
<p><b>SPECIFIC</b></p>	
<p><b>CONTENT</b></p>	

However, little research in South Africa and globally has systematically evaluated these programmes and there is little consolidated effort to address this significant concern. Although we do not want to discourage individual projects aimed at youth violence prevention, a survey of the current situation indicates that a more unified approach through inter-agency, inter-departmental and multisectoral collaboration is needed to address the issue of youth violence in South African schools most effectively. In this section we will discuss various South African school violence prevention projects and make suggestions for future work.

### **Comprehensive, whole-school development programmes**

As mentioned earlier, whole-school development is a collaborative, multi-sectoral effort that creates change at all levels, systems and groups of the school and, ideally, within the environment surrounding the school. When creating a safe and healthy school in this way, there are several areas of intervention that need to be considered. The school infrastructure plays a significant role in the safety of a school. Thus, security measures such as adequate perimeter fencing, security guards and access control as well as improvement of school buildings by replacing or repairing broken facilities and keeping the campus clean and greener to make it welcoming to staff, learners and parents, are part of violence prevention work (De Jong, 2000). Collaborative relationships within and between all stakeholder groups (educators, administrators, staff, learners, families of learners and management) in the school will make significant strides in building a safe and healthy school environment and preventing school violence. Positive relationships rest on mutual respect and a caring culture facilitated by improved communication, greater tolerance and team spirit, which all contribute to a friendlier atmosphere and supportive, prosocial environment for everyone (De Jong, 2000). A mentoring programme will help to establish and maintain such relationships, particularly when newcomers join the school in any of the groups (De Jong, 2000). An inclusive approach to implementing a whole-school programme is essential so that all stakeholders play an active role in developing new school policies and procedures. A French school using this approach experienced a 60% decrease in violence and a 50% decrease in verbal abuse (Khan, 2008). Perhaps one of the biggest changes that schools undergo is the shift from being authoritarian to democratic (Khan, 2008).

A comprehensive, whole-school development programme was implemented at a primary school in the Cape Peninsula (Flisher et al., 2000). This school experienced the negative sequelae of high levels of gang activity

around the school and in the learners' neighbourhoods. The project identified several goals and formed several interest groups (for example, drug abuse, teenage club, nutrition project, educator support group), who then identified and implemented specific programmes to meet their group-specific goals that served the overall aim of creating a safe and healthy school. These groups worked together such that their messages would be consistent and there was a symbiotic relationship between all the groups and their programming. In addition to these programmes, the school incorporated health-promoting messages throughout the curriculum, created collaborative relationships with parents and throughout the process consulted with all stakeholder groups related to the school system. The entire project was evaluated using multiple sources of data and several strengths and advantages were identified as well as some weaknesses that could be addressed in future projects. Specifically, there were gains in terms of interpersonal relationships within and between educator, learner and parent groups, positive skill development for educators and learners and more positive attitudes in educators and learners. However, some difficulties were experienced in motivating all educators and parents to become involved and stay involved, particularly with the already high workload of both of these groups independent of this project (Flisher et al., 2000). The programme is considered comprehensive because it addresses several risks and strengths, and because interventions were implemented across various levels of the school, it can be considered a whole-school development approach. This programme has many features of a successful intervention as outlined in Box 6.1. The programme may have benefited from more structure, particularly within each of the interest groups, to ease implementation of various activities. Although it is certainly an asset to have this programme very specifically mapped onto this school's issues, it is difficult to generalise the programme or the findings to other sites. Nevertheless, this school may serve as an example and consult with other schools wishing to implement a comprehensive, whole-school development programme.

### **Comprehensive, discrete programmes**

Comprehensive violence prevention programmes, by definition, address a broad spectrum of issues related to violence. Some of these programmes may not seem to address violence directly, although the outcomes of the programme include a reduction in violent behaviour among the youth. One such example is the *HealthWise* intervention, which seeks to reduce risk

behaviours in the youth by targeting youth leisure boredom (Caldwell et al., 2004). This individual level programme is delivered to learners in various contexts, including the school and the community, such that the messages are consistent and repeated and the behavioural outcomes are supported in various contexts with which youth regularly interact (Caldwell et al., 2004). By targeting a single group within the school environment (learners), this programme would be considered discrete as it does not address multiple aspects of the school environment. Through various activities, youths learn and practise inter- and intra-personal skills to make health-promoting decisions, manage their emotions appropriately, resolve conflict effectively, and overcome boredom by choosing positive leisure activities at school and in the community (Caldwell et al., 2004). No specific school violence-related data following this intervention was collected during the pilot-testing phase of the programme. However, post-intervention measures indicate a decrease in risk behaviours, including sexual behaviour and substance abuse. Results from a large-scale randomised control trial are awaited to ascertain the strength of the evidence supporting this intervention. Most of the features of successful prevention interventions (see Box 6.1) have been met by this programme, suggesting that there is a high likelihood, supported by data from the pilot test, of success in preventing youth risk behaviour.

Youth violence prevention programming does not only target the youth. Early intervention programmes that aim to prevent youth violence by working with young children with behavioural difficulties have been used in South Africa. Conduct problems are extensive in South Africa, particularly among male youths growing up in poor communities (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). It is particularly important to mobilise resources for early intervention prevention efforts in high-risk groups such as by adapting programming to be delivered in schools by educators. Most early intervention programmes focus on parent training, which, although generally helpful according to multiple large empirical investigations in developed countries, may not be most successful in under-resourced communities where children are surrounded by several risk factors (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). Therefore, such programmes need to be expanded to address other risk factors in the child and other close environments such as peer groups, school and neighbourhood of the child's family. Indeed, it is combined approaches that have been found to be maximally effective (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). Faced with these challenges, researchers adapted the *Webster-Stratton* programme for a community-based project implemented in the Western Cape with aggressive preschoolers (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). Training

was provided for parents and educators, including supports for each of these groups and between groups, with the aim of changing these preschoolers' current behaviour in order to prevent long-term conduct problems (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). On the approach continuum, this programme would fall closer to the discrete type than whole-school development. Groups of parents, children and educators met separately for eight weeks. The parents and educators met at a central community location while the children met at school (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). Parents learned parenting skills, received information about child development in order to understand their children's behaviours, as well as receiving support from other parents and the facilitators. Educators learned positive behaviour modification strategies particularly for classroom management and received support from fellow educators and facilitators. In the child group, activities were focused on introducing rules, rewards and consequences, and learning prosocial skills, emotion regulation, anger management and basic problem-solving. This programme, implemented at two preschools, was compared to two similar, control preschools that did not receive the intervention. Evaluation data was collected in the form of interviews and relevant commonly used instruments measuring preschoolers' behaviours, parenting stress and educators' self-perceived competency. Results from parent and educator ratings of preschoolers' behaviour indicated a reduction in aggressive behaviour. In addition, parents and educators reported increases in their competence to manage behaviour appropriately and effectively (Petersen & Carolissen, 2000). Given the success of this programme, researchers should consider developing a randomised controlled trial to build a strong evidence base for the intervention in order to disseminate it more widely. Already this intervention has several characteristics of a successful programme, including multiple components, early intervention and appropriate timing, building knowledge and skills, some social support by bringing groups with similar challenges and interests together, and the potential for continuous multimethod evaluation. Several of these features could be strengthened and building collaborative relationships with several stakeholders as well as providing a manual for the programme will contribute greatly to a sustainable, successful programme.

### **Specific, whole-school development programmes**

Following the National Schools Violence Study, which assessed the levels and nature of violence in South African schools, several recommendations were made on how to make schools safer and less violent (see Box 6.2; Burton,

2008). These recommendations cover a wide range of interventions from school-based programming, updating school infrastructure, to community development and services for families and young children that all address some aspect of the complex aetiology of school violence. Together, these recommendations may be considered a blueprint for a whole-school development programme specific to violence prevention.

The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in collaboration with the Department of Education has initiated the *Hlayiseka Early Warning System* (Khan, 2008). This system was informed by a review of data on school violence and the current functioning of South African schools. This programme provides a toolkit for school management that guides step-by-step school-wide changes to address violence. An initial diagnostic tool is used by the school to get information from all stakeholders regarding safety concerns and steps are taken to meet the minimum standards for school safety before continuing to the next steps. Subsequent learner and educator surveys further a democratic and consultative management style and acquire information on the nature and extent of violence from key stakeholders, such that the management team have a thorough understanding of the situation they are facing. With this information the school develops a comprehensive safety plan and forms partnerships with community and government departments, particularly to co-ordinate school-based interventions and other safety-focused services. An integral part of this plan is establishing confidential systems of reporting and recording incidents of violence, as well as continuous monitoring of changes in order to maintain school safety. The toolkit is flexible, allowing it to be adapted to every school's unique situation (Khan, 2008). This project is currently being implemented at selected schools nationwide (CJCP, 2008). By targeting violence only, this programme would be considered to be specific on the content continuum. The programme seeks to assess and implement changes at all levels of the school, indicating that it uses a whole-school development approach. Common to most successful interventions, the Hlayiseka programme has multiple components, is socio-culturally sensitive and relevant, is appropriately timed and has the potential to incorporate other features such as positive role models, knowledge and skill building, and structural support for interventions at all levels, including a clear plan for implementation.

Similar to the Hlayiseka project, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) has implemented a *Safe Schools* programme aiming to create learning environments that are violence-free, crime-free and safe for learners, educators and other school staff (WCED, 2003). The programme

aims to create such an environment by targeting three broad areas: school infrastructure; knowledge and skill development programmes and counselling services for learners, educators and parents; and organisational development and collaboration between the school and other government and non-governmental or community-based organisations. Schools are guided by a nine-step process, which includes formation of a Safety Committee, integration of safety in the school's priorities and vision, conducting a safety audit of the school, identification of areas for intervention, selection and implementation of interventions and evaluation of the effects of such programmes. A procedural manual detailing areas of and procedures for intervention for the Safe Schools project is available. The WCED has established the Safe Schools' call centre, which schools and/or learners can call – to report violence and request supportive services such as counselling or trauma debriefing. Although this project has collected descriptive information about the various aspects of schools and their environments, there has been no rigorous evaluation of the effectiveness of the Safe Schools project.

### **Specific, discrete programmes**

Unfortunately, there are no specific, discrete violence prevention programmes that have been evaluated in South Africa to our knowledge. Therefore, we will discuss examples of the types of programmes that may fit into this quadrant in the context of youth violence prevention in South African schools. Infrastructure development projects such as fencing, access control and appointing security guards for the school premises would be considered specific because they aim to prevent violence in the school, as well as discrete because they target the school grounds only. Seminars on effective, positive classroom management skills for educators would be another example of a discrete violence prevention intervention. Similarly, a conflict resolution skills workshop for learners would be located at the intersection of the specific content and discrete approach continua. Although we believe that several such projects are being implemented in South African schools, they are not being evaluated or made public in order to share successes with other schools. This lack can be remedied fairly simply by identifying and evaluating existing programmes or adapting international programmes of this type for the local context. Even with the interventions in the other three quadrants, there is a need to develop strong programmes within the specific, discrete programme quadrant for youth violence prevention in South African schools.

Regardless of the programme type, we believe it of utmost importance that prevention programmes be synthesised and a body of strong evidence be built around them, such that efforts can be co-ordinated in an efficient use of resources and with the most effectiveness. School-based interventions can also not be the sole responsibility of the school, so we urge schools and community organisations to form collaborations to best address the problem of youth violence in schools and throughout society. Individual time-limited discrete programmes are unlikely to result in strong, long-term reductions in violence among the youth, but in the absence of programmes that use a whole-school development approach, they do make a positive contribution to the reduction of youth violence. Ideally, whole-school development interventions should be co-ordinated across all developmental stages ranging from early childhood to late adolescence and the transition out of the school environment. Consistency and multilevel support are key to reducing youth violence *and* promoting youth health and well-being successfully.

## **POLICIES ADDRESSING YOUTH VIOLENCE**

Policy-level interventions can be implemented in various local, national and international arenas. Individual schools can devise and implement policies that are consistent with the policies of the provincial and national government. Various efforts have been made at the policy level in an effort to address the problem of school violence in South Africa. However, a national policy specific to school violence has not yet been created. In this section we will discuss examples of policies that are relevant to youth violence prevention. An important factor to note in this discussion is that even the most carefully crafted policies are unhelpful if they are not properly implemented with adequate support across multiple sectors.

The policy guidelines for youth and adolescent health emphasise the importance of preventing health problems in the youth and promoting optimum, all-round health in all youths (Department of Health, 2001). Although these guidelines do not address the issue of youth violence directly, this issue can be considered part of the broad concept of adolescent health and well-being or a risk to it. Indeed, these policy guidelines identify violence as a youth health priority. Many of the areas for and characteristics of successful interventions that we have discussed in this chapter are also noted in the policy guidelines for youth and adolescent health in South Africa. The Children's Act No. 38 of 2005 protects the fundamental rights

of children, including making violent acts against children illegal and mandating that child abuse of any kind be reported to either the police or child welfare. With this reporting system it is hoped that victims and perpetrators receive appropriate services. Specific to education, the recent South African Council of Educators Act 31 of 2000 legislates professional licensing and ethics for educators (Human Rights Watch, 2001). An amendment in 2000 to the Employment of Educators Act of 1998 requires that educators guilty of serious misconduct, including sexual assault of a learner or having a sexual relationship with a learner, be dismissed (Human Rights Watch, 2001). The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 sets forth that learners found guilty of serious misconduct (to be determined by local governments) can be either suspended or expelled from the school (Human Rights Watch, 2001). These two Acts, if enforced, contribute to creating safe, non-violent schools. The National Programme of Action for Children is charged with integrating all policies and projects by all government departments and NGOs that promote youth well-being, and this programme has the potential to make significant differences in school violence prevention programming (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000).

Another policy-level intervention is evidenced in the Department of Education's introduction of significant revisions to the curriculum in 2006 to improve the education of South African youth. This revision not only introduced a new structure and new content, but also encouraged a new quality of teaching that was more innovative, less reliant on textbooks, more learner-centred and more relevant, with emphasis on learning general life skills throughout the curriculum and particularly in the Life Orientation component of the curriculum (Department of Education website, 2008). This new style of teaching and learning aims to engage learners more and facilitate a positive relationship between learners, learners and educators, and learners and the school. As discussed earlier, such positive relationships help combat youth violence in schools. Further, this type of approach to teaching closely mirrors the type of collaborative, interactive style recommended for interventions (see Box 6.1). Although the content of Life Orientation does not directly address violence, it does aim to build skills, knowledge, values and attitudes that will guide decision-making and prosocial actions within the domains of health promotion, social development, personal development, physical development and career orientation (Western Cape Government, 2008). Life Orientation also provides an opportunity for an intervention team to implement a particular component of a violence prevention programme.

**BOX 6.1**  
**CHARACTERISTICS OF SUCCESSFUL**  
**PREVENTION INTERVENTIONS**

(Breinbauer & Maddaleno, 2005; Kutash, Duchnowski & Lynn, 2006; Nation et al., 2003; Remschmidt, Nurcombe, Belfer, Sartorius & Okasha, 2007).

Successful interventions:

- Are active collaborations between several sectors, including adolescents, families, schools, communities and policymakers throughout the planning, development, implementation and evaluation stages
- Contain multiple components within the programme such as learner-only groups, educator-only groups, parent programmes, family activities and community engagement and opportunities
- Are socio-culturally sensitive and relevant:
  - The programme reflects local prosocial norms, values and beliefs without colluding with systems of discrimination and oppression
  - The programme addresses contemporary youth issues
- Are delivered using interactive and collaborative methods:
  - Various types of developmentally appropriate methods are used to convey information, build skills and address issues to engage the youth and educator to promote behaviour change beyond the school setting
- Target early stages before problems have become entrenched
- Are appropriately timed in terms of developmental stage, fitting in to the school, youth, staff, family and community schedules and lifestyles
- Are clearly structured for ease of implementation and to facilitate fidelity to the model while still allowing for creativity, flexibility and adaptability to deal effectively with unexpected issues and for future generalisation to other populations and contexts
- Have adequate structural support:
  - Respected and trusted staff are carefully selected, trained, supervised and supported to implement specific interventions of the programme. These staff members do not necessarily need to be mental health professionals and programme implementation does not need to be the sole role in the community

(continue)

- Other staff and community leaders are aware of the programme and support it by promoting the same goals and offering structural support as they can
- Manuals for facilitators and programme leaders and newsletters for organisations, families and community members may be helpful in terms of treatment fidelity and encouraging multiple sectors to support and become actively involved in the programme
- Are implemented consistently, ideally across sectors and at an adequate dosage (length and intensity of sessions and whole programme, booster sessions or ongoing programme)
- Undergo continuous, multimethod evaluation to ensure ongoing quality improvement, sustainability and generalisability
- Increase knowledge and build specific skills applicable in various situations
- Incorporate positive role models or mentors to model and engage youths in supportive relationships with their peers, educators, caregiver/s, community leaders or other authority figures
- Are based on specific theories.

## CONCLUSION

Levels of school violence in South Africa are unacceptable and stripping the youth of their need for and rights to a safe and secure school environment. The need to intervene with support and prevention programmes has not gone unnoticed and several programmes have been implemented in schools and communities around the country. In addition, several policy-level initiatives relevant to youth violence prevention have been implemented. We have recommended a comprehensive, whole-school approach to co-ordinate programming to prevent violence in schools in collaboration with organisations and leaders from multiple sectors. We believe that such programmes may have a wide-reaching effect, such that the youth and school outcomes will improve and violence in other contexts will decrease.

Despite the high levels of violence, schools should not only be seen as a high-risk environment because they simultaneously provide youths with several factors that promote their resiliency. Thus, school-based violence prevention programmes should aim both to strengthen these positive factors and to minimise the factors that endanger learners and educators. When

developing school-based violence prevention programmes it should be noted that school violence does not occur in isolation; it intersects with many other problems that also occur within the school context, including the distribution and use of drugs, alcohol and weapons, and these issues need to be addressed concurrently. Within this programme development, there should be several methods of evaluation to monitor and assess the programme and its impact. This research will also build up the evidence base to better inform future work in this area.

Given the importance of education in reducing such widespread social problems as poverty, hunger and mental ill-health (Townsend et al., 2008), we need to create schools and school environments that are places of

**BOX 6.2**  
**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SCHOOL VIOLENCE**  
**PREVENTION PROGRAMMING**

(from Burton, 2008)

- The Department of Basic Education should monitor schools' adherence to minimum safety standards and efforts at preventing and responding to school violence, particularly by collecting regular data on school violence and prevention programmes
- School policies and procedures, including a detailed code of conduct, promoting non-violence and setting out appropriate responses and consequences for violence in accordance with the Department of Basic Education's minimum standards of safety need to be implemented and clearly communicated to all those within the school community
- School staff need to be taught and supported in effective and appropriate classroom management and be held accountable for violence within the schools by enforcing school non-violence policies with appropriate means and any staff who perpetrate violence in the school need to be swiftly and decisively disciplined
- A whole-school development approach involving all groups participating in all the school's systems is indicated by the complex and pervasive nature of violence in schools
- Security infrastructure at schools needs to be updated, maintained and monitored to keep the school premises safe and secure

(continue)

- Through collaboration with the SAPS, Department of Social Development and local government as well as school and community initiatives, the environment surrounding schools should be cleared of drugs, alcohol and weapons, and safe transit to and from schools needs to be established so that learners and educators have access to reliable, safe and affordable transport between their homes and the school
- Although early intervention is key to youth violence prevention, programmes should also be targeted at adolescents. Early childhood development programmes should be implemented to teach children prosocial behaviour and social competencies, including assertiveness training, conflict resolution, anger management skills and self-control from a young age and these lessons should be reinforced throughout children's and adolescents' schooling
- Parenting interventions should be provided to families in collaboration with the Departments of Social Development and Health to teach parents appropriate methods of discipline as well as facilitating their child's prosocial development
- Also in collaboration with the Departments of Social Development and Health and local NGOs, children and youths experiencing violence in the home or community need to be identified and provided with appropriate support services, including counselling
- Planned, co-ordinated and consistent extramural activities should be organised to involve learners in positive leisure activities after formal school hours, such that their exposure to gangs and opportunities to engage in violent or other criminal behaviour are reduced. Such activities may take place within the school buildings and include sports, drama, entrepreneurship programmes or other cultural activities. It is particularly important to get youths' input when designing such programmes and be sure to make them available throughout the year and accessible to all youths
- All youth violence prevention programming, whether school-based or within another context, need to be consolidated and linked not only for cross-programme support, but also to ensure that a consistent message is conveyed and the limited resources are being used most effectively
- Research efforts need to be increased so that programmes are effectively monitored and evaluated to inform programme improvement and generalisability to other schools.

creative and innovative learning and development for the youth. The first step towards doing so is making sure that schools are safe places, free of any sort of violence or discrimination. The long-term implications of inaction on this issue are gravely concerning as we put our society at risk for escalating violence and widespread disorder. School violence is a manifestation of a general lack of respect for individuals and human rights and, therefore, what is needed is a change in orientation to a more human-rights-committed culture (Burton, 2008; De Jong, 2000). In creating such a culture the youth must not only become aware of their rights and how to protect them, but also the responsibilities that come with their rights (Burton, 2008). Schools are an excellent arena to begin such culture change because they are one of the primary socialisation agents in our society and, thus, have a large influence on the majority of our youths from a very young age. However, such a change cannot be optimally successful if schools are left to do it alone. Such a change, particularly one that deserves such urgent attention, needs the collaboration of multiple sectors of our nation at every level.

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# Chapter Seven



## INTERVENTIONS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CONTEXTS

*Lisa Wegner & Linda Caldwell*

### INTRODUCTION

Violence has become part of normal, everyday life for many young South Africans. Almost half (49.2%) of the 4 409 young people surveyed in the National Youth Victimization Study ‘... were personally acquainted with individuals in their communities who had committed criminal acts, including stealing, selling stolen property and mugging or assaulting others’ (Leoschutt & Burton, 2005, p. 20). South African youth are exposed to violence in their homes, schools and communities at twice the rate of adults (Pelser, 2008). Among high-school learners (n=6 787), 67.9% had seen someone being intentionally hurt outside of the home (usually on the street), with more than half (51.3%) of the incidents being serious enough to warrant medical attention (Burton, 2008). A large proportion of young people’s experiences of violence – either as victims or as perpetrators – occur in the community and outside of school hours. For these reasons, this chapter focuses on violence and interventions for prosocial activities in ‘out-of-school contexts’ (OSCs).

OSCs refer to settings where the youth meet or gather during their free time in the afternoons, evenings and over weekends. This includes formal settings such as leisure and recreation settings (including commercial venues such as restaurants, pubs and clubs), sport settings, community and recreation centres, cultural events and faith-based programmes. Youths also spend much of their free time in non-formal settings including homes, shopping centres, street corners and other outdoor spaces such as parks and fields. Activities in OSCs can range from formal, structured pursuits such as sport practices, to informal, unstructured pursuits such as socialising at

a house party, 'hanging out', or self-directed pursuits such as arts or music. Thus, these contexts afford youths opportunities to participate in both positive (healthy, protective, socially acceptable) and negative (unhealthy, risky, socially unacceptable) pursuits.

In comparison with adults, the youth generally have a greater amount of free time, which is time free from obligatory activities such as school, work or chores. Those children who attend school have part of their day occupied with schoolwork and homework. However, young people who have dropped out of high school, as well as youths who are unemployed or homeless, are faced with far greater periods of unstructured free time. Many leisure scholars distinguish between the terms free time and leisure, although in practical use they are often used interchangeably. For this chapter we are interested in all the pursuits that the youth engage in that are not school or work related, and that fall under the rubric of 'unobligated' time. Terms that are often used to describe the pursuits that occur in this unobligated time are 'recreation', 'leisure' and 'free-time' activities. Considerations related to these terms include:

- Time (for example, how one uses one's time during the day and week)
- Type and patterns of activities (for example, sporadic participation in many activities, or regular, intense participation in one or two activities)
- One's motivation for participation (ranging from self-determined to extrinsically motivated)
- Experiences (such as boredom or joy) associated with use of time or participation in activities.

Use of time, for example, can include relaxation and 'doing nothing' (Kleiber, 2000), to strenuous physical activity or sport. Leisure – that is 'nested' within the domain of free time – is the purposeful and intentional use of free time to engage in self-selected and self-directed activities and experiences that are meaningful and intrinsically motivating to the individual, in that they are enjoyable, fun, refreshing and pleasurable. A more detailed discussion of these semantic differences and what they mean for research and intervention is beyond the scope of this chapter and readers are referred to Palen (2008) for a description of the issues associated with these terms.

The way in which interventions are conceptualised, conducted and evaluated depends on one's perspective on this unobligated time in 'out-of-school time' (OST).

Related to the previous point is that OSCs ('out-of-school contexts') afford both a time of risk and opportunity. Most leisure activities are positive and

healthy in nature, but unfortunately some leisure activities are antisocial (for example, delinquent and violent acts may be exciting and fun for the individual, but are in conflict with societal norms and conventions). The leisure and free-time literature has typically not studied leisure as a context for deviance, although there are some exceptions (Rojek, 1999; Stebbins, 1996; Williams, 2005; Williams & Walker, 2006). Readers interested in this topic should consult the special issue of *Leisure/Loisir* (Vol. 30, No. 1, 2006) that was devoted to the topic of 'Deviant Leisure'.

For the purpose of this chapter, we envisage the use of OSCs and leisure as part of a comprehensive, youth development approach to addressing violence. Through their involvement in leisure, young people have a variety of opportunities for building skills and developing strengths and positive behaviours. This is a prevention intervention approach, which focuses on reducing risk factors through promoting positive, healthy behaviour. The approach and strategies suggested in this chapter are not intended to address serious, persistent, and/or pathological forms of violence. Rather, they should be considered for use where young people are more at risk of becoming involved in 'less serious' or general forms of violence.

Identifying effective, evidence-based strategies that address violence in OSCs was difficult. It was clear from the review of literature that this is an emerging field of research. Few rigorous evaluations of interventions that use longitudinal and randomised control study designs have been conducted. Those that do exist were located mainly in North America and evidence from within the South African context was scant. However, from the existing evidence, it was possible to identify what should, and could, be done in OSCs to address violence among South African youth.

## THE NEED FOR INTERVENTIONS IN OSC

The concept of risk prevention and harm reduction has emerged in Western cultures over the past two decades as the preferred perspective for dealing with problem behaviours (Caldwell, 2008a). The thought is that preventing something from occurring is preferable to fixing it after it happens (for example, addictions and suicide attempts). Although school-based interventions are undoubtedly important, since schools have the potential to reach the most youths in an efficient manner, OSCs also offer opportunities for preventive interventions for two main reasons. First, if the OSC is related to leisure activity, one may assume that the leisure activity can be the hook by which to 'reel in' youths. That is, if the OSC includes leisure and recreation

activities, youths may be more likely to self-select participation and be receptive to engaging in programmes. The caveat here, however, is that the intervention itself must not be ‘work or school like’, although most effective after-school programmes include a portion of time for homework. Rather, the intervention should build on learners’ interests and be fun.

The second reason OSCs are important is that hard-to-reach youths may be more likely to participate in these programmes *if* they are viewed as meaningful and interesting to the youth. When one considers the large school dropout rate in many communities, this may be an important context in which to reach those disengaged from mainstream society. As with the previous point, however, the OSC programme must offer meaningful and compelling activities to attract these hard-to-reach youths. One powerful way this is accomplished is by having the youth participate in the development and implementation of the programme.

The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development’s (1992) report on the time use of youths and adolescents was one of the first to identify OST as ‘a matter of risk and opportunity’, pointing to the paradoxical nature of this period of time. A decade later, in a report from the Forum for Youth Investment to the United Nations that examined leisure time cross-culturally, Irby and Tolman (2002, p. 2) cautioned that leisure is linked to ‘pressing threats to [adolescents’] well-being – HIV and AIDS, delinquency, conflict, and drug abuse’. To explore these ideas further, in the next section, we will describe in more detail why OSCs can be settings for risk, and likewise, preventive interventions.

### **OUT-OF-SCHOOL CONTEXTS AS SETTINGS FOR RISK AND PROTECTION**

It is common knowledge that OSCs are places for adolescent rebellion, boredom, vandalism and participation in unhealthy activities such as using drugs and alcohol, violent activities and sexual risk behaviour, although some of these activities certainly occur during school or work time. The relative freedom that the youth acquire as they get older makes it easier for them to find opportunities to engage in risk behaviours in OSCs. Moreover, the presence of peers and the need to fit in and be liked creates a calculus for risk that may be difficult to overcome without support and education from preventive interventions.

Over the last decade or so there has been a surge in attention devoted to understanding the youth and the outcomes associated with prosocial, leisure-time

activities in the developmental literature. (Although this literature is primarily Western in orientation, it is global in scope. See Caldwell (2008a) for a more thorough review of this topic.) Recently, an exciting line of research has emerged that poses some interesting research questions from a transdisciplinary perspective. We would like to raise some of these issues in this section as a means to stimulate additional thought and research in this area.

### **Brain, behaviour, social context interaction**

Recently research has been conducted and theory posited about the brain/behaviour/social context (BBSC) interaction in youths that has important implications for education and intervention (Dahl, 2004). According to Dahl and other brain researchers (Geidd et al., 1999), the brains of young people around the ages of 12–17 years are easily shaped and thus receptive to the influence of social learning and shaping by both adults and peers. It is an important time for the integration of goal-setting and emotional regulation. It is also a time of increased sensation seeking and risk-taking. Dahl likens this period to ‘starting the engines with an unskilled driver’ (p. 17), meaning that the early activation of emotions and passions are ahead of one’s ability to self-regulate. Thus, during this period, youths have a natural tendency for intense and exciting situations. They like novelty and shock and being bombarded with stimuli. It is also important to recognise that this brain activity coincides with puberty and the process of sexual awakening and understanding one’s sexual identity.

This BBSC interaction, however, has not been examined vis-à-vis the OSC in any systematic way. We contend that leisure, in particular, may offer an important context in which the BBSC interaction unfolds because goal-directed behaviour intensifies during this period of development and is often manifested by developing passions in music, art and recreational hobbies (Dahl, 2004). The youth can actually sculpt their abilities to control impulses and ‘ignite their passions’ (Dahl, 2004, p. 21) by developing interests (Dahl, 2004; Geidd et al., 1999) through the pruning that takes place in the brain. This is because there is an overproduction of grey matter at this age. When certain connections among neurons are used, they are strengthened; those that are not used are pruned (Geidd et al., 1999). The other important point here is that executive functioning skills, such as decision-making and problem-solving evolve a bit after the emotion centre in the brain is highly activated, thus accounting for part

of the reason youths often make poor judgements in emotionally charged situations.

Thus, young people by virtue of the ways their brains develop are particularly vulnerable to intense emotions and misinterpretation of other's intents and emotions. Furthermore, they have not yet developed the capacity to critically reflect and problem solve. On the other hand, their brains are ready to be shaped by experience, direct interaction, self-reflection and education (Caldwell, 2008b). This early activation of emotions and passions can be turned into a powerful, positive force if youths are directed to discover and explore personally meaningful and exciting new activities. Like the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development and the Forum for Youth Investment, Dahl (2004) considers this period a time of vulnerabilities and opportunities, particularly because trajectories that are set in motion during this period have a major impact on adult life.

Given the BBSC interaction and the potential importance of OSCs to contribute to healthy development, there are two topics in particular that seem to have relevance for understanding violence in OSCs: leisure boredom and social and emotional learning (and regulation).

### ***Leisure as a context for boredom***

One of the reasons leisure can be risky is that some youths experience boredom. Boredom is often associated with the need for stimulation that may include risk-taking behaviours and violence, although the latter has not yet been well researched. Experiencing boredom can be either fleeting (a state) or pervasive (a trait). Either can be associated with risk-taking and the need for additional stimulation, although there is scant research that differentiates outcomes associated with state or trait boredom. Boredom is a complex phenomenon and researchers have tried to explain it using various theories. From a psychological perspective, the *under-stimulation theory* (Larson & Richards, 1991) provides one means for understanding boredom. This theory suggests that boredom is caused by a mismatch between one's skill and the challenge at hand. Boredom from an under-stimulation perspective may be dependent on age, and more specifically, one's brain development. For example, younger youths may not have the cognitive ability to identify how they can restructure their situation (that is, ways to change the circumstances) to alleviate boredom. As the youth grow older, they usually develop the capacity to temper or regulate their interactions with their circumstances (Elliot & Feldman, 1990). In this case, boredom might be seen as a catalyst

for action. That is, one has to have the ability to perceive oneself as being bored before one can identify strategies for overcoming boredom.

A second set of theories relates to *social control or resistance*. Stemming from a desire to be 'grown up and independent', youths who perceive parental or other adult monitoring as overly controlling may feel as though they cannot be as independent as they would like and engage in their preferred activities, thus causing feelings of boredom. In this case, boredom may be the result of resisting external control (Larson & Richards, 1991). Consequently, the adolescent may disengage psychologically and experience boredom (Eccles et al., 1993). Finally, the *forced-effort theory* of boredom (Larson & Richards, 1991; O'Hanlon, 1981) indicates that boredom occurs when youths have to attend to or focus on tasks that are repetitive and are perceived as routine. Thus, youths might experience boredom when parents, educators or coaches require too much routine and/or monotonous practice. In this case participation may become extrinsically motivated, which, if pervasive, is often associated with negative experiences.

### ***Leisure as a context for social and emotional learning, self-regulation, and mindfulness***

In this section we focus specifically on how leisure time might be a prime context for the youth to learn social and emotional competencies. At the onset, we should state that our remarks are speculative, and empirical testing of the ideas is needed. But we believe that there is enough evidence to piece together from various fields (for example, neuroscience, leisure, human development) to make a rational argument for our remarks. First we begin with a discussion of various aspects of social emotional learning (SEL).

Many researchers have devoted attention to the area of SEL as a means of promoting school success or as a means of preventing violence and bullying (Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004). SEL is based on Goleman's (1995) work on emotional intelligence (McCombs, 2004). Learners in SEL programmes acquire 'skills involved in being self-confident and motivated, knowing what behaviours are expected, curbing impulses to misbehave, being able to wait, following directions, knowing how to ask for help, expressing needs and getting along with others' (McComb, 2004, p. 27).

SEL interventions are designed on theoretical principles and have a person-centred focus (Zins et al., 2004). These authors describe five child competencies typically associated with successful SEL interventions: self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management and relationship management. Some researchers suggest that there is enough

evidence that SEL programmes are successful, and therefore SEL-type interventions should be applied more widely, across various contexts (Lopes & Salovey, 2004). Lopes and Salovey (2004) also advocate for incorporating SEL programmes into OSCs and informal learning opportunities.

Developing SEL competencies leads to the ability to self-regulate one's thoughts and actions in various life situations. Self-regulation is also vital for violence prevention (Buckner, Mezzacappa & Beardslee, 2003; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). Buckner et al. (2003) state that 'youths with good emotion regulation skills are adept in the management of their emotional states. They are unlikely to lash out in anger, are not seen as volatile and do not have rapid shifts in mood. These children are adept at modulating how strongly they express their feelings, they direct their emotions appropriately and display their feelings in manners that are easily accepted by others' (p. 155). Having self-regulation skills is important because it may help youths better reframe potential stressors in their environments through a process of analysis of a situation (or potential situation) and developing a strategy to manage the situation (Buckner et al., 2003). Some have called this problem-focused coping, where the youth come up with goal-directed strategies for dealing with a situation. Furthermore, self-regulation skills may also help a youth deal retrospectively with a past situation and deal with resultant negative emotions (emotion-focused coping).

A related, but more specific term that holds promise as a SEL intervention is mindfulness training. Although traditionally rooted in Buddhism, mindfulness has gained popularity as a way to intervene with adults in clinical settings. Mindfulness has been defined in several, albeit compatible ways. One definition is 'the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgementally to the unfolding experience moment by moment' (Kabat-Zinn, 2003, p. 145), where there is 'non-attachment to outcome' (p. 148). Mace (2007) reviewed current research and found three facets as particularly important:

- 1) Observing
- 2) Non-judging
- 3) Non-reactivity.

Here, observing is 'the tendency to notice or attend to internal and external experiences, such as sensations, emotions, cognitions, sounds, sights and smells'. Non-judging of inner experience is 'taking a non-evaluative stance toward thoughts and feelings', and non-reactivity to inner experience is 'the tendency to allow thoughts and feelings to come and go, without

getting caught up in them or carried away by them' (Baer, Smith, Hopkins, Krietemeyer & Toney, 2006, p. 239).

One question is whether or not SEL competencies, self-regulation and mindfulness can be taught. Buckner et al. (2003) and others (Zins et al., 2004) believe that, although these skills may be in large part individual traits, interventions that promote positive environments in which to learn and practise these skills may be effective. In the United States, there is an active collaborative of researchers who have developed various interventions to promote SEL and self-regulation called the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The CASEL group has developed a set of basic principles on which to base SEL programmes (Elias et al., nd.; Zins, Elias, Greenberg & Weissberg, 2000). However, they stop short of suggesting specific key skills on which to focus, given the breadth in the range of skills that *could* be incorporated and the various contexts in which SEL programmes could operate (Payton et al., 2000). One of the principles, for example, is to:

*Simultaneously – and seamlessly – address students' mental-emotional, social, and physical health, rather than focusing on one categorical outcome. Ultimately, comprehensive and integrated programmes that target multiple social and health problem behaviours have greater potential than short-term interventions that target the prevention of a single problem behaviour* (Elias et al., nd., p. 3).

Much of this work has been focused on younger children (the PATHS curriculum; Greenberg & Kusché, 1998) and much more needs to be done to understand how SEL programmes can be effective with older youths.

We propose that leisure is a natural context to teach and support self-regulation and perhaps mindfulness (if done with a very skilled instructor or leader) for several reasons. As described, a positive leisure (including recreation and sports) experience, by definition, is one of self-choice, personal goal concordance, feelings of perceived freedom, interest and enjoyment. Thus, youths are naturally engaged and interested in the activity as opposed to other types of activities in their daily lives such as school or chores, which are not typically associated with such self-determination and interest. Furthermore, leisure is often characterised by challenge and/or the need to focus (although this is not always the case). One can experience 'flow', where one's skill level and the challenge of the activity are adequately matched, allowing for one to become 'one' with the activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). This is particularly true in physical activity and sport, which are prime contexts in which to pay attention to one's body moving through time

and space. Some people talk about yoga, walking, meditation, running or swimming laps as a means to centre oneself and become aware of the moment and practise mindfulness. Engaging in activities in natural environments, particularly nature-based environments, is an important context in which to develop mindfulness given that one's senses are more likely to be engaged in the moment and deep connection with the world tends to occur. All of the characteristics associated with positive leisure experiences are likely to create opportunities to more easily teach the youth about social and emotional regulation and mindfulness.

Another reason leisure contexts may promote SEL, self-regulation and mindfulness is that often in competitive situations, conflicts arise. These are natural and meaningful situations in which to help youths understand how to resolve differences and conduct themselves ethically and with care and concern for others.

Being able to be mindful promotes the ability to be cognitively or intellectually flexible. Although more a style or capability of thinking than an actual form of intelligence, the ability to be flexible in thought is crucial to promote understanding of social relationships (Caldwell, 2008b). This type of flexibility and creativity in thinking may aid youths in being able to construct their identities of self in relation to others without having to privilege one's self over 'different' others and thus potentially reduce acts of violence. The hallmarks of the mindful condition are the ability to:

- View both objects and situations from multiple perspectives
- Shift perspective depending on the context (Carson & Langer, 2006, p. 30).

Carson and Langer (2006) describe mindfulness as being opposite of mindlessness, in which one tends to unthoughtfully place others into categories or make hasty and misinformed judgements. Mindfulness is associated with self-authenticity and positive regard that is not based on the evaluations of others. Mindlessness is associated with the need to evaluate oneself in relation to others in order to boost one's self-esteem.

### ***Need for organisational support and policies***

There is a big *however* in the preceding remarks. It would be rare for a youth to develop these self-regulation, SEL and mindfulness skills on his or her own. In addition, youths need opportunities and exposure in order to ignite their passions. Thus, in order to promote these characteristics in the youth, highly skilled leaders or youth workers must develop relationships with youths on a sustained basis to expose and provide opportunity, help youths identify

personal interests, develop skills, learn how to keep things interesting over time, and develop personal competencies such as SEL and self-regulation. Unfortunately, not much research attention has been devoted to staff training and retention in order to promote effective interventions.

Thus, preventive interventions alone are not enough. Supports and opportunities in one's environment and from caring adults are important. Additionally, policy must be enacted that ensures that these supports and structures will be in place and maintained over time. Furthermore, adequate staff compensation is needed to assure that the best people are hired for the job. Too often leisure time staff are considered frivolous and merely for 'fun and games' without thought to the important role they can play in risk reduction and health promotion.

Irby and Tolman (2002, p. 1) make some important observations concerning this point:

*On numerous occasions, these hours and activities (sports and recreation programmes and cultural programmes) and the infrastructure that supports them are seen as a promising means to a widely acknowledged end, like delinquency prevention, formal education, or HIV/AIDS prevention. Reducing idling time is adopted as a delinquency prevention strategy ... Too often, however, these forays into 'discretionary' space are taken without an appreciation of what that space is and does for people. The ease with which policymakers and large system planners confiscate time, redefine activities and supplant or take advantage of community programmes ... suggests a basic lack of understanding, if not a lack of respect for what goes on when young people are not in school, not at work.*

They conclude that leisure (meaning time, activity and infrastructure) is a key context for education, learning, human development and full participation in civic life and society. We agree, and suggest further that interventions can be (and have been) designed to promote important leisure skills and behaviours that will decrease risk behaviour, including violence, and promote health and well-being. The next section will describe some specific interventions that address these areas.

## **INTERVENTIONS IN OSCs: A SYSTEMIC APPROACH**

### **Using existing evidence to plan interventions**

Evidence-based evaluation of interventions in OSCs is an emerging field; thus, there is not much information regarding best practices and standards to guide programme design and implementation (Little & Harris, 2003). Nearly all of

the interventions that have been documented are located in North America. It cannot be assumed that the outcomes of these interventions would be similar when applied to a completely different context. However, with little else to guide interventions, it is possible and useful to identify elements that can be considered as promising best practices for addressing violence in OSCs within the South African context. Using the available evidence and examples, in this section we offer suggestions for interventions in OSCs that would form part of a comprehensive approach to addressing youth violence. The main goal of these interventions is youth development, utilising leisure (among other strategies) as a means to promote healthy development. Although less specifically focused on violence prevention, youth development is a significant element of violence prevention strategies.

*Youth development strategies build internal and external assets in youths, helping them to develop characteristics that are necessary to prevent serious problems such as violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out of school. When the youth receive support and opportunities for growth in a caring environment, they experience significant improvements in academic achievement and school success (Creating safe environments: Violence prevention strategies and program, 2006, p. 19).*

The *Harvard Family Research Project* (HFRP, 2008) is an OST research and evaluation database that was set up to provide information about research and evaluation work on OST programmes and initiatives in order to support development in this field. Although all of the programmes are located in the United States of America (USA), the database is a useful resource for accessing and comparing details of empirically supported OST interventions and evaluations. Nearly all of the evaluations and studies on the database have an experimental or quasi-experimental design. The HFRP conducted a comprehensive examination of research on after-school programmes in recent years and provides evidence that participation in after-school programmes has a positive impact on a range of prevention outcomes including decreases in delinquency, violent behaviour and substance abuse; improved academic achievement; social and developmental outcomes; and lifestyle and exercise improvements (After-school programs in the 21st century, 2008). Critical factors to achieve successful outcomes are that:

- Youths need to access programmes frequently and in a sustained way
- Programmes need to offer appropriate supervision and structure, have well-prepared staff and have intentional programming with opportunities for autonomy and choice

- Strong partnerships with families, schools and communities should be facilitated (After-school programs in the 21st century, 2008).

Three comprehensive strategies for addressing violence have been identified that can be applied to OSC interventions:

- 1) Family-based strategies (parental skills development)
- 2) Social-cognitive strategies (learning non-violent methods for handling difficult situations, resolving conflict and developing non-violent beliefs)
- 3) Mentoring strategies (positive adult role models) (Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch & Baer, 2000).

The HFRP interventions that focused on violence incorporated these strategies through the use of academic activities such as homework supervision, academic enrichment and tutoring; life skills and personal development activities; recreation, leisure, arts, sports, cultural and community-linked activities; field trips or outings. Some programmes included an adult mentoring component and parental involvement activities such as workshops.

Outcomes of the HFRP violence intervention programmes provide evidence for improvements in areas such as goal-setting; adult and peer relationships; communication; conflict management; avoiding fights, violence, and substance abuse; problem-solving and decision-making; self-esteem; appropriate behaviour; reductions in delinquent and negative behaviour; and discipline problems (HFRP, 2008).

In the field of violence prevention, there is widespread use of the ecological model to identify risk and protective elements at the individual, family, school and community levels (Williams, Rivers, Neighbours & Reznik, 2007). In the following section, we use Ecological Systems Theory (EST) (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) as a useful framework for planning interventions in OSCs using a systemic approach: microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

### **Interventions at the microsystem and mesosystem level**

According to Pelsler (2008), strategies for reducing crime and violence in South Africa should focus on the home, school and environment of at-risk youths, meaning those who live in the most violence-prone areas of the country. Therefore, interventions in OSCs should be targeted at youths residing in lower-income areas. Drawing on Pelsler's suggestions regarding the key elements of a comprehensive violence strategy, interventions should

start preferably with younger youths and provide developmental support (improve: cognitive abilities, learning abilities, self-esteem and empathy for others). Interventions should link with the safer schools strategies and support the idea of the school as a 'node of care'.

There is a great need to provide safe, secure spaces and places in OSCs for youths to meet and interact. For many youths, particularly those living in under-resourced, lower-income areas, there is very little to do after school and during free time. Youths who have dropped out of school and those who are unemployed are faced with an even greater amount of non-productive free time. The lack of constructive, structured free-time pursuits results in time being spent 'hanging out' on street corners, raised levels of boredom and participation in negative or risk behaviours including violence and crime (Wegner, 2008). Previous research has shown a link between unstructured socialising and delinquency (Osgood & Anderson, 2004). The intention is to provide a positive social climate that promotes bonding, feelings of inclusion and nurturing, prosocial behaviour, positive interaction and healthy relationships. An evaluation of *Teen REACH* (Responsibility, Education, Achievement, Caring and Hope) – an American programme aimed at providing positive youth activities during non-school hours – revealed that youths felt that the programme gave them somewhere to go and something to do, and kept them '... off the streets and out of trouble' (Harvard Family Research Programme). Such places could become sites for building community and fostering civility by affirming the youth and enabling them to express themselves and be heard by adults (Cole, 2003). Participation in extracurricular activities has been found to promote school bonding (Oetting & Donnermeyer, 1998); therefore, it makes sense that these places are linked with schools and the local community. In resource-poor areas, there is even more support for this argument because schools and community-based centres can then share resources including physical resources such as buildings and materials; financial resources such as funding streams; social resources such as shared understandings, trust and relationships among various actors; and intellectual resources such as skills, knowledge and competence of stakeholders (Wimer, Post & Little, 2003).

In order for young people to be able to participate in healthy leisure activities, the required resources and facilities need to be available in schools and communities, and be accessible in terms of both affordability, and that the community knows about the benefits of the programmes. Apart from schools, other community resources that could provide easily accessible

venues for interventions are libraries and recreation centres. Enhanced youth user rates of these civic spaces could in turn increase public support and provide leverage for funding. Community centres could offer opportunities for the youth to engage in leisure and other pursuits in the afternoons and evenings, over weekends and during school holidays. Another advantage is that hard-to-reach youths and those who have dropped out of school may be more likely to attend programmes in these types of contexts.

In the USA, 'teen centres' have been operating for a number of years as either stand-alone centres or as part of existing community recreation centres (Montandon, Cronan & Witt, 2005). The facilities and structures of these centres vary depending on the needs of the population for which they are established. Principles that contribute to their success include having a plan to actively recruit young people, developing consistent funding, creating and maintaining community support, and attracting and training staff to facilitate youth development.

It is vital that interventions in OSCs are run by fully trained staff and volunteers. OSC leisure activities provide excellent opportunities for non-parental and/or parental adult relationship bonding, for example sport coaches. Ongoing training should be provided, which should focus on raising awareness about the importance and benefits of leisure for young people and assist workers to identify strategies for programme implementation. An important outcome of training would be to develop action plans (that include an evaluation component) for appropriate and realistic community-based interventions. In addition, parent training could focus on the parental role in facilitating adolescent children's free time and the importance of monitoring – as opposed to controlling – their free-time activities (Sharp, Caldwell, Graham & Ridenour, 2006). Considering that research on young male offenders has shown that fewer than one in 10 reported a positive and consistent relationship with their fathers (Leoschut & Burton, 2005), it is important that interventions incorporate positive, male role models (Pelser, 2008).

Attention also needs to be given to recruitment and marketing strategies such as advertising and promoting programmes and teen centres through flyers, local radio and newspapers, school announcements and visits. Quite possibly, alternative methods of marketing that are more direct, community-driven and hands-on may need to be adopted. These would require more research in terms of their effectiveness.

Structure and social context are important considerations in planning the leisure component of interventions in OSCs. Youths who participate in leisure activities with high levels of structure may be less likely to be

involved in antisocial activities than those who participate in activities with low structure (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). The social context of leisure includes social agents and persons present in the activity that influence participation. The type of activities youths are involved in influences the peer group with whom they are involved. Leisure contexts that offer very little structured activities, marginal supervision and are non-skill oriented may promote antisocial behaviour (Mahoney & Stattin, 2000). With this in mind, interventions in OSCs should:

- Offer some degree of structure
- Provide opportunities for the development of skills and competence through activities that increase in complexity and challenge
- Be guided by rules
- Be directed by adult activity leaders
- Should follow a regular participation schedule.

Larson and his colleagues have provided an excellent literature that describes youth experiences in both adult-led and youth-led endeavours, and the complexities surrounding youth leadership and youth voice (Hansen, Larson & Dworkin, 2003). The most successful adult-youth partnerships occur when adults adopt a 'scaffolding' model (Dahl, 2004). This is where adults build a support structure 'around' the youth/s to provide the perfect balance of support and resource provision (that is, the minimal amount needed for youths to be successful). Then, as the youth learns and begins to take charge, the adult gently removes the supports and the youth is left with the right amount of autonomy, voice and power.

Effective after-school programmes that focus on skill development are:

- Sequential (sequenced set of activities to achieve skill objectives)
- Active (active forms of learning)
- Focused and explicit (target specific skills) (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007).

Typical after-school programmes operate for two to three hours at the end of the regular school day, four to five times a week, with many incorporating an initial homework hour followed by organised activities such as games, athletics and presentations by community groups or personal skills training such as conflict management (Kane, 2004). Some programmes invite outside staff or agencies to come in and offer activities that require specific expertise not held by after-school staff. For example, local fitness centre staff may be contracted to provide a module on personal fitness and healthy eating. Or a

local dance studio may do a module on some type of dance style of interest to the youth.

It is very important that adolescents be encouraged to take as much responsibility as possible to plan and maintain leisure programmes whether in teen centres or elsewhere. However, this does not necessarily mean that adolescents should run the programmes themselves. As mentioned previously, adult involvement is vital to the success of leisure programmes. The goal should be for adults to support adolescents in being essential players in their own development through positive role-modelling and by equipping them with the relevant skills. The balance of power should gradually shift in the direction of the adolescent. Adults need to offer appropriate guidance, share responsibility and decision-making and strive to work in partnership with young people (Camino, 2005). Youths who have dropped out of school have specific needs and programme planners should make a concerted effort to address these specific needs. Examples include leisure groups held during the day, teenage-mother-and-child leisure and social support groups, career guidance, job identification and basic work skills training.

### **Interventions at the exosystem and macrosystem level**

Interventions at these levels need to occur within local and national governmental structures through awareness-raising and policy development. From the literature reviewed for this chapter, it was evident that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the main providers of the few services in OSCs that do exist to address youth violence. There is a definite need for governmental departments, specifically Education, Health, Social Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Arts and Culture, to recognise their roles and take responsibility for the planning, implementation and funding of interventions in OSCs that address youth violence. Governmental support would also contribute to the sustainability of these interventions.

In addition to the above, further research and development in this field is required. Interventions should be monitored and evaluated to expand knowledge about what is effective in terms of OSC interventions for youth violence in the South African context. In order to combat a lack of co-ordination between service providers associated with violence, and crime prevention that lead to interventions occurring in isolation at local or regional level (Matthews, Griggs & Caine, 1999), it is important that a central, national database be established to provide an opportunity for sharing information about interventions, processes, successes and failures.

## **HealthWise South Africa: Life Skills for Young Adults Programme**

HealthWise South Africa: Life Skills for Young Adults was a five-year, comprehensive, school-based intervention geared toward preventing risk behaviours among Grade 8 and 9 learners (Caldwell et al., 2004). Specifically, we targeted substance abuse, sexual risk and enacting violence. This intervention was a partnership between researchers at the universities of the Western Cape and Cape Town (South Africa), and Penn State (USA), which was funded by the US National Institute on Drug Abuse. Four schools received the HealthWise programme initially. After the programme was evaluated, five other schools received the programme (these were the initial control schools).

HealthWise was designed using elements of Life-Skills Training (Botvin, Mihalic & Grotpeter, 1998; Botvin & Kantor, 2000), lessons drawn from effective sexual risk prevention curricula and components of TimeWise: Taking Charge of Leisure Time (Caldwell, 2004). Previous research among high-school learners in the USA has shown that the TimeWise intervention may be useful in addressing delinquency, and that property damage was lower for TimeWise youths than their peers in a comparison group (Caldwell, 2004; Caldwell et al., 2004; Caldwell & Smith, 2006).

The aim of the HealthWise intervention was to reduce risk behaviours by increasing the influence of protective factors such as positive behaviours and attitudes.

The protective factors included:

- Skills to make one's leisure positive and meaningful
- Self-management skills such as learning how to reduce anger and manage conflict
- Negotiating relationships
- Identifying and avoiding situations that might be or turn risky
- Learning facts about sexual health and substance abuse.

The primary aims of HealthWise with regard to promoting positive use of leisure time as an alternative to participating in negative or risky pursuits were to:

- Create opportunities so that learners can identify and explore positive leisure pursuits
- Assist learners with developing leisure interests
- Encourage learners to take responsibility and ownership for leisure

- Enable learners to overcome constraints and barriers to leisure participation.

HealthWise consists of an in-school component (curriculum) and an OSC component (after-school programmes). The study was conducted in a low-income area and, as such, opportunities for positive OST activities were limited. A process evaluation of HealthWise revealed the need to promote and facilitate leisure opportunities in the schools and the local community (Wegner, Flisher, Caldwell, Vergnani & Smith, 2008). Two youth development workers were employed to take on this role and develop after-school leisure programmes as well as form links with other community organisations. A key principle that these workers adopted was to assist educators and learners to develop and maintain their own after-school programmes.

By way of example, we refer briefly to one successful after-school programme that was an outgrowth of the HealthWise intervention – the *Brown Paper Performing Arts Project* (BPPAP). This project was based on one of the major contributors to effective after-school programmes: relationships with caring adults.

In OSC interventions, youth-adult partnerships (YAPs) can:

- Provide mentoring and positive role models
- Involve the youth in responsible, task-oriented activities outside of the home
- Build self-efficacy among role players
- Encourage youths to take responsibility for developing projects and resources.

Projects should be needs-driven and based on sound project-planning strategies and action plans, taking into consideration role players' principles, values, skills and competencies. They should incorporate time and space for reflection, be explicit about roles and expectations and make use of a third party to explore group assumptions and values (Camino, 2005). Universities and colleges are ideal for recruiting young adults wanting to partner with adolescents in OSC interventions.

The BPPAP used the principle of YAPs by involving a group of university students working with high-school learners in a performing arts project. Students and learners met two afternoons a week over a period of seven months (Wegner et al., 2008). The primary goal was for learners to explore the different facets of, and participate in, performing arts as a leisure activity. In addition, the Brown Paper activities were aimed at promoting

healthy development of the adolescents, such as self-esteem and self-awareness. Learners had opportunities to develop a range of skills in script writing, acting, reading, speaking, listening, assertiveness and decision-making. The programme culminated in a public concert called 'Looking for Mike'.

The BPPAP was evaluated using qualitative evaluation methods that included:

- Focus groups with learners and facilitators
- Digital storytelling with learners
- Interviews with educators (Lesko, Bosman & Wegner, 2006).

Findings showed that learners benefited in many ways as a result of participating in the programme, which they found to be interesting, fun and meaningful. This was summed up very aptly by one of the boy participants who said, 'We do drama, singing and acting. It is nice, very nice. Instead of doing drugs we do drama.' The following quote illustrates the value of the BPPAP in terms of reducing risk activities, although it does not specifically mention violence per se:

*I would like to do something like this in our communities because there are a lot of children who need this because they are 'tikking' [methamphetamine use] and drinking and doing drugs, and I can count on my hands how many of them are still in school. All of the girls there they have babies and stuff like that and I think if they have something like this to keep them busy they won't be doing other things because if like we do the show in other areas then we could maybe even inspire them (male participant).*

There was clear evidence of social emotional learning, since one of the themes dealt with learners' personal growth and development, an increase in self-confidence and the acquisition of new skills. A female learner said:

*I was shy, I could never look somebody in the eye or talk to them but after I came here we played this game that I just loved, the game called 'eye contact' – something we do each time when we start. Before, we looked at each other but we didn't really make eye contact. Here they taught us to look into the next person by looking in his eyes or her eyes.*

Another benefit was the development of new peer relationships and the minimisation of cross-cultural and language barriers. Throughout the duration of the programme, the learners felt that they got to know each other on a more personal level, which promoted respect and understanding of one

another. This can be regarded as the development of mindfulness, as these quotes show:

*We are getting to know other people because here at school, it's like everybody walks past each other, you won't mix and people don't actually know me. But there by the drama classes they actually got to speak to me, and be with me, and they got to know me (female learner).*

*I am talking about the multi-cultural things and I, yes and me as a person, I wouldn't go to their group because I feel like I wouldn't fit in but now they talking about something and I wouldn't understand, but now when we in drama class we all friends. When they talk about something then we ask them now what does that mean and so we learn their language as well (male learner).*

There were benefits for the youth facilitators too. This quote demonstrates the development of self-regulation:

*I gained self-control and learnt how to deal with kids of those ages. Learning from these kids actually helped me to deal with my siblings at home (male student facilitator).*

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we offer a set of summary points that reflect the ideas presented in this chapter. In many ways these points are reiterated elsewhere in the positive youth development literature (National Academy of Sciences, 2001; Pittman, Irby & Ferber, 2000) and in the leisure literature (Witt & Caldwell, 2005). In this chapter, however, we have specifically focused on violence prevention in the South African context and addressed an important but little researched domain of youth: free time and leisure. In addition, we have also included a relatively untapped area of enquiry promoted by a recent and more in-depth understanding of the adolescent brain. In conclusion, we offer these points for further consideration:

- One of the goals of violence prevention interventions should be to help the youth 'ignite passions' by exploring what is personally meaningful, interesting and enjoyable to them; developing the skills to participate; and having opportunities for long-term engagement in the activities.
- There is much to be learned about how the brain/behaviour/social context interaction plays out in OSCs and whether or not there is something unique that the OSC (and in particular leisure) offers in violence prevention.
- Schools are an excellent contact point and after-school programmes that link youths to schools in a safe and structured context are important.

On the other hand, for those youths who have dropped out or are disengaged at school, other venues for programming and intervention must be found and supported. It is vital that vigorous and effective social marketing of these programmes occurs.

- There is an important bi-directional relationship that must be considered in developing interventions in OSCs to prevent violence. The youth must learn to take responsibility for their actions but at the same time, adults, communities and policies must provide the supports, opportunities, services and programmes to empower youths to take that responsibility.
- Related to the point above is that effective interventions and programmes need to include youth ‘voice and choice’; that is, adults cannot *plan for* youths but rather there must be a reciprocal interaction between youths and adults for successful programming to occur.
- Programme staff must be well-trained, well-paid and learn intentional programming to reach important outcomes such as violence prevention and promotion of youth development goals.
- Research is lacking in the area of violence prevention in OSCs and particularly in the South African context. Thus, capacity needs to be developed to conduct this research and money set aside to conduct rigorous, randomised controlled trials to assess the effectiveness of interventions and to suggest how interventions can be further improved.
- Standards for best practices and blue-ribbon programmes in the area of violence prevention and OSCs in South Africa should be established and compiled in a way that is easily accessible to anyone interested in this topic (for example, a web-based product).
- Attention cannot be only focused on youths. Families, schools and educators, religious institutions and other social structures must be implicated systematically in any attempt to reduce violence in OSCs.
- Finally, as evidence is established that interventions in OSCs are effective, more resources must be allocated across governmental, NGOs, school and community structures to support activities that take place in the OSC.

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# Chapter Eight



## INTERVENING WITH YOUTHS IN GANGS

*Adam Cooper & Catherine L. Ward*

### INTRODUCTION

Violence committed by young people operating as a group is by no means confined to those groups that might be identified (or that might identify themselves) as gangs. In recent South African history, national headlines have been made with the arrest of twelve Grade 12 boys for assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm, an act apparently committed as part of an initiation ceremony for inducting Grade 11 learners into leadership positions in the boarding school concerned (Serrao, 2009). In another, less organised incident, one young man was left paralysed in an encounter after which seven teenagers were charged with attempted murder and assault with attempt to do grievous bodily harm (Van der Fort, 2007). Neither of these incidents had anything to do with what we commonly term a gang. It is simply that peer groups are important to teenagers and so it is not surprising that when things go wrong, a group is often involved. Non-gang forms of violence – bullying at school and violence that appears to arise out of a simple disagreement – are addressed in other chapters of this book.

However, much of the violent crime in South Africa is thought to be driven by formally organised gangs (Kinnes, 2000). This said, understanding what is meant by ‘formally organised gangs’ is not a simple exercise. A range of gangs are produced by different socio-economic landscapes, making it difficult to pin down the ‘object’ of study. Youth gangs are contingent on the social, economic and political contexts from which they emerge, creating diverse forms of gangs. Theorists therefore struggle to agree on what a ‘youth gang’ is, or if we should even use the term ‘youth gang’. A ‘gang’ in the Philippines may have little resemblance to a gang in Cape Town or in the Niger Delta in Nigeria. For instance, Civilian Volunteer Organisations in the Philippines were legally established in the 1980s as community groups protecting themselves

from crime, but have become private armies used by local political leaders for (among other things) protection and extortion; the Egbesu Boys in Nigeria are effectively ethnic militias that emerged since the implementation of democratic rule in 1999 (Dowdney, 2005).

Within South Africa, gangs have a long and varied history, with evidence of gangs in Johannesburg organising around the migrant labour of the mines in the late 1800s (Van Onselen, 1984) and in Cape Town's prisons in the early 1900s (Steinberg, 2004). Some gangs are informal groups of young people – what Pinnock called 'corner kids' (1980) – groups of boys who 'hang out' together on street corners, who might become territorial, who might commit minor antisocial acts together, and who might be drawn into illicit activities by other groups, while others incorporate young people into a more formal structure that is organised and run by adults. Several of the more structured, larger South African gangs have links to organised crime, particularly to the drug trade, and in the post-apartheid era when barriers to such trade are lower, are seeking to expand their operations (Standing, 2005). This often means active recruitment of young people, who may begin their involvement with the gang as young as age 12 (Legget, 2005).

The different histories of countries and communities, varied cultural contexts and the differential availability of resources like drugs and guns, all affect the kinds of gangs that emerge and make it difficult to define youth gangs. Definitions from the US predominantly still see youth gangs as a largely 'social' phenomenon, unrelated to the global informal economy and young people's livelihoods. Curry and Decker (1998) define a gang in the following way, incorporating the fact that a gang remains together for a period of time, has an area that they claim as their own and engages in law-violating behaviour:

*A social group using symbols, engaging in verbal and non-verbal communication to declare their 'gangness', a sense of permanence, gang identified territory or turf, and, lastly, crime* (Curry & Decker, 1998, p. 2).

The examples from the Philippines and Nigeria, given above, clearly indicate that many of these groups are not completely 'social' in nature. Other theorists stress the concept of 'identity' as central to defining a youth gang. Two leading youth gang experts in the US, Klein and Maxson, define a gang in the following manner: 'a street gang is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity' (Klein & Maxson, 2006, p. 4).

In that definition, ‘illegal activity’ is described as related to identity – a social phenomenon – and not to earning a living and survival. Many definitions of gangs therefore do not place emphasis on the fact that there are children who are armed and making their livelihoods through gangsterism. For instance, in places like Rio de Janeiro, where young people are given weapons and paid to defend a *favela* (slum or shanty town), terms like ‘social group’ seem inappropriate and the cultural practices of the definitions above appear less definitive of the groups in question (Dowdney, 2005). Yet Rio de Janeiro is not at war and these children do not have political objectives, so terms like ‘child soldier’ are equally unhelpful (Dowdney, 2005).

One way of analysing the differences and similarities between these groups, and of deciding which interventions are appropriate, is to assess how and to what degree gangs are formally organised. Dowdney (2005) has devised five criteria for comparing the regimentation of gangs. These are:

- 1) Elements of a command structure
- 2) Power over territory
- 3) Power over population
- 4) Power over resources
- 5) Armed violence.

Youth gangs may range from heavily militarised groups, which have immense power over communities, are heavily armed and control the local economy, to informal groups of young people hanging around on street corners, committing petty crimes. The Viva Rio group has therefore developed the term ‘children in organised armed violence’ instead of the term ‘gang’, and has agreed on the following working definition:

*Children and youths involved in organised armed violence (COAV) – children and youths employed or otherwise participating in Organised Armed Violence where there are elements of a command structure and power over territory, local population and resources (Dowdney, 2005, p. 13).*

The concept of COAV indicates that in many contexts the youth join gangs in order to make a living and that these groups are, to some degree, organised. Therefore interventions need to provide alternatives to these gang structures, as children’s involvement in organised armed violence is not simply related to individuals’ behaviour problems and ‘delinquency’. In this chapter we will use the term ‘gangs’, as this is the term most people are familiar with, but we are using it to refer to structured groups—groups that are often comprised of

individuals who have joined the gang because of a lack of alternatives and who may well earn a living through the gang's activities.

## **RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTHS JOINING GANGS**

The relationship between crime and gang activities is a complex one; certainly not all crime, not even all violent crime, is committed by gangs or even by individual gangsters operating on their own (Standing, 2005). Yet North American literature suggests that young people who identify themselves as gang members are more likely to engage in violence, to be victims of violence and to be arrested, than those who do not (Huff, 1998). Therefore identifying oneself as a member of a gang is a significant risk factor for a young person in terms of both committing violent acts and suffering their consequences.

Risk factors that increase the likelihood that a child will join a gang show a great overlap with the risk factors for delinquency and violent or aggressive behaviour in general. We summarise these here and in Table 8.1 (Dowdney, 2005; Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001). Some of these are characteristics of the individual child. Children (or young people) are more likely to join gangs if they:

- Use drugs
- Are aggressive
- Have attention or learning problems
- Have antisocial beliefs
- Struggle to resist peer pressure towards delinquency.

Some are risks in their family, school or peer group. If they have violent parents or delinquent siblings, or if they have poor attachment to their parents and school, then these, too, increase the likelihood of their joining a gang.

What may distinguish children who join gangs from those who take another antisocial path may simply be access to the gang. They may live in neighbourhoods where gangs operate and are therefore visible and accessible, and they may have family members or friends who are members and who actively recruit them. Gangs are more likely to exist in cities where there are pockets of poverty surrounded by areas of relative wealth; where there is a high proportion of young people in the population, together with low levels of education and high levels of unemployment (especially among the youth), limited state services (such as policing) and access to illicit economies and small arms.

**Table 8.1: Risk factors that increase the likelihood that a child will join a gang**

Risk factors in the individual	Risk factors in the child's everyday contexts	Risk factors in the community	Risk factors in society
<p><i>Children are more at risk of gang involvement if they:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use drugs</li> <li>• Are violent or aggressive</li> <li>• Have beliefs that justify breaking the law</li> <li>• Are hyperactive</li> <li>• Are unable to resist others who draw them into delinquent activities</li> <li>• Have a learning disability</li> </ul>	<p><i>Children are more at risk of gang involvement if they experience one or more of the following in their home, school or peer groups:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Their parents have pro-violence attitudes</li> <li>• They have only one parent (even if there are other adults in the home), or no parents</li> <li>• They have delinquent siblings</li> <li>• They have a poor educational record at primary school</li> <li>• They have poor school attachment and commitment</li> <li>• Their household is poor</li> </ul>	<p><i>Children are more at risk of gang involvement if they experience one or more of the following in their communities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drugs are available</li> <li>• There are a number of delinquent young people in the neighbourhood</li> <li>• They don't like their neighbourhood</li> </ul>	<p><i>Children are more at risk of gang involvement if they experience one or more of the following in their society:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cities have pockets of poverty within them</li> <li>• There is a high proportion of young people in the population, together with low levels of education and high levels of unemployment</li> <li>• Limited state services (for instance, a lack of policing)</li> <li>• State corruption</li> <li>• The state itself is violent</li> <li>• Access to illicit economies</li> <li>• Access to small arms</li> </ul>

Source: Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Battin-Pearson, 1999; Hill, Lui & Hawkins, 2001; Dowdney, 2005

Because gangs are heterogeneous in nature, successful intervention programming will need to identify and address the particular risks that face a particular group of young people in a particular community. In doing so, good programme design should take into account that these risks are likely to be layered at the individual, family and community levels, and be prepared to address risk at different levels (Dawes & Donald, 2004). For instance, a programme might work with both a child's aggression and with his or her parents' parenting (thus working at both the individual and family levels); or with his or her substance abuse and with job creation in the community (the individual and community levels).

Risks and their importance may also differ by age. Three large studies in the US suggest that employment, particularly for older teenagers, may play a particularly important role. In one study, questionnaires were distributed to 3 348 youths in alternative schools, juvenile correctional facilities and boot camps (1 994 admitted to belonging to a gang; Houston, 1996), and in another, over 1 000 at-risk gang youths were surveyed (Knox, 1997). In both these studies, 50% of the participants said that job training and employment were the answer to the gang problem. In another study of approximately 200 gang-involved youths in Colorado, Florida and Ohio, many gang members said they would not give up selling drugs for a job that brought them less than \$15 an hour, yet 25% said they would give up for \$6–\$7 an hour (barely above minimum wage) if they could get regular hours, even in menial employment (Huff, 1998). A small South African study echoed this: young gang members in Manenberg said they would leave the gang if they could find trade-level jobs (Legget, 2005). This needs to be taken seriously in designing programmes to intervene with young people involved with gangs.

Other factors that seem to make a gang attractive include a need for independence and a sense of belonging (Cooper & Foster, 2008; Huff, 1998), as well as a sense of power (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009). This often informs interventions, as programmes attempt to give young people an alternative group to the gang to belong to. However, this needs to be done thoughtfully and carefully in communities where violence, criminality and substance abuse have been normalised over long periods: grouping adolescents together who tend towards antisocial behaviour can backfire if the activities are not carefully structured, as the group members may simply reinforce each other's antisocial tendencies (Dishion, McCord & Poulin, 1999).

Drug addiction as a route into gang membership also merits a special mention. Young people who become addicted may need to start selling drugs for the gangs (who own the local drug trade) in order to support their own

addiction (Ward & Bakhuis, 2009). Substance abuse interventions may need to be a part of almost any intervention that wishes to be successful.

One of the implicit risk factors in joining a gang is often thought to be male gender, since it is a risk factor for violence (Hawkins et al., 1998; Herrenkohl et al., 2000). However, although female gang membership is under-researched both in South Africa and worldwide (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001; Vetten, 2000), it is clear that there are girls and young women involved with gangs and gang members, and who are themselves gang members. Thus far, South African writings on gangs suggest that women in gangs fall into three traditional roles (Vetten, 2000). They may be:

- Victims of coercion by male gang members
- Glamorous girlfriends who enhance the status of their boyfriend
- Men's property.

Yet it is also clear that there are women who are fully fledged gang members, with all the rights to commit and suffer violence that men have (Vetten, 2000; Legget, 2005). While this is an area that needs more research, we make two points. We should:

- Avoid the assumption that all gangsters are male
- Bear in mind that when intervention programmes are designed, the needs of young women should be taken into account where appropriate. These needs may vary widely, depending on the role of a particular young woman and her child-rearing status (Vetten, 2000).

Despite the fact that gang members and non-gang members who commit acts of violence have many risk factors in common, there is a relatively large body of programmes that attend specifically to the problem of young people involved with gangs. Although there is this great overlap in risk factors, gang membership has some very specific risks – for instance, while in some cases it is easy to leave the gang, in other cases, young people may risk death at the hands of their own gang if they leave (Standing, 2005). In addition, programmes that address violence typically do not address the economic and social problems that play a role in the development of gangs, yet programmes that are successful in addressing the gang problem often include this as an element.

In this chapter, we focus only on those programmes that have specifically been developed to address young people's involvement in gangs. Irving Spergel's (1995) typology, classifying gang interventions as prevention, disengagement, suppression or 'mixed model' programmes, will be used to categorise the youth gang interventions.

- Preventive measures aim to target the general population of youths at risk and prevent individuals from getting involved in gangs in the first place
- Disengagement interventions help young people already involved in gangs to withdraw
- Suppression operations use law enforcement strategies to deal with high-profile individual gangsters and firearms, and aim to keep gang activity to a minimum (Klein & Maxson, 2006; Lafontaine, Ferguson & Wormith, 2005)
- Mixed models use a mixture of these three strategies.

Where programmes have been rigorously evaluated and found to be effective, we note that this is true of very few. Where programmes have undergone an evaluation that suggests they may have been found to have been effective if the evaluation had been methodologically stronger, we note that the programme appears to be promising.

### PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

Prevention interventions aim to prevent the youth from participating in gangs in the first place. The rationale is, quite simply, that it is easier to prevent children from joining a gang than to rescue them once they have joined. Programmes that address risks for antisocial behaviour, which have been shown to be effective, such as the *Nurse Home Visitation* programme (Olds, Hill & Rumsey, 1998) and the *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program* (Limber, 2006), are rated as effective, because they prevent antisocial behaviour and gang membership (Shaw, 2001). Because these programmes have been covered in other chapters, we will not go into further detail about them here.

One prevention intervention that has demonstrated its efficacy for decreasing gang involvement specifically is the *Montreal Preventive Treatment Program*. Forty-three boys of low socio-economic status who displayed disruptive behaviour in kindergarten (and who were therefore at risk for later gang membership) were enrolled in the programme in order to prevent the development of more serious problem behaviour (Tremblay, Pagani-Kurtz, Mâsse, Vitaro & Pihl, 1995). A combination of parent training and skills development for the child himself were provided when the boys were 7–9 years old. Parents were given 17 training sessions to assist them in monitoring their boys' behaviour, giving positive reinforcement for good behaviour, family management skills and discipline strategies (Tremblay,

Mâsse, Pagani & Vitaro, 1996). The boys received 19 sessions of prosocial skills training, aimed at helping improve their social acceptance among their peers, their problem-solving and self-control in conflict situations (Tremblay et al., 1995). Boys who received the programme showed significantly lower rates of delinquency, substance abuse and gang involvement at age 15, when compared with similar boys who did not receive the programme (Tremblay et al., 1996). Clearly this is a suitable programme for young children who have demonstrated risk in the form of aggressive behaviour. Older children and teenagers are likely to have different needs.

A widely referenced gang prevention intervention is the *Gang Resistance Education and Training* programme (GREAT), a solely school-based prevention strategy targeted at 11–13-year-olds. The GREAT programme involves law enforcement personnel administering nine one-hour sessions in school. The programme teaches a variety of skills that aim to help students resist getting involved in gangs. Lesson topics include:

- One's rights as a victim of crime
- Cultural sensitivity
- Conflict resolution
- Learning about how drugs affect neighbourhoods
- Taking responsibility for one's life
- Goal-setting (Esbensen & Osgood, 1999).

A management training programme is used to train police officers in the GREAT programme, and this usually includes sessions on role-playing and how to facilitate group exercises (Esbensen, Freng, Taylor, Petersen & Osgood, 2002). An evaluation of GREAT demonstrated lagged effects four years after the programme had been completed (Howell, 1998): significantly more positive social attitudes were observed in learners who received the programme compared to a control group, including:

- Lower levels of risk-seeking and victimisation
- More positive attitudes towards police
- More negative attitudes towards gangs
- More friends involved in positive social activities (Esbensen et al., 2002).

However, actual gang involvement was not measured and so we cannot know the extent to which GREAT actually prevented young people from joining gangs. Until this aspect is measured, GREAT can be designated neither effective nor promising. It should also be noted that GREAT delivers a very short programme – a relatively low 'dose' – and it is not clear how

this programme actually targets any risk factors for joining gangs. While this prevention dose is targeted to the age at which children are likely to start drifting into gangs, its ability to sustain an effect over the long term in contexts of high risk needs further investigation.

Two school-based programmes that have gone beyond the curriculum to target risk factors by including extramural activities or parental involvement are BUILD and GRIP. The *Broad Urban Involvement and Leadership Development* (BUILD) project combined a school curriculum with an after-school programme providing recreational activities, job skills, educational assistance and social activities (Thompson & Jason, 1988). The evaluation of the programme used three matched pairs of public schools, controlling for the fact that the same gang recruited members from both schools in each pair. Schools were then randomly assigned to experimental or control groups. Gang membership was assessed before the programme started and at the end of the year. In the experimental group, only one of 74 youths had joined a gang, compared to four of 43 in the two control groups, but the results did not reach statistical significance. Although the study showed some promise, it was also hindered by the fact that there was a small sample size and short follow-up period. A larger sample size and longer follow-up period may have made it possible to detect an effect (Thompson & Jason, 1988).

The *Gang Resistance is Paramount* (GRIP) programme consisted of neighbourhood meetings for parents, providing them with support, assistance and resources to try to stop their children from joining gangs, combined with a school curriculum programme. The curriculum comprised a 10-week course for second grade learners, a 15-week course for fifth grade learners and an in-school follow-up programme for ninth grade learners that capped the programme. GRIP seems to have produced small effects on gang affiliation. In a subsequent survey of 735 ninth graders, some of whom received the programme and some of whom did not, programme recipients were marginally less likely to report that they had joined a gang (6% of the experimental group joined gangs versus 9% of the control group), but it is not clear whether this was a significant difference (Solis, Schwartz & Hinton, 2003) and no other evaluation seems to have been conducted. One factor worth noting here is that the programme had different aspects tailored for different ages of children, so that different ages received 'booster shots' as they aged. Providing sufficient dosage over time can significantly strengthen prevention programmes (Nation et al., 2003).

Programmes from the developing world have also creatively tried to address locally pertinent socio-economic risks for gang affiliation through

educational programmes. The Guatemalan Ministry of Education has supported an alternative-delivery education programme to address poor education and unemployment called DIGEEX (*Dirección General de Educación Extra-Escolar*) (USAID, 2006). This programme aims to bridge theory and practice, school and the 'real world', by providing relevant education in a particular community context that is directly linked to employment. For example, training for a community whose economy is driven by the textile market would involve textile-industry relevant skills and problem-solving tailored to the textile industry. 'Capacitation centres' linked to DIGEEX have been established to provide technical and vocational training and there are currently 425 such centres (USAID, 2006). Education with links to realistically attainable employment provides the youth with aims and goals that they can attain and directly addresses the economic motive for belonging to a gang. However, to the best of our knowledge DIGEEX has yet to be evaluated.

Another developing world intervention that uses education, as well as other interventions, is the *Afro Reggae Cultural Group* (GCAR) that was established in Rio de Janeiro in 1993. It began as a series of projects and workshops offering dance, music, football and capoeira (an Afro-Brazilian martial art form) as extramural programmes (Dowdney, 2005), but now also makes it possible for young people from *favelas* to get education and training. A cultural centre was established called the *Vigário Geral Afro Reggae*, which now offers various programmes and projects in four different communities. Although GCAR has not been evaluated, it provides elements that are promising in terms of reducing gang involvement. Extracurricular activities provide supervision, offer constructive experiences and positive social interaction, as well as improving academic achievement (Fashola, 1999). They have been shown to lower rates of school dropout (Mahoney & Cairns, 1997), as well as decrease criminal activity and substance abuse (Youniss, Yates & Su, 1997). Extramural activities, such as the Afro Reggae project, therefore address a number of risk factors for gangsterism, as well as develop skills that promote healthy outcomes for young people.

The need to belong to a peer group in adolescence is often thought to drive gang membership, and in the Western Cape, three provincial strategies seek to provide an alternative, positive peer group to the negative one of the gang (Kagee & Frank, 2005): the *Bambanani Strategy*, the *Chrysalis Youth Academy* and the *Youth Leaders Against Crime Programme* all aim to train young people from high-risk communities to set up and lead youth clubs. Of these, it seems that only Chrysalis has been evaluated formally. It

should also be noted that youth clubs alone, especially in contexts of high risk, are unlikely to be sufficient to combat gang membership, since they are not addressing the actual risk factors that young people face (see Table 8.1 for further details). The Chrysalis Youth Academy, by contrast, offers a wide-ranging and intensive programme over five years. This is a high-dose programme that includes an emphasis on youth employment skills and parent training – that is, a wide range of risk factors. In 2006 the programme was recognised as a best practice example in youth crime prevention (see <http://www.chrysalisacademy.org.za>).

The literature therefore describes a wide range of prevention programmes. Those that have been shown to be effective in preventing antisocial behaviour are also likely to be effective in preventing involvement with gangs, because they will be targeting the same risk factors. The Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Nurse Home Visitation, the Montreal Prevention Treatment Program and, locally, the Chrysalis Youth Academy, are all effective prevention programmes. These prevention programmes share in common one thing: they work in more than one domain of the young person's life, a key characteristic of a good prevention programme (Nation et al., 2003).

Two promising programmes – GRIP and BUILD – similarly worked in two domains, the school and parent training or job skills, respectively. We rank them as promising because the evaluations that were conducted on these programmes suffered from methodological problems, which means that we cannot place sufficient trust in their positive results to regard them as effective.

GREAT, although it has been shown to change attitudes, has not been shown to change actual gang membership and therefore cannot be regarded as an effective gang intervention. It is also unlikely to be effective in impacting on behaviour, because it comprised only a short series of lessons delivered only at school and does not target any other areas of risk.

A number of these interventions are delivered via the school. A caveat is worth noting: many young people involved in gangs may have learning and/or attention difficulties (Hill et al., 1999) and those developing curricula should bear this in mind. In addition, there is a high dropout rate in South African high schools (Wegner, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King, 2008). Programmes that seek to reach gang-involved youths should not rely on the school alone as a vehicle for reaching them, as the most at-risk young people are not likely to be at school.

These programmes offer some sense of what has been tried and evaluated in the developed world. Other programmes, from Guatemala, Brazil and South Africa, have also been mentioned. However, none of these has yet undergone

outcome evaluations and are therefore not yet ready to be offered even as promising. Programmes do need, as part of their design, to work towards an outcome evaluation, so that their efficacy can be assessed (Nation et al., 2003).

## DISENGAGEMENT PROGRAMMES

Disengagement interventions help gang members to withdraw from the gang. Typically, the transition process is complicated, as the individual gang member needs to overcome a number of difficulties. These include the threat of violence from other gang members who remain in the gang and from rival gangs' members who may still want revenge (Caldwell & Altshuler, 2001; Legget, 2005), as well as, frequently, a lack of education or skills that are useful in the formal labour market. They may also be stigmatised by their community.

In this section, we review several promising interventions that have some demonstrated potential for helping young people disengage from a gang. Some of these rely on 'detached workers': outreach workers who go out onto the streets to reach the young members of gangs. Some are offered through the criminal justice system, which provides an easy means for identifying young gang members; others through community agencies that serve at-risk youth. The first three we review are oriented towards treating the young offender, that is, to seeing his or her behaviour as a clinical problem and working to change that behaviour. Other disengagement programmes tend to emphasise the provision of opportunities, rather than treatment.

Detached worker interventions, where outreach workers are sent out to work directly in neighbourhoods, helping to remove individuals from gangs, have been used in different contexts. The *Midcity Project* in Roxbury, Boston, worked with 400 members of 21 gangs (Howell, 1998). The project included family casework, organised group work, recreation and job referral (Spergel, 1995). It aimed to direct youths towards legitimate opportunities in both education and employment. The *Midcity Project* is considered by some to be the most rigorously evaluated gang programme evaluation ever conducted and to be of excellent quality. It was therefore disappointing when it was found to have negligible impact on the presence of gangs in the neighbourhood (Howell, 1998), although individual gang members may have been helped by the programme.

Another detached worker intervention, the *Ladino Hills Project*, began in South Central Los Angeles in 1961. Malcolm Klein and his colleagues attempted to test their gang cohesiveness hypothesis: that is, if individual gang members could participate in more non-gang activities, the gang itself

would be weakened (Spergel, 1995). Gang members were helped to find employment, recreational activities were organised and individual therapy was provided. Parents' clubs were also started. Thirty years later Klein reflected that an impact was made on individual gang members, but not on the existence of gangs themselves (Howell, 1998). Individuals had left the gangs, but others had joined and the gangs continued to exist. These two interventions suggest that since working with individual gangsters does not change the social and economic conditions that create gangs in the first place, disengagement interventions are unlikely to weaken the gang itself, or to prevent another from taking its place.

Philadelphia's *Crisis Intervention Network* (CIN) represented a new wave of gang disengagement interventions, in the 1970s. Detached workers with cars were sent to gang 'hot spots' to patrol and defuse potentially volatile situations. The programme attempted to integrate community groups and a probation unit, to provide services and opportunities for both older and younger gang members (Spergel, 1995). Mothers' groups and other grass-roots organisations were also involved in crisis intervention, mediation and community education activities. There was no formal evaluation of the project, although police data showed that crime decreased in the areas serviced by the CIN (Spergel, 1995).

Other crisis interventions have followed, including the *Crisis Intervention Services Project* (CRISP), which took place in gang-ridden areas of Chicago. CRISP included both patrols and counselling for gang youths and their families, and various neighbourhood and community initiatives (Howell, 1998). The project showed a decrease in serious violent crimes and homicides and although there were problems, the fact that the project showed some positive results was encouraging.

At the same time as these detached worker projects, the *House of Umoja* (a Swahili word for 'unity') project came into existence in Philadelphia, in the 1970s. The House of Umoja was a novel grassroots programme led by community residents. The programme targeted youths who generally lived on the street and were involved in gangs, and who received a comprehensive programme, including education, career development, employment assistance, housing and individual counselling (Howell, 1998). The programme was based on the 'extended family' concept: providing parental support for young people who may not have this form of support and a safe space where they could 're-orientate' their lives (Howell, 1998). The House of Umoja also organised a gang summit that resulted in a truce between gangs. The project was instrumental in reducing the number of gang deaths in

Philadelphia, from 39 in 1973 to six in 1976 and one in 1977. The truce was another achievement, as no gang members died during the 60-day 'ceasefire' (Howell, 1998; Spergel, 1995).

The example of a gang truce is another type of gang intervention which perhaps does not fit neatly into the typology of interventions we have chosen to use. It is not a prevention programme (the gangs still exist), a disengagement programme (gangs do not lose members), nor a suppression programme (gang activities are not suppressed by outside agencies). However, it is worth attending to, for two reasons. First, it represents an important possibility in itself, since it shows that it is possible to broker truces between gangs and so to bring hostilities to an end, even if temporarily. Second, the House of Umoja is important for another reason: it was led by community residents, not imposed upon them and this was a key factor in its success. Often communities benefit from the activities of gangs. For instance, high-profile gang leaders in Manenberg, Cape Town, are known for giving money to children and for sponsoring community activities such as sports teams (Legget, 2005). Interventions that are negotiated with and by the community and that meet their needs (and those of the local gang) are far more likely to succeed than those that are imposed by outside agencies (Wandersman, 2003).

Programmes offered through the criminal justice system are completely different in orientation and tend to be far more structured. *Operation New Hope* is a parole re-entry programme for young offenders who have committed serious offences (Josi & Sechrest, 1999). They attend 13 consecutive three-hour weekly sessions of life-skills training, which address topics such as drug use, emotion regulation, employment and education opportunities. At the end of the 90-day programme, 115 participants in *Operation New Hope* were compared with a matched group of 115 young people who had not received the programme. Programme participants were significantly different from those who had not received the programme on a number of dimensions:

- They had significantly less contact with former gang friends
- They were significantly more likely to find employment
- They were significantly less likely to use illicit drugs (members of the control group were three times more likely to do so)
- They had significantly reduced recidivism during programme participation (35% of the experimental group broke their parole versus 53% of the control group) (Josi & Sechrest, 1999).

Over time, however, these effects became less significant and many participants who could not find satisfying employment returned to the gang

lifestyle, pointing again to the importance of employment and economic risk factors in gang membership.

The *Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Home Run Program* is a wrap-around, holistic programme which tailors treatments for individual youths through individual case management. The programme offers a range of services, over six months, for first-time offenders. Underlying the programme is the philosophy that co-ordination and joint planning by a team of professionals from social services, mental health, public health, probation and the community would serve an offender better than any one of these agencies individually. Therefore each team includes a probation officer, public health nurse, clinical therapist and social services practitioner and others as needed, providing comprehensive treatment to at-risk first-time offenders.

Depending on the needs of the offender, treatment may address substance abuse, education, family functioning, the offender's own social functioning, his/her delinquent peer group and other areas as necessary (and may include such restorative justice elements as victim restitution and community service). In an evaluation that included 145 gang members and 137 non-gang members, both groups improved significantly in terms of:

- Academic performance
- Attendance of classes
- Suspensions from school
- Self-perceived family functioning
- Number of arrests (Schram & Gaines, 2005).

Both groups also reported decreases in alcohol and drug use, although the gang group reported more problems with substance abuse before and after the intervention (Schram & Gaines, 2005).

*Multisystemic Therapy (MST)* is an intervention very similar in spirit to MDT and has been reviewed elsewhere in this book. We will therefore not describe it in detail here, but simply note that because it so broadly addresses the risk factors that predispose a young person to gang membership, it has been identified as an intervention that is likely to be effective as a disengagement strategy (Lafontaine et al., 2005).

*Aggression Replacement Training (ART)* has been used in different contexts, including with whole intact gangs as participants. ART teaches social skills, anger control and moral reasoning in a structured 50-session, 10-week curriculum (Goldstein & Glick, 1994). The rationale for including whole gangs in a test of the curriculum was that, through intervening in a whole gang, the intervention would affect each individual's peer group, thus resulting

in support for prosocial behaviour in their peer environment. Twelve New York gangs from low-income neighbourhoods were recruited into the study through community-based agencies, six receiving ART (38 participants) and six acting as a control group (27 participants). After the programme, the ART programme participants did significantly better than the control group in seven skill areas (although there was no significant difference in anger control). This seemed to follow through in two important domains of actual behaviour: in an eight-month follow-up period, significantly more of the ART programme recipients were employed and significantly fewer arrested, than of the control group. Although the evaluation does not say this explicitly, it is likely that this intervention targeted gangs of 'corner kids', rather than the more formally organised and armed groups of young people associated with organised crime that are found in some South African gangs. The literature is often silent on what type of 'gang' is being addressed by which intervention, but it is unlikely that one could recruit an entire organised crime faction into such an intervention. If carried out with whole gangs, ART is more likely to be appropriate with younger groups. It should be mentioned, however, that ART has successfully been carried out with groups of incarcerated young people aged 13–21 (Goldstein & Glick, 1994). In this case, of course, it is unlikely that they would belong to the same gang.

The *Boys and Girls Club of America*, in conjunction with the *United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention* (OJJDP), developed the *Gang Intervention Through Targeted Outreach* (GITTO) initiative, as well as a similar prevention initiative called *Gang Prevention Through Targeted Outreach*, or GPTTO (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). Both programmes operate similarly, in that they both mobilise community resources to offer youths at risk a range of resources to combat the gang problem at a community level; both offer young people positive after-school opportunities, with the aim of enrolment in Boys and Girls Clubs; and both offer individualised case management aiming to decrease gang and juvenile justice involvement, and increase school attendance and achievement at school (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). However, GITTO differs from GPTTO in that the young people it serves need a different range of services because they are already involved in gangs. Therefore they need services such as drug treatment, tattoo removal, remedial education, life-skills and job training, which were less likely to be necessary for the young people involved in GPTTO (Arbreton & McClanahan, 2002). In an evaluation in which 66 GITTO youths were matched with comparison youths from similar neighbourhoods, the intervention group had significantly greater expectations of graduating

from high school, a significant reduction in gang-associated behaviours (less stealing with other gang members, wearing gang colours, flashing gang signals, spending time with gang members), and significantly less contact with the juvenile justice system.

Opportunities provision programmes are a particular form of disengagement programme that are less treatment-oriented in nature. Rather, they recognise that gangs provide a livelihood to their members, and that if disengagement is to succeed, ex-gangsters must have a viable, legitimate means of making a living outside of the gang. One example of such a programme comes from Medellín, Colombia, which was in turn based on the *Urban Leadership Training Program* that was established in the US. The Urban Leadership Training Program aimed to co-opt individual gang leaders into following a study programme that would help them integrate into mainstream society as community leaders. This programme failed because funding and political goodwill ran out before it could be implemented properly (Rodgers, 1999). However, in Medellín, it seems to have greater state and private support. Both state and private institutions offer long-term employment programmes and opportunities for social mobility, if Medellín gangsters withdraw from gangs (Rodgers, 1999). These youth gang leaders have been encouraged to immerse themselves in community politics and aid in the development of their communities, using their gang networks to these ends. Gangs have even been given incentives to collaborate with each other on social development projects and have been transformed into community conflict mediators (McIlwaine & Moser, 2001; Rodgers, 1999).

Similarly, the *HABITAT* project in the capital of Nicaragua, Managua, also tries to create a different, positive path for gang members (Rodgers, 1999). This project has attempted to supply the youth with education, resources and training towards skilled employment. Gang members were recruited through local leaders of gang-affected communities and were given training, predominantly as carpenters and masons, in exchange for formally and publicly giving up their gang lifestyle. At the end of the training they were given a small loan in order to facilitate the setting up of a minor business (Rodgers, 1999). If an individual returned to the gang, the loan was cancelled and the person was forced to repay the money. Unfortunately, there was substantial dropout during the training and education phase and most recruits were unable to establish a stable business after training. An initial evaluation of the project named two reasons for the project's failure. There is a collectivist culture in Nicaragua and many former gang members felt that they were selfishly betraying their communities by using 'egotistical'

entrepreneurship (Rodgers, 1999). They also felt that they had betrayed their gangs. The collective element of gangs themselves and the communities they exist within was therefore ignored by the project. In Nicaragua, it would have been more beneficial for the project to benefit the community as a whole, or to create a collective occupation through which the gang might have 'matured out' together. Also, in the context of a country with an unemployment rate of 60% in the mid-1990s, it was very difficult for a one-time small loan to stimulate and sustain a small business (Rodgers, 1999).

However, if carefully implemented over a long period of time, opportunities provision programmes may offer some hope (Rodgers, 1999). Although they have yet to be formally evaluated, it is worth noting that these programmes particularly target one of the main risk factors over which other programmes have stumbled: ensuring that young gang members have the means to make a living when they leave the gang. This would appear to be a key element to any successful disengagement programme.

Disengagement programmes, therefore, come in a variety of guises. They have also taught us, through detached worker programmes, that working with individual gang members is not enough. Even if they are able to help individual gang members, on their own they are inadequate to deal with multipronged community risks and problems associated with gangsterism, so that even if individuals change, the gang itself will remain in the community (Houston, 1996; Spergel, 1995).

Programmes which operate through the criminal justice system and/or which offer life-skills training to young offenders never had the intention of doing away with the gang as a whole, but only of helping young gang members leave the gang. As with good prevention programmes, sufficient dose and targeting sufficient areas of an offender's life are important (Nation et al., 2003): Operation New Hope may have done better if the intervention had been more sustained and/or it had done more to help its participants find work, while MDT targeted multiple areas of the young offender's life simultaneously, and was effective. Similarly, GITTO is a promising programme because it worked holistically with the young people it served. ART's success is probably due to the duration of the programme: it delivered a good, long dose of skills training, using teaching methods that were very active and designed to help participants take the skill home (Goldstein & Glick, 1994), one of the criteria for successful prevention programmes (Nation et al., 2003).

In South African prisons, an organisation called The President's Award for Youth Empowerment runs a programme called *Reintegration and Diversion for Youth*, or READY (Steyn, 2005). Although not specifically targeted at

gang members, its work with young offenders serving custodial sentences will inevitably include gang members. The programme requires young people to perform some form of community service, to go through a skills training programme, to take part in an outdoor expedition of several days and to participate in regular sports and recreation. Participants progress through bronze, silver and gold levels and receive a medal as they complete the requirements for each level. Evaluations suggest that it is successful in reducing recidivism (Steyn, 2005), although the addition of a post-release component would strengthen the programme. We regard this as a promising programme and there is every indication that a rigorous evaluation may find it to be effective.

As an aside, one of the problems we face in South Africa is that of scale: how do we scale up labour-intensive programmes such as MDT that are effective but that need highly-skilled staff to deliver services intensively? It is encouraging to note that READY is managed by an auxiliary social worker and run by volunteers and prison staff (Steyn, 2005), making it a high-impact programme at a relatively low cost.

Other promising programmes in our prisons are the *Tough Enough* programme, run by NICRO, and *Khulisa's Destinations* programme (Steyn, 2005). Tough Enough runs over 9–12 months, starting three months before release and works with both offenders and their families. Although the programme has not been formally evaluated, informal records of the staff indicate that recidivism rates of participants are low and are mostly because of parole violations rather than re-offending (Steyn, 2005). Destinations is a three-month programme which aims to prepare people for employment and works with them on release from prison. Again, there is no formal evaluation of it, but staff records suggest that the recidivism rate for graduates of this programme is lower than the national average (Steyn, 2005).

Opportunities provision programmes contrast with the more treatment-oriented programmes offered by detached workers and through the criminal justice system, in that they aim to meet the needs that gangs fulfil, through legitimate means, and to attract gang members out of gangs and into legitimate lifestyles through the provision of these opportunities. These need to be carefully designed so that they are in accord with local cultural norms and economic realities and implemented over the long term. Although there has not yet been an opportunity to evaluate an opportunity provision programme that has been implemented well, they do target one of the main reasons that draw people into gangs and they may well have a role to play in disengaging young people from gangs.

## SUPPRESSION PROGRAMMES

Suppression interventions, in contrast to prevention and disengagement interventions, do not attempt to reform individuals at all: their aim is strictly to suppress gang activity in a community. As intervention programmes, they may have three possible roles: one is to deter gang membership by making it clear that it has serious consequences; another is that, in suppressing gang activity, they make gangs less accessible to those young people who are not involved, and therefore decrease the chances of their being drawn into the gang; and finally, they limit gang activity and hence the injuries that may result from them. Suppression interventions have focused on efficient prosecution of gang members, policing strategies that target gang activities, reducing the number of firearms and legislation to increase punishment for illegal gang activity. Many of these interventions have been successful in reaching their explicit targets, whether it be reducing firearms, successful prosecution or arresting more gang members. However, this may not necessarily mean that youth involvement in gangs is being reduced by these programmes.

One suppression tactic is to target the most dangerous gangs and individual gangsters. The *Tri-Agency Resource Gang Enforcement Team* (TARGET) of Orange County, California, was operating in eight cities in the year 2000. During its first two years of operation, TARGET identified 647 individual gang members, including 77 leaders, two-thirds of whom were placed in custody while awaiting trial (Howell, 2000). Of those placed in custody, there was a 99% conviction rate and a 62% reduction in gang-related crime. In 1998, 3 475 criminal charges were laid against gang members and a cumulative 47% decrease in gang crime occurred over a seven-year period (Howell, 2000). Gang-related violence significantly decreased in the areas that were targeted, as compared with control areas – there was a 57% decrease in the target areas and a 37% decrease in the control areas – but this does not necessarily mean that all gang crime decreased or that fewer youths were involved in gangs (Fritsch, Caeti & Taylor, 1999).

In some cases suppression strategies have almost become full military campaigns. The Los Angeles Police Department launched the *Community Resources Against Hoodlums* (CRASH) operations in the early 1980s. These operations involved ‘gangsweeps’, targeting gang hot spots and applying pressure on gangs through intensified patrols. One particularly notorious gangsweep was known as *Operation Hammer* in South Central Los Angeles in 1988. One thousand police officers arrested 1 453 likely gang members on a Friday and a Saturday night and these individuals were taken to a mobile police station

to be charged. Charges were only filed in 32 instances and the operation was described as 'remarkably inefficient' by Malcolm Klein (1995, p. 162).

The *Youth Firearms Violence Initiative* tried to reduce the number of guns in 10 US cities. It was launched at a time in the US when youth violence was increasing and handguns had become the weapons of choice between juveniles and was an attempt at a solution when little else seemed promising (Dunworth, 2000). The police departments in 10 cities were to use community policing approaches to develop youth-focused programmes in order to decrease the number of violent firearms crimes and reduce the number of firearms-related gang offences. Some success was found, where the programme was most intensively implemented, in dropping violent firearms crimes. However, there were no clear effects on gang membership (Dunworth, 2000).

*Operation Cul De Sac* (OCDS) in Los Angeles used traffic barriers to restrict automobile use and hence opportunities to commit crime, in a 10-block area with the highest number of drive-by shootings and homicides in LA (Lasley, 1998). The entire patrol division surrounding the site acted as a comparison site. In comparison with the year preceding the two years of the project, in the 10-block area homicides fell from seven to one, and assaults from 190 to 138, in both cases a statistically significant difference. Homicides rose again in the year the programme stopped, while crime levels in the comparison area remained constant throughout, indicating that the project was effective (Lasley, 1998).

Anti-gang legislation has been introduced in a number of states in the US, including Nevada, California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois and Louisiana (Lafontaine et al., 2005). At the city level, Civil Gang Injunctions (CGIs) against individuals have been used to prohibit gang members from performing certain activities, such as loitering at schools, riding bicycles, carrying pagers, wearing gang colours, using hand signals or behaving in a way associated with selling drugs. There were 37 separate CGIs in Southern California between 1980 and 2000 (Maxson, Hennigan & Sloane, 2005). A CGI holds individuals personally accountable, which is intended to weaken gang activity and lessen levels of participation in gang-related behaviour, especially amongst peripheral gangsters. Effects of CGIs appear to be short term (Maxson et al., 2005):

- Community residents felt less of a gang presence
- Felt less intimidated
- Were not as scared of confrontation.

However, no significant changes in medium- or long-term outcomes were observed, except for reduced fear of crime. The authors conclude that the

positive effects of CGIs could be improved if the CGI implementation involved community residents in neighbourhood empowerment and improvement strategies and targeted gang members were provided with skill development and treatment resources (Maxson et al., 2005).

However, suppression approaches can backfire. So-called *mano duro* ('heavy hand') policies were introduced by governments in El Salvador and Honduras. In El Salvador, *mano duro* policies led to 11 000 arrests in 2003, but many judges protested at the government actions because of appalling prison conditions and the increased load on courts and prisons (USAID, 2006). In addition, rather than weakening the gangs, they united against these government actions and carried out increasingly violent responses to them. Therefore the government reformed some of its strategies, setting aside 20% of total funding for gang interventions to be dedicated to 'friendly hand' and 'extended hand' approaches, or prevention strategies (USAID, 2006).

In South Africa, the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (No. 121 of 1998) criminalises gang membership, or any criminal activities related to gangsterism. Although it had been passed in 1998, it was only in 2005 that this Act was beginning to be used to obtain convictions of gangsters (Kagee & Frank, 2005). However, Standing (2005) warned that whole-hearted enforcement of this Act was only likely to cause exactly what had happened in El Salvador: a uniting of the gangs against law enforcement officials. Similarly, there are other suppression programmes in the Western Cape that run the same risk. *Operation Slasher* identifies police stations in areas where there have been high levels of gang violence and applies a 'zero tolerance' approach to policing in those areas (Kagee & Frank, 2005). The *High Flyer Programme* on the other hand, may be less likely to evoke a response from the gangs of uniting to address a common threat (law enforcement), since it targets only a relatively few individuals known to be responsible for high levels of serious organised crime (Kagee & Frank, 2005). Suppression through law enforcement may be effective if it deters and deals with adults involved in gangsterism, as young gang members are significantly less likely to leave the gang if the gang has adult leaders (Knox, 1997).

There is evidence that targeting the most dangerous gang members, hot spots or drug dealers can effectively decrease gang crime. Carrying this out, however, needs an efficient and well-co-ordinated law enforcement team. Limiting the number of available firearms has also proven to work to decrease gang crime in the United States. Suppression strategies therefore perform important tasks, such as keeping people not involved in gangs safe and protecting community residents. However, they do not actually seem to reduce the number of gangs

or the total number of young people involved in gangs. Even if individuals leave the gangs, the gang structure remains, neighbourhood conditions remain unchanged and other young people join the gang.

### MIXED MODELS

Given that prevention programmes may help to prevent young people from joining gangs in the first place, but do not help those already involved; disengagement programmes help young people to leave but do not keep community residents safe since the gang still exists; and suppression programmes may increase safety but do not change the gang itself; it makes the most sense to combine effective elements of these different interventions. Having said this, however, a 'one size fits all' approach to gang interventions, which assumes that the same programmes can be implemented unaltered in different contexts, is not effective (Spergel, 1995). Therefore, mixed model interventions stress tailoring programmes to the needs of specific communities. This requires thorough research on the actual situation, in a specific location, before the programme is implemented (Spergel, 1995).

In the US, the OJJDP and the University of Chicago's Irving Spergel have been developing a comprehensive community-wide model for gang interventions since the 1980s. This model incorporates prevention, disengagement and suppression components and attempts to provide guidelines to develop community structures and leadership (Spergel, 1995). The so-called 'Spergel model' is not a programme as such, but more a framework that assists communities in setting up a co-ordinated range of programmes (Howell, 2007). Key to the Spergel model is the co-operation of different agencies.

Using the Spergel model, six comprehensive community-wide approaches have been tested and implemented. The first was the *Gang Violence Reduction Program* based in the Little Village area of Chicago. In this programme, a team of community youth workers (often themselves former gang members), police officers dedicated to the project, adult probation officers and representatives of neighbourhood organisations worked under the aegis of the Chicago Police Department to:

- Mobilise community agencies to work together (rather than separately) on the gang problem in Little Village
- Provide opportunities such as job opportunities and training for older gang members
- Provide remedial education or alternative education for younger gang members, as appropriate

- Reach out actively to gang members through street work
- Provide opportunities for family counselling, crisis intervention, substance abuse treatment and the like
- Carry out suppression activities targeted at specific youths and at gangs, with an emphasis also on positive information sharing with youths and on co-ordination of agencies
- Develop collaboration between the various organisations in a tightly-knit structure
- Target specific young people, gangs and social contexts that were at high risk for a crime situation (for more details, see Spergel & Grossman, 1997).

The project had several outcomes: older youths who had been specifically targeted by the programme were less likely to be arrested for violent crimes in the three-year period of the programme and Little Village had the lowest increase in gang violence (compared with similar areas) over the four years of the project.

The comprehensive community-wide approach to gangs was then adapted and implemented at another five sites in the US (Bloomington, Illinois; Mesa and Tucson, Arizona; Riverside, California; and San Antonio, Texas) by the OJJDP. These five sites have had mixed results (Klein & Maxson, 2006). In Riverside the project was responsible for a decrease in arrests for serious violence during the programme period compared to the pre-programme period. Youths in the programme were three times more likely to avoid arrest for serious violence compared to the comparison group (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005c). In Mesa both groups reduced arrests, but youths in the programme had an 18% greater reduction in total arrests than the comparison group. Total incidents of crime decreased by 10% more in the Mesa project area than in the average of the three comparison areas (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005d). Success in these two locations was based largely on collaboration between the lead agencies, the Riverside and Mesa police departments, with other sectors, such as juvenile and probation departments, school districts, social agencies and the city council. In these two locations the model became institutionalised – in other words, it had overall coherence and was not simply a scattered amalgamation of different organisations' efforts (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005d; Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005c; Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005b). Another reason for the success in these sites was the fact that youths remained in the programme for longer periods of time (Howell, 2007).

However, in the three remaining sites things did not go so well. The failures in Bloomington, Tucson and San Antonio were largely due to a lack

of co-operation between the lead agency (often the police department) and other partners. Ineffective implementation was also a downfall. Common mistakes were ineffective, steering committees and key components of the OJJDP model not being incorporated. Communication and linkages were not well worked out, and experimental and control groups were often not well matched, with experimental groups having more arrests prior to the programme, when compared with control groups (Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005e; Spergel, Wa & Sosa, 2005a).

Another example of a mixed model approach is Boston's *Operation Ceasefire*. Although primarily a suppression intervention aimed at suppressing youths' firearm violence, what makes this a mixed model is that, simultaneous to using every possible legal option when violence occurred to suppress further violence, gang members were offered services by police officers, probation officers, streetworkers and later in the project's term, community organisations and churches (Braga, Kennedy, Waring & Piehl, 2001). An impact evaluation indicated that Boston experienced lower levels of youth homicide, of gun assaults and of the police being called out because shots had been fired after Operation Ceasefire was implemented (Braga et al., 2001).

Mixed models therefore hold out hope, both for increasing community safety and for reducing young people's involvement in gangs. Key to their successful implementation, however, is efficient co-operation between the agencies involved, implementing a co-ordinated community-wide plan that has grassroots involvement and in obtaining genuine community participation. One of the key barriers to inter-agency co-operation is that individual agencies have their own budgets, goals and cultures. Future 'mixed model' projects therefore need to find ways of dealing with the issues of co-operation, in order to implement genuine community-wide interventions. In addition, these projects need to be designed to deal with the particular kinds of gangs and the particular risk factors and opportunities that exist in the community in question.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence for 'what works' in terms of interventions for the youth involved in gangs has almost exclusively emanated from North America. With the notable exception of the Chrysalis Youth Academy, a prevention programme, there have been no other thoroughly evaluated gang interventions that work in the South African context. Yet the principles that inform these programmes are likely to translate.

Tackling the problem of young people's involvement in gangs needs a combination of prevention and disengagement, possibly with the addition of judiciously and thoughtfully used suppression programmes. Prevention programmes and disengagement programmes on their own may assist individual young people, but they are unlikely to do much about the existence of gangs as such. Suppression programmes (especially stand-alone programmes) run the risk of provoking the gang into greater cohesion and a more violent response (Standing, 2005; USAID, 2006). Opportunities provision makes a great deal of sense as a part of programming, given the apparent economic incentives for belonging to a gang and the evidence that a stable income would provide an incentive for leaving. Mixed models are therefore necessary – although we offer this suggestion with some caution, noting that none of the examples we have given have miraculously removed gangs from any community, probably because they failed to address the economic and social realities that gave rise to the gangs in the first place.

However, the best models are those that carefully assess what is needed in a particular community, with a particular group of young people. What is essential is that the risks and problems that this particular group faces are addressed, not that a generic programme is rolled out. The careful assessment of individual and community needs is most likely to lead to an effective programme (Nation et al., 2003). Careful assessment is particularly key since successful programmes may well be community-based, may not be based in law enforcement, and may make extensive use of local social networks – relationships between residents and gangs, among residents, and among service providers in the community – to achieve that success (Venkatesh, 1999). Working with communities and understanding their particular strengths and needs seems key to successful gang interventions.

There are additional cautionary notes that are necessary. Although it is clear that girls and young women are involved in gangs (Legget, 2005; Ward & Bakhuis, 2009), we could not find in the literature any prevention or disengagement programmes that attended specifically to their needs. For instance, North American studies suggest that many girls join gangs to find a refuge from sexual abuse at home (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). While there are no concomitant South African studies, what little data there is suggests that sexual abuse of girls may be part of the gang experience for them (Legget, 2005). Therefore sexual abuse and the possibility of pregnancy and child-rearing (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001) will all need to be taken into account when designing programmes to meet the needs of girls and women.

Second, in our review we have presented a catalogue of programmes that have been attempted in various contexts. In some cases, it has been possible to state which programmes have been designed for which age groups. In others, however, it is clear that the programme framework (such as a multidisciplinary approach to a parole programme) could work with any age of offender, but different elements of the programme will need to be adapted for different ages. Here we simply raise the issue so that, when adapting programmes for local contexts, age is attended to, alongside issues of gender and cultural specificity.

In addition, a number of these programmes are of very short duration. Young people are typically involved in a gang, or live in a high-risk neighbourhood, for a number of years. It would be ludicrous to imagine that a programme that is only a few weeks long could be of sufficient dose to counteract these effects. Programme design should always bear the need for a sufficient 'dose' in mind, and consider a long-term programme, and the need for after-care and/or 'booster' sessions (Nation et al., 2003).

Finally, we have presented, in our review, a catalogue of programmes that have been attempted. Few of them have any strong evidence base, and where there is an evidence base, it leans towards success for individual gang members rather than eradication of gangs. Gangs appear to be social phenomena that are far more deeply embedded in communities and in their economic and social characteristics than can be removed by the simple application of a programme. This is not to say that programmes should not be attempted, but rather to urge realism and humility in the face of huge social problems that small programmes cannot, realistically, change. Individual gang members can and should be helped through the programmes described here; but gangs themselves are likely to stay with us until larger social and economic change occurs.

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# Chapter Nine



## YOUTHFUL SEX OFFENDING: THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT, RISKS AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

*Amelia van der Merwe, Ulrich Meys & Samantha Waterhouse*

### INTRODUCTION

Whereas sexual offending concerning children and adolescents was viewed as an exception in the past due to lack of research in the field, in the last two to three decades the number of studies in this area has grown and points to the contrary. While the exact incidence of sexual crimes committed by children and adolescents is unknown internationally, the incidence figures from victims' statements and the arrest statistics point out the seriousness of the problem. Statistics from the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (2007) show that, in the US, approximately 18% of all rapes and other sexual offences were perpetrated by youths under 18 years of age (see [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/data/table\\_38.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2007/data/table_38.html)).

Twenty-three per cent of those cautioned or found guilty of sexual offences in the UK are under 21 years of age and 50% of offenders commence this pattern of behaviour during adolescence, but do not progress to adult offending (Masson & Erooga, 1999). Victims are typically prepubescent girls who are known to the typically male adolescent offender (Masson & Erooga, 1999).

Towards the end of the 1990s, the rape rate in the US was four times higher than that of Germany, 13 times higher than that of England and 20 times higher than that of Japan (Men Against Sexual Assault). However, despite this, between 1992 and 2000 there was a decline of almost 40% in child sexual abuse in the US and there has been debate among professionals as to why (Finkelhor & Jones, 2004). Some maintain that it is because of two decades of effective prevention and treatment, while others believe there has

been no real decline, and instead, the dramatic decline is due to a reduction in the number of cases being identified or reported, or due to changes in the practices of child protection agencies (Finkelhor & Jones, 2004).

UK Home Office sexual assault statistics indicate a 7% decrease in these crimes between March 2007 and April 2008 (UK Home Office, 2008).

The quality of data in governmental crime information systems, particularly youth crime information systems, is poor in South Africa. According to practitioners, poor-quality information systems are a stumbling block to effective policy development (Frank & Waterhouse, 2008; Muntingh, 2008a). Several detailed studies on the rates of victimisation in South Africa exist, but few studies have been conducted with offenders and particularly with young sex offenders. In what follows, we use information from the few available local sources and studies to give the reader a rough indication of the scope of youthful sex offending in South Africa.

## Defining sexual offences

In order to understand data relating to sexual offences, it is important to consider the various definitions that may be used. Many studies rely on the term *sexual assault* – a term normally used by practitioners and researchers to describe unwanted sexual acts ranging widely from non-penetrative and less physically invasive acts through to penetrative and extremely physically invasive acts. The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007, which was passed in South Africa in December 2007, uses the term *sexual assault* to describe the crime committed when any one of a wide range of non-penetrative acts is committed under certain circumstances. Most penetrative acts are not included in this definition. Under the common law, the term *indecent assault* was used to describe these non-penetrative acts and acts of unlawful penetration of a person's mouth or anus. The use of these different definitions for sexual assault can thus be confusing. Until December 2007 *rape* was legally used to describe unlawful and intentional penetration of the vagina of a female by the penis of a male without the consent of the female. This definition of rape was amended by the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007 to include acts of penetration of the genitals, anus or mouth of one person by the genitals of another or of the genitals and anus of one person by any object, or part of the body of another person. Due to these amendments at the end of 2007, the numbers of cases reflected in crime statistics will shift and it is anticipated that the number of rape matters will increase as a result of

cases previously considered *indecent assault* now being defined as *rape* by the law. The term 'sexual offences' is currently used in South Africa to describe rape and sexual assault, together with a range of other offences relating to the sexual exploitation of children. However, due to the fact that the data referred to in this chapter was collected prior to the promulgation of new sexual offences legislation, the term 'sexual offences' is used in this chapter to refer to rape and indecent assault as defined at that time.

### **The statistics in South Africa**

Data from the South African Police Service (SAPS) Provincial Crime Information Analysis Centre indicates that the average number of youths arrested for sexual offences in the Western Cape between 1998 and 2001 was 417 youths per year (Redpath, 2003). The majority of these arrests were made for rape. Redpath (2003) highlights that this represents a small proportion of the total number of sexual offences in 2000. For example, the total number of arrests of youths for rape, attempted rape and indecent assault in the province amount to only 5% of the total arrests that were made for these crime categories (Redpath, 2003).

However, statistics from the Child Protection Unit in the East Metropole area in Cape Town from April 2000 to January 2002 show that 23% of persons arrested for sexual offences by this unit were under the age of 18 (Redpath, 2003). It must be noted that this unit is responsible only for investigating crimes committed against children. The figures from this unit will thus not reflect cases of adolescents who commit sexual offences against adults. The proportion is also only reflective as a percentage of persons arrested for sexual offences against children.

Arrest data alone does not provide an accurate picture of the incidence of sexual offences committed by youths. Firstly, this is because research suggests that there is significant under-reporting of sexual assault (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). Under-reporting is influenced by factors such as the psychological consequences of sexual assault, including denial, avoidance, subjective interpretation of the abuse and fear of the consequences of disclosing the abuse (Battiss, 2005). Secondly, the arrest rate is influenced by factors relating to the quality of policing. Thus, cases that are reported do not always result in an arrest (Redpath, 2003). Finally, arrests relate only to youths suspected of committing sexual offences. They have not been convicted and it is thus not possible to assess from reporting data how many youths are actual offenders.

An examination of the number of youths imprisoned for sexual offences from 1997 to 2007 shows that these numbers have remained relatively

low over the 10-year period (Muntingh, 2008b). The highest number of sentenced youths in prison for these offences was just over 250 in 2002. Since then, these numbers have steadily declined to less than 150 sentenced youths in 2007 (Muntingh, 2008b). However, in addition to prison sentences, youths may also be sentenced to Places of Safety (which are now referred to as Child and Youth Care Centres in accordance with provisions of the Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007) and we were unable to access information on young sexual offenders from these facilities. Furthermore, there have been shifts in the child justice system towards restorative justice, which include diverting youths into intervention programmes and away from formal criminal processes before the case goes to trial and using alternative sentencing options for youths who are convicted. Alternative sentences include non-custodial sentences, such as placement in the care of a parent or guardian and sentence to intervention programmes. These developments are also likely to influence the number of youths in prisons. But without accurate data from a range of government departments, it is impossible to accurately track trends in this area.

Research into pre-sentence detention periods of youths show that approximately 12.6% of youths awaiting trial in prison on 7 March 2007 were accused of sexual offences. Other categories included aggressive crimes, economic crimes and narcotic crimes (Nevill & Dissel, 2006). Youths awaiting trial in prison are likely to be those accused of committing very serious sexual offences. Youths accused of committing less serious sexual offences are more likely to be diverted into intervention programmes and out of the criminal justice system, or to be awaiting trial in Places of Safety, Child and Youth Care Centres, or in the care of their parents or guardian. Furthermore, research into the number of young sex offenders (pre-sentence and sentenced) in custody in March 2001 shows that youths account for only 2.3% of the total population of sex offenders in prison (adults and youths). This is a lower rate than the number of youths in prison as a proportion of the total prison population, which is 3.5% (Redpath, 2002).

Redpath's (2003) analysis of Childline South Africa data from crisis line calls reporting sexual abuse, indicates that young people in the age group 15 to 20 are the most likely to be accused of sexual abuse of children, followed by children in the 10- to 15-year age group and adults between 30 and 40 years, which are reported at equal rates. Police custody data (of youths under 18) show that it is primarily adolescents of 16 and 17 years of age who are in custody for sexual offences (Redpath, 2002). Again, as with the management

of young people accused of less serious offences, younger children accused of these crimes are less likely to be placed in facilities and more likely to be placed in the care of a parent or guardian or diverted away from the criminal justice system than older children (Gallinetti & Kassan, 2007).

From the above data, the picture of young sex offenders in South Africa is extremely unclear. We know that youths contribute to sexual offending in the country, but we do not know precisely to what extent. There is a significant difference between the statistics provided by the SAPS with regard to the arrest rate of youths (0–18 years, although most offenders are adolescents) at 5%, and information obtained by the specialised unit working with sexual offence cases and Childline South Africa, which suggests that this is closer to 25%. International studies also suggest that the rate of offending by adolescents (13–19 years) is between 20% and 30%. Data about youths in prison for sexual offences is inaccurate in assessing rates of offending. However, this data does indicate that there has been a decrease in youths in prison for these offences, probably as a result of policy shifts towards restorative justice programmes and not as a result of a reduction in the rate of young sex offenders.

In this chapter, we firstly describe the legal definitions and provisions regarding youthful sex offending; secondly, we briefly overview typical versus atypical or deviant sexual development; thirdly, we review factors that increase the likelihood of youthful sex offending; and finally, we examine emerging trends in the management of youthful sex offending.

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN LEGAL CONTEXT

Recent and proposed legislation has implications for the management of young sex offenders. Two key pieces of legislation are the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007, which was passed in December 2007, and the Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008).

A basic outline of key provisions follows.

### **Sexual offences in the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act**

The recently passed Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007 is intended to strengthen the legislative and policy framework for addressing the high rate of sexual offences in the country (Section 5: Sexual Assault). The Act extends the common law

definition of rape from the penetration of a female's vagina by the penis of a male to include the penetration of a person's mouth, genitals or anus by the genitals of another person, and the penetration of a person's genitals or anus with any other object or part of the body of another person (Section 3: Rape). Another important development is the creation of the new offence of sexual assault, which criminalises almost any form of non-penetrative sexual contact under circumstances where one party does not consent to this; this includes unwanted kissing, touching and fondling.

In addition to these key offences, a wide range of new offences are defined by the Act. These include:

- Compelled rape and compelled sexual assault, referring to situations in which one person is compelled to commit a sexual act against another person where neither gives consent
- Compelling or causing an adult to witness a sexual offence
- Exposure or display of the genital organs, anus or female breasts to an adult
- Exposure or display of child pornography to an adult
- Engaging the sexual services of an adult person.

In addition to the offences above, which can be committed against both children and adults, the Act separately defines a number of offences that can be committed only against children. These are:

- Sexual exploitation of children
- Sexual grooming of children
- Exposure or display of child pornography or pornography to a child
- Using children for or benefiting from child pornography
- Compelling or causing children to witness sexual offences, sexual acts or self-masturbation
- Exposure or display of genital organs, anus or female breasts to children (flashing).

Lastly, the Act creates two offences that relate only to the protection of children between the ages of 12 and 16 years. These are *consensual sexual penetration with certain children (statutory rape)* and *consensual sexual violation with certain children (statutory sexual assault)*. The first deals with situations where adults or children engage in penetrative acts with a child between 12 and 16 years with the consent of that child. The second deals with the broad range of non-penetrative acts under conditions where the child consents. By way of example, the range of non-penetrative acts covered

include contact between the mouths of two consenting children (kissing), contact between the mouth of one child and any part of the body of another child and contact between the hand of one child and the genitals of another. Penetrative acts include digital penetration of the genitals or anus as well as full sexual penetration.

These two offences were intended to protect children from manipulation and exploitation by adults, and to recognise the general social moral standard against young adolescents and children engaging in sexual acts notwithstanding their consent. The report of the South African Law Reform Commission, *Project 107: Sexual Offences Report* (2002), notes that there is strong public support for the argument that children below a certain age should not engage in consensual sexual relations and that this is wrong. p. 64). However, the legislature has failed to take a sufficiently nuanced approach to the formulation of these offences to recognise normal sexual activity as part of the sexual development of adolescents, and to protect children aged 12–16 years who engage in consenting sexual acts with other children between 12 and 16 years from criminalisation. By way of offering some protection against prosecution, the Act provides that prosecution may only be authorised by the National Director of Public Prosecutions and that this decision may not be delegated (Section 15(2)(b)). These provisions will assist in preventing unnecessary prosecution of children, but they do not provide sufficient protection to ensure that children who engage in a wide range of consensual sexual activity are not criminalised. This is because children who engage in consensual acts can still be arrested and charged and in some cases will be prosecuted. In cases where children engage in non-penetrative sexual acts, the Act provides a defence if the age difference between the two children is not more than two years (Section 56(2)(b)). Again, this defence offers some measure of protection. However, it is extremely limited and will not necessarily prevent children from being exposed to a criminal process. The defence is not available in respect of acts of penetration. In order to address discrimination against boy children in the application of these provisions, the Act provides that if both parties concerned were children at the time of the offence, and there is to be a prosecution, then both children must be prosecuted (Section 15(2)(a)). In their deliberations on the Bill on 26 January 2004, the Portfolio Committee on Justice and Constitutional Development note that where two children under the age of consent were involved, charging only one party (usually the male child in heterosexual circumstances) where both were involved in an act of contravening the law would be unconstitutional.

Overall, the Act recognises and provides a legal response to the wide range of sexual acts that are committed against adults and children by sex offenders. The legislature's intention was to provide complainants of sexual offences with the maximum and least traumatising protection that can be provided by the law, and to introduce measures to enable organs of state to combat the high incidence of sexual offences in the country (Section 2: Objects).

### **Stratification of sexual offences in the Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008)**

The Child Justice Act distinguishes the seriousness of different offences in three key schedules. The Act then proposes different management of these offences based on the schedule in which they appear (Section 6).

The offences that are viewed as being least serious are contained within Schedule 1 and those considered to be most serious are listed in Schedule 3. Some of the offences listed in Schedule 2, which deal with more serious offences, can be problematic when viewed from a developmental perspective. For example, exposure or display of pornography to another (consenting) child(ren) is treated as a relatively serious offence. This is worrying in light of the fact that viewing naked and sexual images may be considered a part of normal sexual development in adolescence, as is the exposure or display of genital organs, anus or female breasts to other consenting adolescent/s. The context of the commission of these acts by an adult towards a child is significantly different to when these acts take place between two consenting children. See Box 9.1 for a detailed description of Schedule 1, 2 and 3 offences.

An important aspect of the Act is the provisions that promote diversion. The purpose of diversion is to:

- Deal with the child outside the formal criminal justice system
- Encourage accountability of the child
- Promote reintegration of the child
- Reduce the potential for re-offending
- Prevent the child from having a criminal record
- Render symbolic or actual compensation to the victim (Section 51).

While Schedule 1 and 2 matters may be diverted, Schedule 3 matters may only be diverted in exceptional circumstances and where the victim and police have been consulted (Section 52).

In addition to provisions of the Child Justice Bill, the Children's Amendment Act provides for the development of diversion programmes in

**BOX 9.1  
STRATIFICATION OF SEXUAL OFFENCES IN THE CHILD JUSTICE ACT**

<b>SCHEDULE 1</b>	<b>SCHEDULE 2</b>	<b>SCHEDULE 3</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public indecency</li> <li>▪ Engaging the sexual services of a person 18 years or older (S11)*</li> <li>▪ Bestiality (S13)</li> <li>▪ Consensual sexual acts with children from 12 years to 16 years of age (S15 &amp; 16)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Sexual assault, compelled sexual assault or compelled self-sexual assault (S5, 6 &amp; 7) where no grievous bodily harm has been inflicted</li> <li>▪ Compelling or causing persons 18 years or older to witness sexual offences, sexual acts or self-masturbation (S8)</li> <li>▪ Exposure or display of or causing exposure or display of child pornography or grooming of a child pornography (S10 &amp; 19)</li> <li>▪ Incest and sexual acts with a corpse (S12 &amp; 14)</li> <li>▪ Exposure or display of or causing exposure or display of genital organs, anus or female breasts to any person (flashing) (S9 &amp; 22)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Rape or compelled rape (S3 &amp; 4)</li> <li>▪ Sexual assault, compelled sexual assault or compelled self-sexual assault involving the infliction of grievous bodily harm (S5, 6 &amp; 7)</li> <li>▪ Sexual exploitation of children, sexual grooming of children and using children for or benefiting from child pornography (S17, 18 &amp; 20)</li> <li>▪ Exposure or display of or causing exposure or display of child pornography or pornography to children (S19) if this is intended to promote the sexual exploitation or grooming of a child or the use of a child for the purposes of child pornography in order to benefit in any manner from child pornography</li> <li>▪ Compelling or causing children to witness sexual offences, sexual acts or self-masturbation (S21)</li> <li>▪ Sexual exploitation, sexual grooming, exposure or display of child pornography or pornography to persons who are mentally disabled (S23, 24, 25 &amp; 26)</li> <li>▪ Trafficking in persons for sexual purposes (S71)</li> </ul>

\* The Sections referred to in this list relate to sections of the Sexual Offences Legislation

Section 144 relating to the provision of Prevention and Early Intervention programmes, which includes programmes that focus on ‘providing psychological rehabilitation and therapeutic programmes for children’ and ‘diverting children away from the child and youth care system and the criminal justice system’ (Section 144(1)(e) and (h)).

Although the Constitution requires that imprisonment is always considered a last resort, certain minimum sentences apply to children over the age of 16 and relate mainly to very serious offences (see Box 9.2). This has been challenged in the Constitutional Court and at the time of writing, judgement by the court on this matter was awaited.

In summary, recent developments in South African legislation have included the broadening of criminal definitions of sexual offences and the stratification of sexual offences when committed by children, both of which have impacted on the management of young sex offenders. Current legislation is driven by a child-rights approach that seeks to minimise imprisonment and maximise the likelihood that young sex offenders are diverted from the formal criminal justice system.

## **TYPICAL VS. DEVIANT SEXUAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **Typical sexual development and behaviour**

Sexual development is a process that requires the synthesis of many dimensions of experience, including feelings of desire and attraction, morality and social convention and the individual’s view of others as sexual beings with desires and rights. The individual must make sense of all these factors and successfully integrate them to achieve healthy sexual development.

Despite this, there are often few resources for children and adolescents to draw on to assist them at school, at home and in the community (Bolton & MacEachron, 1988; Bukowski, Hoza & Boivin, 1993). At an international (US) level, Wilcox (1999) emphasises the lack of sex education at home and at schools where many of the psychosocial aspects of sexuality, such as gender roles, sexual values and ethical considerations of various sexual behaviours, are absent from the curriculum. In South Africa, the emphasis in sex education efforts is on HIV prevention as opposed to normative sexual behaviours.

Furthermore, empirical studies on normal childhood sexual development are rare (Abel, Coffey & Osborn, 2008; Bancroft, 2006; Larson & Svedin, 2001; Sandfort & Rademakers, 2000; Vizard, Monck & Misch, 1995). The reasons for this include the fact that the large majority of research on sexual development

**BOX 9.2**  
**SEXUAL OFFENCES IN SCHEDULE 2 ACT NO. 105 OF 1997**  
**MINIMUM SENTENCING LEGISLATION AS AMENDED**

- Part I      Offences for which life sentences apply**
- Rape or compelled rape that **results in the death** of the victim
  - Rape or compelled rape where the victim was raped **more than once or by more than one person, where the person has been convicted of two or more offences of rape but not yet sentenced, where the victim was under 16 years old, is physically or mentally disabled, or involving the infliction of grievous bodily harm**
  - **Trafficking** in persons for sexual purposes
- Part III    Offences for which 10-, 15- and 20-year sentences apply for 1st, 2nd and 3rd convictions respectively**
- **Rape** or compelled rape in circumstances other than those described above
  - **Sexual exploitation** of a child or a person who is mentally disabled
  - **Using a child or person who is mentally disabled for pornographic purposes**

at any age relies on self-report, which is clearly limited by problems of recall error and bias, depending on the time period being recalled. The difficulty with parental reports is that their value is largely restricted to observations of children young enough not to have learned that sexuality-related behaviours are taboo and therefore not to be enacted in front of adults. Furthermore, there is significant observation bias among parents (Bancroft, 2006).

Vizard et al. (1995) note that large-scale studies of sexual behaviour in typically developing children have been rare. An exception is Friedrich, Grambsch, Broughton, Kuiper and Beilke's (1991) survey of 880 mothers who rated the behaviour of children aged 2–12 years (excluding those with a history of sexual abuse or disability). The results showed that children exhibited a wide variety of sexual behaviours at relatively high frequencies. However, it was extremely unusual for children to exhibit aggressive sexual behaviour and behaviour more imitative of adult sexual behaviour. For example, less than 1% of the children were reported to insert objects into their vagina or anus, ask a partner to engage in a sex acts, or engage in oral/genital sex. They observed a decline in children's (both boys and girls) overt sexual behaviour as they got older.

Between the ages of two and five years, children start establishing their sense of gender identity. It is at this age that children become increasingly interested in their own and others' genitals (Burton, Nesmith & Badten, 1997; Friedrich et al., 1991). Common behaviour during this period includes genital play, undressing, discussing bodily functions and enquiring about sex. During this phase of development children also often expose their bodies to others and engage in sexual exploration games with each other. Sexual play, is defined as unsophisticated acts involving the genitalia such as looking and touching between pre-adolescent children, whose difference in age is no more than four years with the absence of bribes or threats (Johnson, 2002). Martinson (1991) reports that when young children do engage in sex play, they prefer to carry out this activity with their peers rather than with older individuals. As a result, non-coercive peer sex play has been regarded as a common part of the child's normal psychosocial development.

As outlined by Gil and Johnson (1993), normative sexual behaviour for preschool children includes watching or poking others' bodies and being interested in toileting functions. For children aged five to seven years, it includes telling dirty jokes, kissing and holding hands.

In an overview of typical sexual behaviour from middle to late childhood, Johnson (1999) noted that sexual interests during the middle childhood years fluctuate with the degree of sexual stimulation and sexually sensitising experiences. Kissing and holding hands may occur. 'Playing doctor' and other forms of sexual play between children are characteristic. Only when coercion occurs or when there is a lack of mutual consent is there cause for concern. As children get older they are invariably sexually stimulated and sometimes sexually aroused. It is at this stage that they seek information continually, trying to establish a greater understanding about the nature of sexual life. Play and sexual exploration with others and gender/role enactments are the means whereby the child begins to assimilate the elements of sexual life and to institute patterns of sexual excitement and pathways to sexual gratification. Generally the child's interest in sex and sexuality is balanced by curiosity about other aspects of his or her life, with most sexual play taking place between children who have well-established, mutually enjoyable play relationships and/or school friendships. Sexual behaviours of children vary greatly and as well as being influenced by previous sexual experiences, their behaviours are affected by fortuitous and opportunistic experiences, the degree of sexual stimulation, and the child's sexual interests and curiosity. Araj (1997) adds an extra dimension to the description of normal sexual behaviour in children, observing that sexual play is typically spontaneous and

causes pleasure, joy, laughter and embarrassment. Such play is accompanied by varying levels of inhibition and disinhibition.

For pre-adolescents, aged 8–12 years, normative behaviour includes ‘mooning’ and exhibitionism, kissing and touching others’ genitals. Araj (1997) and Friedrich et al. (1991) add penile erections, thigh rubbing in female preschoolers, sexual exploration games, touching and rubbing of the genitals, exhibitionism, voyeurism, use of ‘dirty’ language and flirtatious behaviours to the list of activities observed during typical childhood sexual development between two to six years of age.

While early development provides the crucible for the development of sexual values, sexual development is greatly facilitated during the middle school years (Postman, 1994). It is at this age that children are increasingly exposed to popular culture and have virtually the same access as adults to sexually explicit information from films, television programmes, pornographic magazines and the Internet. Postman (1994) looks to the latter in particular, saying that in an age of electronic information, popular culture has in many instances superseded the family as the source of information about what is acceptable sexual behaviour.

When it comes to describing typical adolescent sexual development, the picture is complex. Biological processes associated with sexual maturation combine with social processes to influence the age at which sexual activities start and the type of activity. For the large majority, the sequences of behaviour move from touching and kissing through sexual petting to full intercourse.

Reynolds, Herbenick and Bancroft (2003) studied young adults in order to determine their first experience of sexual arousal, sexual attraction to another person and sexual fantasies, furthermore noting age differences between girls and boys. Sexual arousal, compared for boys and girls, first occurred before puberty for the majority, with an average age for the pre-pubertal onset group of around nine years. First sexual attraction shows a gender difference, with the majority of boys reporting this occurring before puberty (average age 11 years) and a majority of girls reporting this post-puberty (average age 13.7 years). The onset of sexual fantasies shows the gender difference even more strongly, with the majority of boys experiencing these pre-pubertally (average age 10.8 years) compared to post-pubertally in girls (average age 14.4 years).

Lamb and Coakley (1993) state that so-called ‘normal’ sexual behaviour is difficult to describe because there is great diversity of experience within the ‘normal’ range (meaning behaviour that promotes development or at least is

not detrimental). This conviction is supported by Haugaard and Tilly (1988), who asked 1 089 male and female undergraduate students about their sexual interactions during childhood. Among the most frequent types of activities reported were kissing and hugging, exhibitionism and fondling, although a few people reported engaging in oral sex and intercourse. It is important to note that, regardless of the type of activity engaged in, the encounter was viewed more negatively when higher levels of coercion were used.

Cole and Cole (2004) note that the sexual activity of the young is very responsive to social change over time. For a variety of reasons not fully understood, sexual activity among teenagers has increased over the past 25 years in the United States. Between 1971 and 1990, the proportion of unmarried 15-year-old girls who had had sex at that age increased by 121% (from 14% to 32%). By 16 (the age of consent in South Africa), 43% of American girls had had sexual intercourse in 1990 (Cole & Cole, 2004).

South African studies conducted since 2000 provide similar findings. The most common age for first sexual intercourse is 16 for boys and 17 years for girls (Ritcher et al., 2005).

Beyond biology, sexual development is guided by the cultural community in which the child grows up. This tends to be forgotten in the academic literature of psychiatry and psychology, which is overwhelmingly derived from research on the modern Western child. 'Normal' sexual development is therefore not necessarily universal as the anthropological record shows (Mead, 1954).

Social learning is the primary mechanism for the development of sexual identity and behaviour and sex role development and behaviour are shaped by the cultural scripts that prevail in the child's family, peer group and the wider community. In small-scale, more traditional societies, socialisation into appropriate sexual behaviour was likely to have been a family affair. For example, in rural Shona society, grandfathers were (and are) primarily responsible for guiding boys towards manhood, whereas in the case of girls this fell to grandmothers and, to a lesser extent, the mother (Gelfand, 1979). The role of elders in the initiation of African boys in Xhosa and other South African communities is well known.

Regardless of cultural background, parents and peers provide primary models for sexual behavior and reward what they consider appropriate (Caldera, Huston & O'Brien, 1989; Fagot, 1978). In modern communities, where the research has been conducted, the school and other agencies, such as health facilities beyond the family, increasingly take on the role of providing information and guidance, particularly during adolescence.

Increasingly, the Internet is likely to play a role in providing children with sexual images and text with sexual content. For example, a recent study conducted in the United Kingdom found that 39% of children aged nine to 19 years surveyed had regularly encountered pornography by accident on the Internet (Livingstone & Bober, 2004).

With globalisation and access to sexual content in the film and Internet media, adolescents and even younger children across the world will increasingly become exposed to sexual activity and content of a similar nature, in all probability reducing cultural particularity in sexual socialisation. The challenge of these new media is that the young are likely to have limited guidance from adults as to how to interpret it. The peer group will be the most likely source of information and interpretation. Of concern are findings from meta-analyses and empirical studies with American college students that show strong correlations between frequent pornography use and sexually aggressive behaviours (Malamuth, Addison & Koss, 2000). The findings suggest that pornography is a source of information about sexual practices that is taken up by these late adolescents and young men, possibly reinforced and rendered normative in sexist male peer group settings. Exposure to this mix of factors suggests a pathway into sexual violence among some of these youths.

It appears from at least one major survey that sexual violence is normalised for South African adolescents. In a school survey of 10- to 19-year-olds, more than 50% of both boys and girls believe that forcing someone they know (not necessarily a partner) to have sex with one is not a form of sexual violence. On average, 30% of both boys and girls believe that girls do not have the right to refuse sex if demanded by their partner and 26% of both genders believe girls enjoy rape (Andersson et al., 2004).

The prevalence of such views is deeply disturbing, particularly the fact that so many girls have internalised the view that boys have the right to violate them. While this is only one study, the findings suggest that South African youth are primed for sexual offending. Indeed, one is prompted to ask whether it is normative.

## **Deviant sexual behaviour**

Sexual offending is a legal, not psychological or psychiatric construct. However, deviant sexual behaviour is a psychological construct, which overlaps with or determines sexual offending in the sense that it creates the necessary preconditions. Becker (1988) has described non-deviant sexual behaviour in

adolescents as ‘non-coercive sexual interaction with a peer’. By extrapolation, deviant sexual behaviour may be defined as comprising one or more of three elements:

- 1) The use of coercion or force
- 2) Sexualised interactions that are age inappropriate for the partner
- 3) Partners who are not peers.

If any of these elements is present, the behaviour of the subject may be defined as abusive, but Vizard et al. (1995) caution that even these guidelines are open to question – that is, what constitutes ‘coercion’ and ‘age appropriate sexual interactions’, and even (at the margins), who are peers and who are not.

As defined by the National Task Force on Juvenile Sexual Offending in the USA (1993), sexually abusive behaviour occurs without *consent*, without *equality*, or as a result of *coercion*.

In this context *consent* is defined as including all of the following:

- Understanding what is proposed
- Knowledge of societal standards for what is proposed
- Awareness of potential consequences in alternatives
- Assumption that disagreements will be respected equally
- Voluntary decision
- Mental competence.

*Equality* is defined as ‘two participants operating with the same level of power in a relationship, neither being controlled or coerced by the other’.

*Coercion* is defined as ‘exploitation of authority, use of bribes, threats of force, or intimidation to gain co-operation or compliance’.

Sexually abusive behaviours range from non-contact offences to penetrative acts. Monastersky and Smith (1985) suggest the following sexual offence continuum for this purpose:

- 1) Non-aggressive hands-off behaviours, including exposure, voyeurism, masturbating with women’s underwear and obscene phone calls and letters
- 2) Aggressive hands-off behaviours, including all the above activities where steps are taken to increase the victim’s proximity
- 3) Non-aggressive hands-on behaviours, including fondling, oral-genital contact and penetration where the offender uses their authority to gain access to the victim

- 4) Aggressive hands-on behaviours including the previous activities where the offender uses (or threatens to use) force and/or weapons and/or does not stop if the victim expresses distress.

## **RISK FACTORS FOR YOUTHFUL SEX OFFENDING**

Youthful sex offending is not caused by a single risk or causative factor, but by the interaction of many risk and causative (and protective) factors at many ecological levels (see Chapter 3). Although a great deal is known about the magnitude, risks, patterns and determinants of youth offending in general, particularly internationally (see Chapter 2), adolescent sex offenders are a complex and heterogeneous group and much more research is still needed in this area (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). What follows is a brief review of what we know about risks for youthful sex offending. The literature is mainly drawn from the US and Western Europe due to the lack of research from other areas. Most of these studies are quasi-experimental studies including young male sex offenders and control groups consisting of young male non-sexual offenders.

### **Individual-level risk factors**

There is a great deal of debate in the literature about what the most robust risk factors for youthful sex offending are, but the most consistently identified factors occur at the individual level, and appear to be an antisocial orientation and general criminality, impulsivity and deficits in self-regulation, and deviant sexual interests and preoccupations. However, a number of other factors also play an important role.

In an attempt to shed light on the composition of this diverse group, a number of scholars have devised typologies of young sexual offenders. Smith, Monastersky and Deisher's (1987) cluster analysis indicates the presence of four types of young sex offenders:

- 1) A shy, overcontrolled, socially isolated worrier
- 2) A demanding, narcissistic, argumentative type who is likely to use physical illness to gain attention and fantasy to avoid problems
- 3) A socially outgoing type with no impaired judgement, but a tendency to be emotionally overcontrolled and (sometimes) subject to violent emotional outbursts
- 4) An impulsive, mistrusting, alienated type who has poor judgement and social skills, and who is vulnerable to perceived threat and likely to act out in anticipation.

A very similar, more recent typology was developed by Worling (2001). The results of Worling's (2001) analysis revealed four personality-based groups, each with a different aetiological pathway and potentially different intervention needs. They include:

- Antisocial/Impulsive
- Unusual/Isolated
- Overcontrolled/Reserved
- Confident/Aggressive.

Offenders in the two more pathological groups (Antisocial/Impulsive and Unusual/Isolated) were the most likely to be charged with a subsequent violent or non-violent offence (Worling, 2001). Antisocial and impulsive behaviour, as well as an antisocial peer group or social isolation, have been identified as increasing the risk of sexual offending and are associated with the two most pathological types (Gerhold, Browne & Beckett, 2007).

Another typology based on risk pathways was developed by Oxnam and Vess (2006). These authors found significant differences in adolescent sex offenders' reports of familial physical abuse across withdrawn, socially inadequate types; antisocial and externalising types; and normal range, conforming types. No significant differences were found between groups in terms of history of sexual abuse, victim age and victim gender, although adolescent sex offenders who had experienced sexual abuse were more likely to choose a male victim (Oxnam & Vess, 2006).

1) The *antisocial type*:

- Impulsive
- Mistrusting
- Aggressive
- Unpredictable
- Domineering
- Poor understanding of social rules
- Ignoring others' well-being and acting out in hostile ways with little provocation.

This type was also described as lacking insight and as showing no empathic concern for others.

2) The *inadequate type*:

- Chronically insecure
- Avoidant of interpersonal contact
- Low self-esteem

- Generally pessimistic
- Fears rejection
- Internalises his distress
- Feels despair, guilt and worthlessness
- Insecure and frequently had a history of abuse.

This type typically had poor social skills and sought contact with younger children who were less likely to judge and reject him or her.

- 3) The *normal range type* displayed no behaviours of significant clinical concern. However, this group did demonstrate substantial anxiety and discomfort about their offending and were more likely to feel guilt and embarrassment about what they had done. These youths were more likely to commit hands-off offences motivated by curiosity, and were described by the authors as naïve experimenters (Oxnam & Vess, 2006).

Other scholars have classified young sex offenders according to the type of offence they have committed. Saunders, Awad and White (1986) divided male adolescent sex offenders into three groups on the basis of the type and severity of the offence and risk factors for the offence:

- 1) Courtship disorders (exhibitionism, toucherism and obscene phone calls)
- 2) Sexual assaults
- 3) Paedophilic offences.

The first group did not consider the offence as a sexual act, tended to come from less disorganised family backgrounds and were relatively well adjusted at school and in the community (Saunders et al., 1986). Group two came from more disorganised family backgrounds, which included more frequent long-term parent-child separations, a higher rate of borderline intellectual functioning and violent offences (Saunders et al., 1986). Finally, the third group were more likely to have witnessed violence between parents, were described as infants who did not enjoy being cuddled and had siblings who were truant (Saunders et al., 1986).

Graves, Openshaw, Ascione and Ericksen (1996) identified the:

- Adolescent paedophilic male (typically commits offences against much younger females)
- Adolescent sexual assaulter (typically commits offences against females of varying ages)
- Adolescent mixed offence offender (typically commits the most varied offences against a full age range of victims).

Each type differs in his family's demographic and abuse history, with the mixed type having the highest risk profile. This type had the most pathological family interactional style, was of lower socio-economic status, reported that their mothers were physically abused as children, and described their fathers as substance abusers (Graves et al., 1996).

One of the most concerning features of youthful sex offending is that it appears to escalate over time. A recent study included three types of young sexual offenders: those who admitted to sexual offending before the age of 12 only; the second after the age of 12 only; and the third before and after the age of 12. This study revealed that the continuous type had more serious and complex levels of perpetration as time progressed (Burton, 2000). The continuous group also had higher trauma scores. They scored the highest on the sexual and emotional abuse measures, followed by the early offenders and the lowest scores were reported by the older offenders (Burton, 2000).

Early-onset sexual offending has also been associated with sexual recidivism, so that the younger the perpetrator is, the greater the likelihood of persistence of deviance and the offences tend to become increasingly serious (Boyd, Hagan & Cho, 2000).

Many researchers have found that young sex offenders have a history of both sex offending and non-sexual offending (Fehrenbach, Smith, Monastersky & Deisher, 1986; Moody, Brissie & Kim, 1994; Varker, Devilly, Ward & Beech, 2008). In other words, the index offence seldom occurs in isolation and offenders rarely 'specialise'. For example, one study found that young sexual offenders did not only engage in sexual offending, but also committed drug-related offences (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001). In a review of the characteristics of young sex offenders, Aljazireh (1993) states that between 40% and 60% of adolescent sexual offenders have a history of prior non-sexual antisocial behaviour, while O'Shaughnessy (2002) states in his review that between 46% and 70% of violent young sexual offenders acknowledge prior non-sexual offences. The results of Nisbet, Wilson and Smallbone's (2004) study similarly challenge the assumption that there is unvaried continuity between adolescence and adulthood in sexual offending: sixty-one per cent of their sample received convictions for a diverse range of non-sexual offences seven years after their adjudication as adolescent sex offenders (Nisbet et al., 2004).

Some research has also indicated that there are no significant differences in the personal characteristics and adjustment of sexual and non-sexual young offenders. In a study that included a sample consisting of five demographically matched groups (sexual offenders with peer/adult victims, sexual offenders with

child victims, violent non-sexual offenders, non-violent non-sexual offenders, and non-delinquent youths), results showed that similar to non-sexually offending youths, both groups of sexually offending youngsters displayed disturbances in their peer and family relationships, including lower bonding to family, school and prosocial peers and higher levels of association with deviant peers (Ronis & Borduin, 2007). It is important to note that 94% of the young sexual offenders with peer/adult victims and 89% of the young sexual offenders with child victims had perpetrated non-sexual offences (Ronis & Borduin, 2007). The authors conclude that sexual offending should be understood as part of a broader pattern of serious antisocial behaviour (Ronis & Borduin, 2007).

Key characteristics of young sex offenders include antisocial, hyperactive and impulsive behaviour, poor self-regulation, precocious sexual behaviour and social skill deficits (Starzyk & Marshall, 2003). Impulsivity was found to be the most important factor distinguishing young sex offenders from oppositional defiant-disordered youths (Moody et al., 1994). Young sex offenders have also been described as:

- Detached
- Impatient
- Easily frustrated
- Followers of their own urges
- Self-indulgent
- Threat sensitive
- Expectant of affection and attention
- Followers in a group (Moody et al., 1994).

Young sex offenders do not easily fit into any diagnostic category and they often receive a multitude of diagnoses indicating their multiple needs. However, the most common diagnosis is Conduct Disorder (Moody et al., 1994). Young sex offenders have also been reported to meet DSM-IV diagnostic criteria for Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and depression (Vizard et al., 1995). In recent studies, violent young sex offenders have scored from mild to severe on measures of juvenile psychopathy (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). It is also important to note that the association between child maltreatment and sex offending may be indirect, through its association with psychopathology.

Numerous scholars have examined the relationship between empathy and sexual offending in adolescents and studies have yielded mixed results. Some have found no relationship between empathy and youthful sex offending (Monto, Zgourides & Harris, 1998), while others have understood lack of

empathy as a key determinant in the aetiology of sex offending (Varker & Devilly, 2007). A key shortcoming in studies on the relationship between youthful sex offending and empathy is the varied and simplistic conceptualisation and definition of empathy (Varker et al., 2008). When conceptualised and defined as a multidimensional construct, some aspects of empathy bear a relationship to sex offending and others do not. Varker and Devilly (2007) found that although adolescent sex offenders did not differ from age-matched non-offending controls in general empathy, they did display significant empathy deficits for their own sexual abuse victim compared to empathy for a general sexual abuse victim. In addition, young sex offenders scored significantly lower than the control group on perspective-taking, which the authors attributed to narcissistic personality traits. Future studies on the relationship between youthful sex offending and empathy should distinguish between different dimensions of empathy, so that we can reach a more complex understanding of the potentially protective role of this construct.

Low self-esteem is an important predictor of sexual offences (Monto et al., 1998). It is likely that the young sex offender commits this type of offence as a way of gaining a sense of control and power to counter feelings of worthlessness (Oxnam & Vess, 2006).

Different types of young sex offenders demonstrate social skills deficits in different ways. The socially inadequate types tend to isolate themselves socially due to their low self-esteem, social anxieties, fear of negative evaluation and self-consciousness (Aljazireh, 1993). Conversely, the conduct disordered, antisocial type's impulsive, hostile and aggressive approach also demonstrates significant social skills deficits.

Poor academic performance and school problems have repeatedly been found in young sexual offenders (Ronis & Borduin, 2007; Shenk & Brown, 2007; Vizard et al., 1995). In a study comparing young offenders with youths diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder and perpetration of non-sexual crimes, results indicated that the latter group had significantly more school problems (Moody et al., 1994). In this same study, the control group scored lower on a measure of intelligence than the sex offender group (Moody et al., 1994). It appears that the association between sex offending, learning impairments and poor academic performance is as a result of behavioural problems (possibly mediated by deficits in self-regulation) rather than as a result of low intelligence (Moody et al., 1994; Vizard et al., 1995).

It is also widely believed that young sex offenders have cognitive distortions that facilitate their offending behaviours (Keown & Gannon, 2008; Keown, Gannon & Ward, 2008). For example, young female sex offenders have been

found to misinterpret clearly negative responses from victims in sexually aggressive vignettes (for example, the victim cries) and to distort perceptions about responsibility (endorsing statements about victim complicity, victim benefit, victim responsibility, victim enjoyment) (Kubik & Hecker, 2005).

Interestingly, young sex offenders have demonstrated a tendency towards external locus of control (Keown et al., 2008). This is consistent with cognitive distortions that deny responsibility for the offence and assign guilt or blame to the victim.

There are a number of demographic risk factors for youthful sexual offending. Although males represent 25%–33% of children who are sexually abused as children, they constitute 95% of adolescents who sexually abuse children (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001). This is because males tend to externalise their distress and utilise aggression to achieve interpersonal goals (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001). Most victims of male adolescent perpetrators are girls, and are known to the perpetrator (Gerhold et al., 2007; Medoff, 2004; Moody et al., 1994). Having multiple and stranger victims are important risk factors for future sexual offending (Gerhold et al., 2007). Being sexually victimised by both male and female perpetrators and the forcefulness of the perpetrators were key predictors of sexual offending in a recent study distinguishing between sexual and non-sexual offending young male offenders (Burton, Miller & Shill, 2002).

It is interesting to note that young sexual offenders have been found to have lower rates of alcohol abuse than non-sexual young offenders (Moody et al., 1994). Oxnam and Vess's (2006) antisocial type, however, reported high levels of substance abuse, so findings are not consistent and may vary according to sex offender type.

An important point that is very rarely dealt with in the literature is the difference between factors associated with the onset of sexual offending and those associated with recidivism. These factors are not necessarily the same, although they are often assumed to be. Similarly, there is the assumption that features present in clinical settings, such as low empathy, self-esteem, cognitive distortions, family difficulties and even deviant sexual arousal were present before or during the sexual offence. However, these features may be the result of the offending or being caught and may not have played a causal or contributory role in the offence (Stephen Smallbone, personal communication).

### **Family-level risk factors**

A number of studies have found a relationship between either physical abuse or sexual abuse and youthful sex offending. It is clear, however, that

the relationship between child maltreatment and later perpetration is not necessarily 'within type', in other words, there is a neat association between sexual abuse and sexual offending (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001; Oxnam & Vess, 2006; Worling, 2001). It is important to note that most children who are sexually abused do not, in fact, become perpetrators of sexual offences. However, many young sex offenders have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse and family dysfunction. Some studies show that young sex offenders are more likely to have experienced physical abuse than sexual abuse (Aljazireh, 1993), while other authors demonstrate that there is simply less variability in the incidence of physical abuse than sexual or emotional abuse. A review of studies showed that 0%–80% of young sex offenders report sexual abuse, whereas 25%–50% report physical abuse (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). One study found a risk pathway to sexual offending starting with an initial report of neglect, followed by at least two physical or sexual abuse reports (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001). Adolescents in this study with one child maltreatment record tended to have three or more subsequent reports of different kinds of abuse, which points to the co-occurrence of different types of child maltreatment (Jonson-Reid & Way, 2001). This study demonstrates that children are unlikely to progress along a trajectory consisting of only one kind of maltreatment, which leads to committing exclusively one kind of crime. The reality is far more complex.

The offending patterns of youths who have been sexually abused appear to be different from those youths who have not suffered similar victimisation. In a study comparing the outcomes of sexually abused and non-abused adolescent sex offenders, the authors found that sexually abused adolescents had an earlier onset of offending, had more victims, were more likely to abuse both males and females, and displayed more psychopathology and interpersonal problems (sexually deviant arousal, social incompetence and Conduct Disorder) than the comparison group (Cooper, Murphy & Haynes, 1996). The findings from this study suggest that a history of sexual abuse affects the severity of the youth's offending behaviour and it has implications for early intervention.

Living with a single caregiver—most frequently in a female-headed household—is a common characteristic of young sex offenders (Becker, Cunningham-Rathner & Kaplan, 1987; Worling, 2001). Young sex offenders' caregivers frequently have a history of psychiatric problems and abuse themselves (Becker et al., 1987). Family interactional styles have been described as pathological, including rigid, enmeshed, chaotic relationships with high caregiver expectations and role confusion (Becker et al., 1987).

Family violence and exposure to sexual interaction between family members have also been isolated as risk factors for youthful sex offending (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004).

Poor caregiver-child bonding, discontinued caregiver care through death, divorce or separation, neglect, as well as caregiver substance abuse, deviance and criminal involvement are key risk factors for youthful sex offending (Aljazeera, 1993; Starzyk & Marshall, 2003). Sex offending adolescents have also described themselves as members of families characterised by low levels of cohesion (Bischof, Stith & Wilson, 1992).

### **BEST PRACTICE: ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION**

*‘... the doctrine that you can’t change human nature has a larger purpose: the defence of the existing social arrangements.’ – Barrows Dunham, *Man against Myth*, 1947 (cited in Marshal, Fernandez, Hudson & Ward, 1998)*

#### **Assessment of young sex offenders**

Young sex offenders are a heterogeneous population, with variable levels of disturbance, risk of re-offending and amenability to treatment. For example, the treatment needs of the socially inadequate type and the antisocial type described earlier are likely to be quite different (Hunter, Gilbertson, Vedros & Morton, 2004). The purpose of assessment is to determine the intervention needs of the youth and to ensure appropriate treatment. As such, assessments should inform the content of interventions to increase the likelihood that they are able to effectively reduce target behaviours. While there are a number of actuarial instruments designed for adults (for example, the Rapid Risk Assessment for Sex Offender Recidivism; the Static 99; the Minnesota Multiphasic Sex Offender Screening Tool-Revised), this is not the case for young sex offenders (Medoff, 2004; O’Shaughnessy, 2002).

At present, there are no well-validated, standardised instruments for assessing sexual recidivism risk in young people, although a number of authors have recently attempted to address this important gap. The *Estimate of Risk of Adolescent Sex Offense Recidivism* (ERASOR) is an empirically based, structured clinical assessment that has been developed and partially validated by Worling and Curwen (2001).

The *Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol II* (J-SOAP) was also developed and tested to address the lack of empirically derived assessment tools for young sex offenders. It is now available as a revised version (Prentky

& Righthand, 2003). However, further work needs to be done to validate the J-SOAP and to increase its reliability. Martinez, Flores and Rosenfeld (2007) found that the J-SOAP-II total score predicted general and sexual re-offending, as well as treatment compliance.

The *Psychopathy Checklist – Youth Version* (PCL-YV) (Forth, Kosson & Hare, 2003) (based on the adult Psychopathy Checklist Revised for adults [Hare, 1991]) has also been used to predict violent recidivism in young sex offenders. The theoretical assumption underlying the use of the PCL-YV is that young sex offenders have psychopathic tendencies. However, there has been substantial debate in the literature focusing on the identification of psychopathic tendencies in children and adolescents for the purpose of violence prediction. Although high psychopathy ratings have been found to be predictive of recidivism, this is only one of a number of factors contributing to sexual offending, the most robust of which include a generally antisocial orientation, impulsivity and sexually deviant interests (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005). General criminality remains one of the most reliable predictors of sexual recidivism (Gerhold et al., 2007).

Psychopathy, as assessed in adults, is a personality disorder characterised by early-onset and persistent social and interpersonal dysfunction. Psychopathic individuals are described as: grandiose, manipulative, impulsive, sensation-seeking, irresponsible, forceful and lacking in empathy, guilt or remorse (Gretton, Hare & Catchpole, 2004; Lynam, 1997; Lynam, 1998). In addition, these individuals display an inability to form long-lasting attachments with others and show little regard for social and legal norms (Gretton et al., 2004). Current understandings of psychopathy conceptualise the condition as distinct from, but as overlapping with, the adult diagnosis of Antisocial Personality Disorder (Lynam, 1998).

Psychopathy in adult perpetrators of violent offences has been well researched, although much less is known about the development of psychopathy in childhood and adolescence and the relationship of this construct to youth perpetration of violence (Lynam, 1998; Gretton et al., 2004). Some scholars have asserted that adult diagnoses are inappropriately applied to children and adolescents, whose socio-emotional abilities are still developing and changing (Edens, Skeem, Cruise & Cauffman, 2001; Seagrave & Grisso, 2002). These researchers argue that attitudes and behaviours in young people that resemble adult psychopathy may be a normal and transient part of development (for example, egocentricity, a lack of goals, impulsivity, risk-taking and irresponsibility are common features of adolescence) and have advocated against labelling adolescents 'psychopathic' under all except

the most rigorous of assessment conditions (Edens et al., 2001; Seagrave & Grisso, 2002).

The *Antisocial Process Screening Device* (APSD) (Frick & Hare, 2001) is a screening instrument for psychopathy that is faster and easier to administer and has also been used in clinical settings with young sex offenders.

Other, less significant attempts at developing assessment instruments include Langstrom and Grann's (2000) and Prentky, Harris, Frizzell and Righthand's (2000) work. The former conducted a study aimed at identifying factors that underlie sexual recidivism and found that early-onset sexually abusive behaviour, male choice of victim and multiple victims should inform the development of any empirically derived assessment instrument. The latter developed a 23-itemed four-scale instrument that is still undergoing revisions. Two of the scales represent static, historical domains (Sexual Drive/Sexual Preoccupation and Scale II: Impulsive, Antisocial Behaviour), while the other two represent dynamic factors that could be indicative of behaviour change (Scale III: Clinical/Treatment and Scale IV: Community Adjustment) (Prentky et al., 2000). Initial results indicate that the item reliabilities are good and scales are internally consistent, although data generated from Scale 1 proved to be problematic and the scale has since been adapted (Prentky et al., 2000). These and further refinements to this instrument may render it a promising tool for assessment of young sex offenders.

It is important that local assessment tools are developed. The most efficient way of doing this would be to conduct validation studies of instruments such as the PCL-YV or the J-SOAP-II in South Africa.

In the absence of actuarial risk assessment tools at present in South Africa, it is important that any clinical interviews include questions on both the most important static (for example, biological) and dynamic (for example, cognitions) risk factors, as well as information about the circumstances surrounding the index offence. For example, an assessment should include:

- The youth's sexual behaviour and fantasies
- The nature of the sexual offence (what preceded and followed the offence)
- Emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse history
- Intelligence and cognitive ability
- History of emotional and/or behavioural problems and hospitalisations
- History of antisocial behaviour
- Sexual knowledge
- Sexual history

- Peer relationships
- Relationship to authority figures
- Empathy
- Self-esteem
- Family demographics
- Family medical, psychiatric and criminal history (Becker, 1990; O'Shaughnessy, 2002).

In addition, the practitioner should gather information from multiple sources (for example, court records, victim statements, prior psychological treatment reports, psychological evaluations, caregivers) (Becker, 1990; Medoff, 2004). This is particularly important because youths have a tendency to distort, deny or minimise the alleged offence (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). The content of these interviews should be based on current research evidence. Since the assessment should inform the choice of intervention and interventions for antisocial youths, which are theoretically founded, are on average five times more effective in reducing target behaviours than those that are not (Izzo & Ross, 1990), it is vital that it is based on contemporary understandings of the aetiology of youthful sex offending.

It is important to note that what is described above is an ideal we should work towards. However, currently in South Africa there is no standardised assessment specifically designed for young sex offenders. It is crucial that resources are dedicated towards funding research studies focused on determining the predictors of youthful sex offending in local contexts and that a standardised assessment is developed on the basis of such research evidence. Once such an instrument is developed, probation officers and interventionists will need to be trained in administering the assessment and it should be ensured that the assessment is administered in a language the child understands (or an interpreter should be present).

### **Interventions for young sex offenders**

Prevention or treatment options need to address the wide variety of sexual offending that takes place, including youthful sex offending that is perpetrated in romantic relationships. The limited evidence available suggests that the prevalence of adolescent dating violence in South Africa is high (Swart, Seedat, Stevens & Ricardo, 2002). There are also few effective prevention or intervention programmes targeting adolescent dating violence, especially in South Africa (Swart et al., 2002). Prevention efforts with this particular population is challenging because of survivors' fears that the abusing partner

will come after them, being emotionally invested in the relationship or in love with the violent partner, or guilt feelings about events that took place during the relationship (Murphy & Smith, 2010).

Reaching these young people is also difficult as they typically display high levels of internalising and externalising symptoms and many report significant engagement in antisocial behaviour (the overlap between young offenders in general and sex offenders in particular and the implications for intervention are tackled below) (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). One interesting avenue to pursue in designing effective interventions for this population is utilising peers. Just as peer influence may play a significant part in the experience of dating violence as well as other high-risk or antisocial behaviour, prosocial peers can influence and amplify behaviour in each other, too (Swart et al., 2002; Vezina & Hebert, 2007). Those who are in healthy romantic relationships can be used to act as models and assist those in violent dating relationships (Vezina & Hebert, 2007). However, in order to be effective, such peer-influenced interventions also have to include the central characteristics of the most effective intervention programmes (see Box 9.3).

In designing interventions for young sex offenders, it would be useful to understand these youths as Ronis and Borduin (2007) do, as part of a broader community of serious young offenders, rather than a 'special' population with specialist needs that in no way overlap with other young offenders. In fact, their needs overlap a great deal. Generalist young offenders may not commit sexual crimes, but the reverse is not true: young sex offenders tend also to commit non-sexual crimes and particular young sex offender subtypes, such as the antisocial/impulsive type, share characteristics with Moffitt's (1993) life-course-persistent delinquent, who commits increasingly serious and more varied crimes across his/her lifespan (Gerhold et al., 2007). For intervention purposes, it would be more useful to dedicate resources to discriminating between different types of young sexual offenders than between non-sexual young offenders and sexual young offenders.

The principles outlined in Box 9.3 have been found to characterise the most effective programmes targeting antisocial youths. Since young sex offenders share an antisocial orientation with youths who may not commit sexual crimes, but are generally antisocial, these principles apply.

In South Africa, young sex offenders have very few interventions they can be referred to. The *South African Young Sex Offenders Programme* (SAYStOP) is the only diversion programme available for young sexual offenders, although it should be noted that *Safeline* in Durban and the *Teddy Bear Clinic* in Johannesburg offer interventions for young sexual offenders.

**BOX 9.3**  
**WHAT WORKS? GENERIC PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION PROGRAMMES**

- 1) *Risk principle*: Match offender risk levels with the *intensity* of the intervention; offenders representing a higher risk of recidivism and/or committing serious/violent offences need more intensive services; lower-risk individuals should receive less intervention (Andrews et al., 1990; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998).
- 2) *Need principle*: Focus on factors that *cause, support or contribute to offending behaviour* and not on factors that are distantly related or unrelated to this behaviour (Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995).
- 3) *Responsivity principle*: Staff and offender *learning styles should be matched*. Active participatory methods rather than either didactic or unstructured experiential methods should be used (Andrews et al., 1990; Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Rutter et al., 1998).
- 4) *Community based principle*: Programmes that have close links with the child's community are most effective. Proximity to participants' homes promotes real-life learning and generalisation of positive skills (Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Mulvey, Arthur & Reppucci, 1993; Rutter et al., 1998).
- 5) *Multimodal intervention principle*: The most effective programmes are *multimodal and social skills oriented*. Highly structured, cognitive-behavioural treatments directed at development of concrete skills have been shown to be at least twice as effective as other interventions and to have more lasting effects (Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; Izzo & Ross, 1990; Lipsey, 1992; Lipsey, 1995; Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Mulvey, Arthur & Reppucci, 1993; Rutter et al., 1998; Tate, Reppucci & Mulvey, 1995).
- 6) *Intervention integrity principle*: Indicators of integrity – the intervention should be research-based throughout; have sufficient resources to achieve objectives; objectives should be linked to intervention components and desired outcomes; and the intervention should be systematically monitored and evaluated (McGuire & Priestley, 1995).

SAYStOP was developed by four non-governmental organisations, including NICRO, RAPCAN, the Community Law Centre at the University of the Western Cape and the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cape Town (Steyn, 2005). The programme is described as a life-skills intervention, consisting of 10 sessions, which focus on crime awareness, self-esteem, understanding of the body, sexuality, socialisation and myths, victim empathy, anger management and relapse prevention (Steyn, 2005). Monitoring and evaluation processes are an integral part of the programme. However, no outcome data on sexual re-offending is available.

Internationally, evaluations and large-scale meta-analytic studies have indicated that cognitive-behavioural programmes are more effective than other types of interventions in reducing sexual offending as is the case with general recidivism (Becker, Kaplan & Kavoussi, 1988; Hall, 1995; Hanson et al., 2002; Hunter & Santos, 1990; Lösel & Schmucker, 2005). Typical interventions for young sex offenders consist of sex offender specific group therapy, supplemented by family and individual therapy (Hunter et al., 2004). Psychodynamic therapy, particularly when used as a single-module intervention, has proven ineffective in treating young sex offenders (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004). Current sex offender interventions usually involve some of the following components:

- Sex education
- Verbal satiation
- Covert sensitisation
- Social skills development
- Anger management
- Correction of cognitive distortions
- Strengthening of impulse control
- Victim empathy work
- Teaching relapse prevention (Becker et al., 1988; Hunter et al., 2004).

Some authors argue that these programmes could be made more effective if core treatment targets, such as empathy, victim awareness and offence responsibility, are replaced with more robust predictors of sexual recidivism – an antisocial orientation and previous (general) criminality, deviant sexual interests and sexual preoccupations (Hanson & Morton-Bourgon, 2005).

Since young sex offenders frequently have an underlying antisocial orientation, which leads them to engage in a range of other types of offending behaviours, it appears that the most effective interventions are likely to be those that include components characterising non-sexual young offenders'

programmes (for example, caregiver skills enhancement, social skills development), as well as components targeting the most robust predictors of sex offending (for example, impulsivity, sexual deviancy, sexual preoccupation). Ongoing monitoring and evaluation of two community-based interventions targeting young sex offenders, which are characterised by high levels of inter-sectoral collaboration between legal and clinical professionals and multiple modes of intervention targeting both sexual offending and the determinants of antisocial behaviour more broadly, indicate that these programmes cost-effectively reduce sexual recidivism.

Hunter et al. (2004) argue in favour of community-based interventions that increase the chance of changes observed in therapeutic settings being generalised to the home and school and emphasise the importance of conceptualising interventions according to ecological models, which understand youthful sex offending as the product of multiple interacting individual, family, school, peer and broader social influences. As emphasised in Box 9.3, any intervention is strengthened if it has a community base. Hunter et al. (2004) are critical of the narrow focus of current sex offender programmes and argue in favour of broadening the therapeutic focus.

Tate, Reppucci and Mulvey (1995) recommend the use of comprehensive, individualised, community-based, family-oriented interventions with a cognitive component for serious, chronic and violent young offenders. In addition, these authors argue that interventions for these types of youths should ideally be conceptualised as an ongoing (long-term) care model (Tate et al., 1995). The best-known and well-researched example of this and the application of ecological approach is *Multisystemic Therapy* (MST), which has been successfully extended to young sex offenders.

MST is a holistic, individualised intervention targeting families, including children and adolescents with clinically significant antisocial behaviour, including those at risk of out-of-home placement (in a correctional facility, residential care or psychiatric placement). Individual development and problems are understood as the product of complex reciprocal interchanges between the individual and the social systems in which s/he is embedded (Henggeler, Schoenwald, Borduin, Rowland & Cunningham, 1998). Based on a detailed assessment of the child/adolescent and family needs, a multi-disciplinary team, consisting of a trained therapist who has a low caseload (four to eight families each), legal, social and any other required services, provide co-ordinated, individualised mental health services, promote access to other services and guide and empower caregivers to accept responsibility for affecting therapeutic change (Henggeler et al., 1998). The therapy

follows the principles of cognitive-behavioural therapy and interventions are present-focused and action-oriented (Henggeler et al., 1998). The core therapist or case manager who leads a team is required to be available to the family 24 hours a day, seven days a week, although treatment gradually decreases towards the end of a three-to-five-month course of MST (Henggeler et al., 1998). Most studies evaluating the effectiveness of MST have been randomised controlled trials and have positive reported results for a number of hard-to-reach populations – not only young sex offenders, but also violent and persistent young offenders, maltreating caregivers and substance abusing young offenders (Borduin, Heiblum, Jones & Grabe, 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998). For young sex offenders, however, compared to youths who received the standard intervention (group-based community intervention), youths in the MST condition evidenced significant reductions in sexual behaviour problems, delinquency, substance abuse, externalising symptoms and out-of-home placements (Letourneau et al., 2009). Although MST is resource-intensive to set up, cost-benefit analyses indicate that MST is a highly cost-effective alternative to residential placement or incarceration (Borduin et al., 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998).

*SAFE-T* is another example of a comprehensive, community-based, individualised, systems-based intervention. It includes a team of 12 staff (child care, social work, psychology and art therapy, support staff and a part-time consulting psychiatrist) (Worling, 1998). The intervention targets two groups:

- 1) Children and families in which incest has occurred
- 2) Adolescent sexual offenders (both intra- and extra-familial) and their families.

The average duration of the treatment is two years, but clients may return to treatment during subsequent times of crisis (Worling, 1998). Assessment takes approximately two months and treatment goals are reviewed every four months. The programme consists of weekly group therapy for 18 months, weekly individual therapy for 24 months and bi-weekly family therapy for 12 months. Cognitive-behavioural and relapse-prevention strategies are used to address denial and accountability, sexual arousal, deviant sexual attitudes and victim empathy (Worling, 1998). Other treatment goals include:

- Enhancement of social skills
- Self-esteem
- Family relationships

- Trust
- Body image
- Anger management (Worling, 1998).

As in the case of MST, clinical staff work collaboratively with all other stakeholders, such as group home staff, probation officers and child protection officers, to prevent inter-agency conflict and ensure a co-ordinated approach to adolescent sexual offender treatment (Worling, 1998). Although not as extensively nor as rigorously evaluated as MST, current outcome data indicates that the sexual recidivism rate for the treatment group was more than three times lower (5%) than the comparison group (18%) at a mean follow-up of six years (Worling, 1998).

A number of authors have commented on the use of pharmacological agents to treat youthful sex offending, but are generally in agreement that this should be a last resort. There are three general classes of medical interventions, including:

- 1) Anti-androgen therapy
- 2) Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)
- 3) Anti-psychotics (Lundrigan, 2004).

Anti-androgens may be prescribed where there is a high risk of severe paraphilic and/or violent behaviour and when SSRIs have failed to produce results (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004). Anti-androgens decrease the level of testosterone in the system, but can have adverse consequences for a young person if they have not reached certain developmental milestones, such as interference with the bone mineral density, so should be prescribed with caution (Gerardin & Thibaut, 2004; Lundrigan, 2004). Hormonal interventions have been shown to be highly effective in reducing sexual recidivism (Hall, 1995; Lösel & Schmucker, 2005). However, the long-term medical risks are not known, so this medication should only be used when all else has failed (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). Similarly, luteinising hormone releasing hormone analogues have been used recently for the treatment of paraphilic disorders with some success, but there is no published data on their long-term effects, so their use on children is ethically questionable (O'Shaughnessy, 2002). SSRIs reduce the intensity of sexual preoccupation and compulsive fantasies, and may assist depressed young people in participating more fully in interventions. Atypical anti-psychotics, such as Seroquel, Risperdal, Geodon and Abilify, assist in the management of compulsive and addictive thought patterns, and help people feel more stable

and in control of themselves mentally, and more able to participate in the intervention (Ludrigan, 2004). However, overall, most scholars agree that ethically the use of these treatments are highly problematic and psychosocial programmes are preferable in almost all instances.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, any intervention is more likely to effectively produce change in the targeted behaviour if it is based on a comprehensive assessment. There is an urgent need for reliable and validated actuarial assessments for measuring youths' risk of sexual recidivism to be developed, both internationally and locally. There is also a need for the development of standardised clinical interviews based on empirical evidence. These interviews should be designed to gather information on the most robust predictors and risk factors for youthful sex offending, such as indicators of antisocial orientation, impulsivity and sexually deviant interests and preoccupations. Contextual factors such as family history and demographics, school problems and the circumstances surrounding the index offence are also important. The greater the number and intensity of risk factors present, the more likely it is that the youth will benefit from high-intensity interventions (*Risk principle*, see Box 9.3). Information should be collected from multiple sources.

Since young sex offenders seldom 'specialise' in sex offending, but tend to commit sex offences as part of a broader range of antisocial behaviour and offending, the most effective interventions for this heterogeneous group are likely to be those that target both antisocial behaviour more generally, as well as include components especially designed to reduce or eliminate sex offending. Structured, cognitive-behavioural, multimodal interventions, particularly those that target skills deficits that cause or contribute to offending behaviour (for example, social skills deficits) and which are theory- and research-driven, have consistently been found to be effective in reducing antisocial and offending behaviour more generally (producing a reduction in recidivism of up to 40%) than unstructured, single-component, insight-oriented or psychodynamic interventions (Kurtz, 2002; Lipsey & Wilson, 1999; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000). Intervening with young sex offenders is a relatively new research area and much still needs to be done. What we can tentatively say at this point is that (corresponding with young sex offenders' multiple needs) resource-intensive, highly individualised, multisystemic and high-intensity community-based interventions with young sex offenders and their families, characterised by multidisciplinary teams of professionals and

high levels of inter-sectoral collaboration, have yielded promising results. Considering its cost-effectiveness in the long term, this is a gold standard of treatment that South African interventionists should aspire to.

Considering the heterogeneity of young sex offenders and their diverse intervention needs, it is imperative that interventionists avoid a 'one size fits all' approach. Ideally, a wide range of the kinds of programmes described above, available in different 'dosages' or intensities and with different emphases, should be accessible to young sex offenders with different risk profiles, as determined through assessment. With so few interventions that young sex offenders can be referred to, South Africa has a long way to go in this regard.

Routine evaluations need to be conducted to determine which components of interventions designed specifically for young sex offenders are most helpful in reducing sexual recidivism, and these components should be strengthened. It cannot be emphasised enough how important it is to have routine monitoring and evaluation systems in place.

Future research efforts should also be dedicated to resiliency. There is a dearth of research on protective factors – those factors and processes that buffer youths from engaging in high-risk behaviours, sex offending in particular (Efta-Breitbach & Freeman, 2004). However, there is a general literature base on resilience broadly, from which inferences can be drawn to strengthen programming (Efta-Breitbach & Freeman, 2004).

A great many studies emphasise the seriousness of the youthful sex offending problem by drawing attention to the fact that adult sexual offenders often begin their sexual offending in childhood and adolescence. It is pertinent for intervention purposes to note that although these youths may pose some risks because they are not yet emotionally, socially and cognitively mature, they are also more amenable to change.

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## Legislation and policies

Child Justice Act No. 75 of 2008

Children's Amendment Act No. 41 of 2007

Criminal Law Amendment Act No. 105 of 1997, as amended by Section 1 of the Criminal Law (Sentencing) Amendment Act No. 38 of 2007

Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act No. 32 of 2007

# Chapter Ten



## SCREEN MEDIA VIOLENCE AND THE SOCIALISATION OF YOUNG VIEWERS

*Jane Stadler*

### INTRODUCTION

In South Africa and in international markets, the media entertainment industry is heavily reliant on the popularity of screen violence: television series featuring crime and violence are regularly among the best-rated programmes; blockbuster movies showcasing violent action produce the highest box office revenue; and by 2008 the digital game industry revenue outstripped both the film and music industries, with global sales dominated by titles such as *World of Warcraft* (Gentile, et al. 2009; Piot, 2006; *The Age*, 2007). This is disturbing in light of findings by leading quantitative media effects researchers claiming that ‘the correlation between media violence and aggression is only slightly smaller than that between smoking and lung cancer’ (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001, p. 234–235). This alarming assertion about the dangers of screen violence is one perspective on how screen media affects young viewers. Other researchers argue that audiences understand the distinction between media texts and reality and that life is not like a game of ‘Simon Says’, in which we mimic what we see and do as we are told (Tulloch, 2000). It is widely acknowledged by experts in both qualitative and quantitative media research that ‘violent media are not necessary precursors to violence’ and ‘violent media are not sufficient to cause violent behaviour’; serious aggressive behaviour requires ‘the confluence of many causal factors’ such as community or domestic violence, parental neglect, poverty, mental health issues and low education (Anderson & Bushman, 2002, p. 448–449). As qualitative ethnographic studies and the uses and gratifications model of audience response show, the media are not all-powerful: viewers can choose what to watch and how to respond and many viewers value the

creative freedom of media producers. Qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are often in tension, but they are understood in this chapter to be complementary means of acquiring knowledge.

Concerns about young people and violent media rest on the assumption that youngsters lack sufficiently developed ethical frameworks, critical faculties or life experience to distinguish between fact and fiction, to negotiate or resist the messages communicated in the media, or to foresee the consequences of imitating media content (Weaver & Carter, 2006). Focusing on fears about the detrimental effects of the media on young people in South Africa, this chapter poses the following question about the function of media violence as a socialisation agent: How might exposure to screen media violence impact on behaviour, attitudes and the transmission of cultural norms? In addressing this issue, more nuanced questions surface about how young people understand and respond to violent screen media at different ages and in different contexts. Do they recognise it as unrealistic fantasy material that should not be enacted off screen, or does it teach them to mimic violence and to think guns are exciting toys and violence is an effective problem-solving strategy? Rather than demonising the media as a cause of violence, I argue it is important to develop a multifaceted picture of the ways in which the media functions as a socialising agent. This entails formulating an evaluative overview of research into the influence of screen media, considering perspectives offered by quantitative and qualitative studies, and using research findings to enhance media literacy in order to equip audience members to engage critically with the media.

Television, film and digital games have different characteristics and are consumed in different contexts and quantities, thus their effects differ – particularly in South Africa where gameplay and cinema attendance are not widespread. However, since most films are eventually broadcast on television and released on DVD, and many film and television texts, particularly in the action genre, are adapted from or into games targeting the youth market (for example, *District 9*, *Spider Man*, *Shrek*, *TRON* and *Alias*), this study addresses a range of screen media. After reviewing media effects data, such research will be reconsidered in light of the ways in which audio-visual style and narrative structure impact on experiences of spectatorship and character identification, investigating how degrees of realism and fantasy violence affect audience responses in South Africa and more broadly.

It is important to note that most media effects research has been undertaken in developed nations, principally the United States, where the frequency, content and social context of screen media consumption differs

from that in South Africa. Concerns about contemporary youth violence in South Africa cannot easily be divorced from the residue of the apartheid era violence, such as the 1976 Soweto youth riots. The legacy of apartheid is evident in persistent racial and economic disadvantage and its relationship to violence involving children. It also features in contemporary media coverage of youth politics, one prominent example being the statement by Julius Malema, President of the ANC Youth League, that the Youth League is 'prepared to take up arms and kill for Zuma' (*News 24*, 2008, n.p.), and Malema's subsequent court case over the right to sing the struggle song 'Dubul' iBhunu' ('Shoot the Boer'), which has been interpreted by some as hate speech with the potential to incite racial violence (*Mail & Guardian Online*, 2011, n.p.). This highlights the importance of understanding how socio-cultural and historical contexts affect young people, media representations and violence. It also problematises the overwhelming emphasis in American media effects studies on fictional violence, to the exclusion of news media.

## DEBATES ABOUT MEDIA INFLUENCE

Key issues in the contested terrain of media effects research include arguments about direct, particular effects and general, diffuse effects; antisocial and prosocial impacts of identification and participation; and qualitative versus quantitative methods of gauging media influence in varied reception contexts. Concerns about the adverse impact of screen violence often relate to content and reception patterns across the industry as a whole, rather than individual screen texts. It is therefore difficult for regulatory bodies to control this impact by rating, restricting and warning against specific textual instances of violence when it is the pervasive influence of long-term exposure to violence across a range of texts that may be problematic. Screen violence can be exciting but it can also be disturbing or frightening, causing young viewers to experience short-term effects, such as agitation and nightmares (Cantor, 1996; 2001), or it may cause cumulative, long-term effects ranging from desensitisation, timidity and paranoia to aggressiveness (Gerbner, 2006). Some lobbyists and researchers even claim screen violence is 'a drug' (Murray, 2008, p. 1212) and a form of 'electronic child abuse' that inflicts trauma and encourages viewer aggression and involvement in violent crime (Buckingham, 2006, p. 279).

Such claims about screen violence causing aggression and antisocial behaviour should not be discounted, but they may deflect attention from the prosocial effects of screen media and they must be balanced by an

understanding of other causal or contributory factors associated with violent conduct, such as family and community influences, social inequity and the accessibility of weapons and drugs (see Chapter 3 in this book and Buckingham, 2006). Media education researcher David Buckingham argues that even 'negative' responses to media violence (such as fear and anger) can have 'positive' consequences, including self-protective behaviour and enhanced critical media literacy that enable audience members to 'understand and deal with real-life anxieties and concerns in the comparatively "safe" arena of fiction' (2006, p. 281; p. 284). Communication scholar George Gerbner's long-term correlative study of television viewing and perceptions of the world also contends that representations of violence are not *necessarily* undesirable, as screen narratives and news media frequently present cautionary tales of the tragic consequences of violence (2006). While this chapter is restricted to concerns about the youth, violence and negative media effects, a holistic understanding of the role of the media as a socialising agent must take these different factors and perspectives regarding texts, audiences and contexts into account.

Media are implicated in and respond to all social systems and their socialising influence or causal role in aggression cannot necessarily be singled out to the degree that media effects research aspires to, which is why the large body of evidence correlating screen violence with viewer aggression over the past 50 years is still under debate. Effects studies may over-simplify the range of variables and modify the context of reception (Gauntlett, 1998).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In 'The Case against the Case against Media Violence', Huesmann and Taylor present psychological and economic arguments to discredit opponents of media effects research assumptions, methods and findings. Notably, they exclude the perspectives of qualitative humanities researchers and arguably focus on 'straw man' opponents. The authors suggest that only those who do empirical effects research can legitimately critique such research findings and they go on to argue that their opponents' 'glib' criticisms are based on a 'psychology of denial' because they stand to lose money, freedom of expression and consumption, or their positive self-image if they recognise the validity of media effects research findings (Huesmann and Taylor, 2003, p. 112). Further, Huesmann and Taylor claim critics of media effects research misrepresent research findings as claiming 'TV violence is the only cause of aggression'. Alternatively, critics wrongly exclude experimental studies on the basis that the laboratory environment cannot model real-world audience experiences or media effects, or critics are guilty of selective reporting or decontextualising results from theoretical frameworks such as observational learning theory (2003, pp. 115–116). While this chapter endeavours to avoid the pitfalls Huesmann and Taylor describe, it also seeks to create a legitimate space to question their dismissive 'case against the case against media violence'.

The response of a viewer to disturbing media content will vary depending on factors such as age, gender, culture and class; media consumption habits and desensitisation; media literacy and narrative comprehension; family, community, education and pre-existing beliefs and experiences. Responses are also affected by the company with whom youths consume media; whether they identify with victims or perpetrators of violence; whether the style and story seem realistic or are interpreted as humorous or fantastical; and where texts are consumed (at home, in an experimental setting, or a public venue).

The media violence debate is further complicated by variations in research methods and aims. Methodological pluralism can enable 'triangulation' of converging evidence across different studies, providing a more detailed picture than a single method (Gentile et al., 2009). However, divergent approaches can also lead to false comparisons and conclusions within meta-analytic reviews, prompting researchers working in the literary and cultural studies tradition of media studies to question such research (Gauntlett, 1998; Heins, 2006). Nevertheless, quantitative research including media effects experiments, longitudinal cultivation studies and content analyses enable researchers to identify patterns running through large numbers of texts and viewer responses, sometimes over long periods of time. The incidence of disturbing content in one film or game may be infrequent, but its contribution to long-term media effects may be significant in ways that case-specific text-based analyses miss. Therefore quantitative data forms a crucial part of the bigger picture of the media and its effects, if interpreted in conjunction with qualitative research that offers a richer understanding of how particular audiences experience and react to specific types of screen violence.

### **CULTIVATION THEORY AND CUMULATIVE MEDIA EFFECTS**

According to cultivation theory, sustained exposure to screen media can affect perceptions of the real world (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). Cultivation researchers Jonathan Cohen and Gabriel Weimann regard screen media as 'an important source of socialisation and everyday information', and focus on the influence on viewers' attitudes and beliefs, rather than behaviour (2000, p. 99). Cultivation theory has been used to support the argument that television 'cultivates a sense of personal risk in the real world', and shapes perceptions about how hostile the world is (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001,

p. 237). It also suggests that heavy viewers tend to become desensitised and believe violence is justified:

*For example, by the time the average American child reaches the age of 18, they have witnessed 16 000 simulated murders and 200 000 acts of violence [...] children constantly exposed to carnage become desensitised and begin to accept violence as a normal part of life to be imitated (Richardson & Scott, 2002, p. 178).*

Desensitisation research correlates the amount of media consumed and the quantity of violent incidents on screen with aggressive attitudes or behaviours, and demonstrates effects such as physiological arousal and neurological responses, including changes to emotional processing and activation of ‘threat perception’ regions of the brain (Bartholow, Bushman & Sestir, 2006; Bushman & Anderson, 2009; Carnagey, Anderson & Bushman, 2007; Murray, 2008, p. 1224).<sup>2</sup> One serious effect of desensitisation is that it might decrease inhibitions against aggressive behaviour as well as diminishing aversion to screen violence.

When engaging critically with such research, contextual specificity is important. For instance, because television does not have such prevalence in the lives of South African youths, cultivation effects are likely to be weaker. The data cited by Richardson and Scott above is substantiated in the *Eurodata TV Worldwide* study in which it is found that North Americans watch 4 hours and 39 minutes of television per day and 98% of North American homes contain at least one television (Eurodata, 2011). The average for Africa fell from 3 hours and 52 minutes in 2009 to 3 hours and 45 minutes in 2010, with South Africans among the heaviest television viewers on the continent (Eurodata, 2011). Proportionately, this suggests that by the age of 18 a South African may have been exposed to approximately 157 175 acts of violence on television rather than 200 000. Following the logic of cultivation theory, a lower level of television viewing is likely to correspond to a lower level of desensitisation – yet this fails to account for how the rates of violent crime and domestic violence in South Africa impact on audience perceptions

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<sup>2</sup> Desensitisation trials and other media effects research must control for base-line aggressive predispositions in experimental subjects. As ‘justification theory’ suggests, aggressive children are likely to consume more media violence since it justifies their own behaviour and makes it seem normal (Huesmann et al., 2003, p. 217). This creates a ‘chicken or egg’ problem that skews research results and makes it hard to know whether being aggressive causes people to consume more violent media or watching a lot of violent media causes aggression.

of and responses to media violence.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, a more recent study indicates that desensitisation may occur far more swiftly than Richardson and Scott suggest and that repeated exposure to media violence, while watching the equivalent of just seven feature-length films, can enhance enjoyment of screen violence while also 'reducing the psychological impact of media violence in the short term, therefore desensitising viewers to media violence. As a result, viewers tended to feel less sympathetic toward the victims of violence' (Fanti, Vanman, Henrich & Avraamides, 2009, p. 179).

In addition to watching less television, South Africans own fewer television sets, have access to fewer channels, and make different viewing choices. *WorldScreen* puts the proportion of South African households with television sets at only 69%, and the nationwide data collated by Statistics South Africa puts the figure even lower (possibly because only sets in good working order are counted), with 67% of households owning a television in 2007, and ownership falling as low as 56% in poor rural areas such as the Eastern Cape (Statistics SA, 2008; *WorldScreen*, 2008).<sup>4</sup>

The significant factor in relation to cultivation theory is that South Africans have less exposure to television than the North American audiences on which the cumulative media effects research findings are based. Furthermore, since

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<sup>3</sup> A rare study (by a Masters student) into South African children's perceptions and experiences of screen violence and the subsequent impact it has on them, worked with two focus groups of adolescents from middle-income schools and found 'screen violence is an overall positive experience for learners in the sense that they find it exciting and not emotionally distressing' (Kader, 2006, p. 2). These findings may support a desensitisation hypothesis amongst South African youth, but the study is small and inconclusive. The lack of local data points to further possibilities for research on screen media violence in South Africa. It is generally acknowledged by media effects researchers that children who are already emotionally disturbed by traumatic experiences or by conditions such as ADHD or an aggressive predisposition, or 'neurophysiological abnormalities, poor child rearing, socio-economic deprivation, poor peer relations, attitudes and beliefs supporting aggression, drug and alcohol abuse, frustration and provocation' are more likely to be 'vulnerable to the influence' of media violence (Murray, 2008, p. 1220; Huesmann et al., 2003, p. 201). While South African children may be more vulnerable to media influence because of higher exposure to violent crime than their North American counterparts and the extent to which they are 'psychological and physical victims of violence' (Van As & Ramanjam, 2008, p. 14), they have less exposure to screen violence.

<sup>4</sup> South African television ownership may actually be somewhat higher. The South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF) uses a sophisticated research instrument, the All Media Products Survey (AMPS) to measure media use and its relationship to South African demographics and development. The SAARF Development Index report in 2007 indicated that based on a sample of over 21 000 homes across all demographic groups, 81% of South African households own a television, though in rural areas this figure falls as low as 70% television ownership (SAARF, 2008).

many North American households contain multiple television sets, young people are more likely to view television without parental supervision. In the majority of South African households there is only one set, consequently exposure to age-inappropriate material on television without parental guidance is less likely as people frequently view in family groups, with local soap operas being the most widely viewed programmes, even for 7–15-year-olds (Van Vuuren, 2005). Changing patterns of media use among children, however, offset this, as young adults now watch less television but obtain unsupervised access to screen media via mobile and online content (Eurodata, 2011).

Cultivation theory can help understand the media's contribution to socialised aggression, but the challenge is to determine how best to utilise the research findings to make sense of the cumulative impact of the media in light of South African consumption patterns, teasing out the implications of violent content in news media, film, television and games to understand how South African youths might interpret such texts in relation to their own lives and actions. Different theorists have suggested the cumulative impact of screen violence may have effects as varied as 'mean world syndrome' (Gerbner, 2006, p. 49), compassion fatigue (Moeller, 1999; Tester, 2001) or even 'the fostering of a collective global compassion' that challenges audience members to 'include strangers in their moral conscience' (Hojjer, 2006, p. 347). Cohen and Weimann caution against reductive assumptions about the media's ability to cultivate certain attitudes and beliefs in viewers, observing that different texts and genres offer different images of the world. While news media, thrillers and crime fiction may contribute to the development of a 'mean world' perspective, heavy viewing of South African soap operas is likely to have very different effects, especially as these programmes frequently incorporate prosocial education-entertainment storylines (see Singhal & Rogers, 1999). As Cohan and Weimann rightly observe: 'If TV can create a scary world, why should it not be able to create a more trusting and friendly world?' (2000, p. 102–103). Similarly, if games such as *Postal* invite participation in a violent dystopia and heighten aggression, equally popular games such as *Guitar Hero* foster musical appreciation and dexterity, and even violent games can produce prosocial effects such as sharing, co-operation and emotional awareness (Gentile et al., 2009, p. 261).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Anderson and Bushman's 2001 meta-analytic review of video game research literature indicates playing violent video games decreases prosocial behaviour (2001), however, a more recent study of the prosocial impact of video games argues the 'good/bad dichotomy' is inappropriate as games have a wide range of effects depending on 'amount, content,

Parallel with stereotypical gendered divisions involved in targeting particular film and television genres at certain demographics, digital games that address women and girls as the primary market tend to involve more role-playing, narrative, character development and emphasis on appearance (King & Krzywinska, 2006, p. 209). In contrast with a first person shooter like *Doom*, which simulates military training, teaching players how to shoot to kill and engage in hand-to-hand combat, *The Sims* interpellates players into consumer capitalist ideology by immersing them in the activity of developing families of avatars and nurturing their relationships and careers, while building and furnishing their homes. Gendered differences between media genres that target and are consumed by young people can lead to corresponding differences in socialisation patterns.

### OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING AND SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY

Social cognitive theory accommodates gendered and cultural differences regarding the influence of screen media across different genres by explaining varying responses to violent screen media in terms of observational learning. From this perspective, aggression has a cultural dimension in that children model their own actions on the behaviour they observe in their everyday lives and in the media. This suggests the media's influence is social and dispersed, rather than direct. Children may be more likely to respond to screen violence with aggressive behaviour if they are also frequently exposed to violence within their homes, schools and communities (Fleming & Rickwood, 2001; Huesmann, et al, 2003, p. 201). This is the case for many South African youths: studies in Cape Town indicate community violence has a strong impact on South African children (Parkes, 2007; Shields, Nadasen & Pierce, 2008; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). As Cecilia von Feilitzen points out, culture, class, gender and age all affect learned responses to violence and modes of expressing aggression: 'girls

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context, structure, and mechanics' (Gentile et al., 2009, p. 754). 'Playing prosocial games tends to increase prosocial behaviour' but the 'parallel argument' about violent media and aggression is more complicated: violent video games can heighten aggressive tendencies but they can also increase prosocial behaviour, for instance, by prompting players to co-operate or act protectively (Gentile et al., 2009, p. 760–761). As a further indication of possibilities for games to be both prosocial and deal with violence, in 2008 a partnership between the Population Media Centre and the Emergent Media Centre began designing a game to address the public health and human rights crisis of violence against women in South Africa (Champlain College, 2008).

and people belonging to the middle class may express their aggression in other ways, for example, more often verbally' (2001, p. 23).

Social cognitive research studying the observational learning of social behaviour finds that people learn how to behave by observing role models and by remembering the 'script' that was performed so that they can play the part themselves when they encounter a similar situation (see Bandura, 1994; Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). Scripts directing ways of behaving in particular circumstances can be derived from witnessing real or fictional role models. Research indicates that 'Scripts for behaviour are also constructed early in development, and it is likely that continued exposure to media violence influences the development of aggressive scripts' (Dubow & Miller, 1996, p. 136). A script is most likely to be retrieved, mimicked and progressively reinforced if the situation an individual faces is very similar to the one seen in reality or in the media, if the action is very realistic, if the viewer identifies with the protagonist or role model, and if the protagonist receives positive reinforcements or is perceived to have desirable characteristics such as being attractive, wealthy, or powerful (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001; Geen, 1994; Huesmann et al., 2003).

In her systematic review of research into the impact of the media on young people, Susan Villani concludes that screen violence contributes to harmful effects, including aggression, desensitisation and fear, although not all violence contributes to these effects in the same way. She outlines a number of factors that raise the likelihood that a particular image of violence will generate these three main effects:

*The predicted impact of contextual factors based on social science research rated attractive perpetrator, presence of weapons, and humor as associated with learning aggression; graphic violence and realistic violence associated with generating fear; and humor and graphic violence associated with predicting desensitisation (Villani, 2001, p. 395).*

One factor that draws Villani's findings into question is that she uncritically includes in her review a much-cited but controversial study by American researcher, Brandon Centerwall (1992). Centerwall's study compares television ownership and homicide levels in Canada, America, England and South Africa, drawing on rising white South African homicide statistics following the introduction of television in 1975 to argue for a strong causal link between viewing screen violence and real-life aggression:

*As of 1987, the white South African homicide rate had reached 5.8 per 100 000, a 130% increase from the rate of 2.5 per 100 000 in 1974, the last year before*

*television was introduced ... Centerwall hypothesised that if television technology had never been developed, there would be 10 000 fewer homicides in the United States each year, 70 000 fewer rapes, and 700 000 fewer injurious assaults (Villani, 2001, p. 395–396).*

If we investigate the alarming statistics about the murder rate rising after the introduction of television and factor in data about crime and South Africa's proportionately low rates of television ownership and viewership compared to the other countries in the study, Centerwall's conclusions cannot be supported. White murder victims account for less than 5% of all homicide victims in South Africa, and homicide rates are higher in the South African communities with *less* access to film and television. Furthermore, during the period Centerwall's study refers to, exposure to graphic screen violence was restricted as the media was subject to heavy censorship. The fact that the social context in the period covered in Centerwall's study included high levels of poverty and the distress and instability caused by apartheid makes the assertion that television as a primary causal factor in the rising incidence of homicide seem spurious.

Research into media violence has also been exhaustively reviewed by leading media effects researchers, Brad Bushman and Craig Anderson, who report that 'repeated exposure to violent media, for example, a couple of hours a day for 15 years, causes a serious increase in the likelihood of a person becoming a habitually aggressive person and occasionally a violent offender' (2009, p. 481–482; see also Bushman & Huesmann, 2006). Corroborating these findings, Huesmann and colleagues undertook a long-term study from 1977 to 1992 of relations between exposure to media violence at ages six to 10 and adult aggressiveness some 15 years later, using police records and interviews with the subjects and their spouses (see Huesmann et al., 2003). Huesmann et al. found evidence over the long term that 'habitual exposure of children to violence in the media (or in the real world around them), does have lasting effects on their propensity to behave aggressively and violently' (2003, p. 219). The correlation between media violence and aggressive behaviour holds for all social classes, especially demographics where violence is more prevalent in the community and where there is heavier viewing of televised violence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). Research also suggests a relationship between violence in digital games and consequent player aggression, but the correlation is weaker than that found for television and the aggressive impulses of video game players are not powerful enough on average to overcome social sanctions against aggressive behaviour (Konijn, Nije Bijvank & Bushman, 2007; Sherry, 2001).

It is difficult to gauge how South African youths respond to televised violence if they live in violent communities, but are not heavy television viewers or consumers of violent media genres. If social sanctions against violence are not present, that is, if violence is normalised in a community, then media violence may have a stronger effect (escalating, reinforcing and naturalising aggression). South African youths cannot be assumed to consume and respond to the media in the same ways as young Americans: 'youth' itself is not a homogeneous category, nor is 'screen violence'. Definitions and measures of 'violence' and 'aggression' vary widely and are culturally specific, which makes it problematic to generalise the conclusions of various media effects studies. In quantifying 'violent incidents', some effects studies include indirect and verbal aggression, threats and coercion, while others count only physical aggression and may not distinguish between realistic or fantasy violence. For instance, when a reputable longitudinal study states 'examples of shows rated as *very violent* are *Starsky and Hutch*, *The Six Million Dollar Man*, and *Roadrunner* cartoons' (Huesmann et al., 2003, p. 205), the researchers' cultural perceptions of levels of violence will affect the strength of results in the study.

### **SCREEN VIOLENCE, VIEWER AGGRESSION AND DEVELOPMENTAL VARIABLES**

Youth behaviour is informed by patterns set in childhood and the developmental level of viewers is a crucial variable in the media effects equation. Young children who do not fully understand much of what they see are more likely to be affected by obvious textual features like spectacular instances of screen violence featuring impressive special effects. Unlike more sophisticated viewers, they may miss important cues about motives and consequences that modify the overall message, and may simply imitate what they see (Geen, 1994; Van Evra, 1990). In other words, narrative comprehension and understanding of complex motives and causes is related to developmental factors which affect responses to screen media. A key difference between film, television and digital games lies in the relative importance and complexity of narrative: game storylines tend to be thin and generic, emphasising action over plot and motive (King & Krzywinska, 2002; Piot, 2006). The diminished importance of narrative can affect young players' comprehension of actions and their meanings within the game world.

Children under the age of seven are most susceptible to screen violence, and are most likely to mimic it, as this is the stage at which they are

developing behavioural scripts and are less conscious of the distinction between fantasy and reality, or the complexity of narrative context, motives and justifications for violence (Bushman & Huesmann, 2001). Huesmann et al. recommend 'we do not need to be as concerned about adults' or even teenagers' exposure to media violence as much as we do with children's exposure. Media violence may have short-term effects on adults, but the real long-term effects seem to occur only with children' (2003, p. 218). Until around eight years of age children tend to mimic both realistic and unrealistic depictions of violence if the perpetrator's actions are rewarded or go unpunished, since they interpret narratives based on appearance and other superficial features (Funk, Flores, Buchman & Germann, 1999). Content analysis of an extensive sample of screen texts has revealed a troubling ethical dimension to the depiction of violence in children's films in that 'a striking behavioural message implied by many of the G-rated animated films is that the good guys triumph over the bad through the use of physical force' (Yokota & Thompson, 2000, p. 2720). Preschool children have limited narrative comprehension and short attention spans, so they may miss the relevance of behavioural rewards and punishments administered in the narrative resolution. In addition, young children have yet to develop a stable sense of identity or ethics, so they are capable of very fluid identifications and may relate to either the antagonist or the protagonist, depending on who has the upper hand, who is rewarded, and who seems most attractive or interesting (Funk et al., 1999). Some researchers claim that television frequently 'portrays justified violence that is perpetrated by heroes with little, if any, negative consequence. By glorifying violence in this way, empathy for the victim, and therefore perspective-taking by the children, may be discouraged' (Krcmar & Valkenburg, 1999, p. 622). Indeed, 'depictions of justified violence by heroes who are rewarded, not punished, are in fact worse than gruesome violence by villains who get their comeuppance in the end' (Heins, 2006, p. 175).

To summarise the research findings thus far, concerns about media violence rest on ideas about how social behaviour and expectations are based on media role models:

*It is believed that children shape their identities, values, and behaviours by drawing clues from their environments. Role models, for purposes of this article, are persons held in high esteem by children who possess characteristics, skills, or attributes worthy of emulation. Inordinate exposure to fictional and real images in television, video games, music videos, sports, and movies provide an endless array*

*of role model choices and perhaps more importantly, cultural messages about acceptable practices and behaviour* (Richardson & Scott, 2002, p. 179).

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FEAR AND VIOLENCE

In addition to role modelling and cumulative effects that can be augmented by consumption patterns and the co-occurrence of community violence, fear generated by horrific, suspenseful or graphic scenes and alarming images and sounds also constitutes a significant negative effect of screen violence. The indication that violent media images shape perceptions of the world as a hostile place, making people more inclined to respond aggressively to perceived threats, is perhaps the most startling link between violent media, aggression and fear. Strong fear responses heighten the impact of media texts, but it is uncertain whether this will increase or decrease the likelihood of young viewers mimicking media violence. Cantor (1996) claims verbal explanations such as telling children that the actors (as opposed to the characters) are not *really* in danger are ineffective for preschool children, but reassure older children. Many older children report enjoying being frightened by media imagery and some theorists suggest that fear intensifies appreciation of the more positive aspects of the story, and that stories provide a safe space to explore dark fears and fantasies (Cantor, 1996).

The relationship between what viewers believe to be real, and how they react to the text (by imitating aggressive behaviour or exhibiting fear, stress and other responses) has been considered in relation to violence in interactive digital games. Interactivity and the level of control that players of digital games exert over the action moderate perceptions of realism and reduce the experience of fear when young players are confronted with screen violence:

*Young players said repeatedly that aggressive content is not the central attraction of games. Many players said that they perceive the aggressive content as fantastic and preposterous, with the result that they do not take it seriously as a representation of violence. The ability to control the action was perceived by many as mitigating the impact of aggressive content. Players did not see their own actions as harming others, since they do not believe that the characters on screen are real or suffer pain. Players experienced less distress or anxiety at aggressive content in computer games than in other media (such as the movies), because they could stop or moderate any discomforting experiences at will* (Durkin & Aisbett, 1999, p. 123–124).

This research suggests that, in addition to the degree of agency a text invites, the perception of realism and the ability to distinguish fantasy violence from real violence are important variables in determining media effects.<sup>6</sup>

### **FANTASY: PERCEIVED REALISM, RELEVANCE, AND MODALITY**

Research findings about screen violence and fear prompt the interrogation of assumptions about how 'realism' influences the impact of the media on children. Modality is a judgement about degrees of certainty and realism that 'concerns the reality attributed to a message' (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, p. 104). When applied to screen media, texts featuring actual child actors will have a higher modality or a more definite relation to the real than cartoons with talking animals, mythical creatures or giant robots from outer space. Anything that signals the relation between the message and reality can be termed a 'modality marker' (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, p. 105), and can either strengthen or weaken the text's relation to reality, thus modifying its effect on viewers' beliefs, attitudes, feelings and behaviours. While modality does not create an emotional or behavioural response, 'it determines the valency and force of that response, and hence contributes decisively to whatever effects may come from watching television' (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, p. 115–116; Tulloch, 2000). In addition, modal judgements draw on experience and prior understanding or knowledge of reality. For instance, if a child does not know whether dragons exist, the presence of a knight slaying a dragon in a text will neither raise nor lower the modality, nor lessen the effect of the violent message as it would for someone who is certain dragons are not real.

While Hodge and Tripp emphasise the ability of children to make sophisticated fantasy/reality distinctions, they acknowledge 'this capacity takes time to develop, so there will be a period when children can be expected to make different modality judgements from adults, and be affected differently by the same content' (Hodge & Tripp, 1986, p. 103). Children younger than eight are more likely to confuse appearance and reality in screen media and may be affected strongly by cartoon violence that seems unrealistic to adults (Van Evra, 1990, p. 86).

It is plausible that the strength of character identification and involvement in the story world can result in a more intense response than 'fantasy' material would ordinarily warrant, even when viewers are old enough to make fine

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<sup>6</sup> Regarding the correlation between fear and violence and varied understandings of violence in the South African context, see Parkes (2007).

distinctions between what is real and what is not. Van Evra's research shows that the 'length of the content (for example, movies over brief shows) with more character development may have greater impact', and that 'violence was more disturbing when characters came to life enough to evoke empathy in viewers' (1990, p. 87). Discriminations about what is real are an important part of responses to narratives, but something with a low modality can still influence behaviour and attitudes if there is significant viewer involvement and identification with characters in an extended narrative. For this reason, we can expect an animated cartoon series or an animated feature film or a game in which players are immersed for hours on end to have noteworthy effects, despite apparently low modality.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2001, p. 1224) states:

*It is not violence itself but the context in which it is portrayed that can make the difference between learning about violence and learning to be violent. (...) Viewers learn the danger and harm of violence by vicariously experiencing its outcomes. Unfortunately, most entertainment violence is used for immediate visceral thrills without portraying any human cost. Sophisticated special effects, with increasingly graphic depictions of mayhem, make virtual violence more believable and appealing. Studies show that the more realistically violence is portrayed, the greater the likelihood that it will be tolerated and learned.*

Close attention to the modality markers in screen texts, and to their relation to the overall narrative, reveals a great deal about the impact of potentially disturbing content and whether the violence portrayed is likely to cause fear, aggression or some other reaction. By the end of a feature film it is reasonable to expect that many audience members will be emotionally engaged with the characters and will identify with the protagonists, but there is a need to research how perceptions of reality and corresponding modality judgements of children raised in a South African township may differ from children in the North American studies when confronted with the same media text.

## HUMOUR AND VIOLENCE

Youth media frequently provides light relief by including comic interludes within tense sequences, and in such cases violence perpetrated by positive characters will often be represented as funny (Villani, 2001; Yokota & Thompson, 2000). Research shows that the combination of humour and violence runs the risk of trivialising violence and desensitising audiences. It also reduces the modality of the violence, because actual violence has real

and unpleasant consequences and therefore does not present an occasion to laugh. However, as Nathanson and Cantor point out in relation to humour, violence and aggression in cartoons, even when children know the violence is not real:

*the combination of the attractive, funny perpetrator with no reference to the consequences of violence for victims is sufficient for increasing aggressive inclinations in elementary-school boys. Hence ... programs that appear as benign as a classic cartoon require some form of mediation to prevent boys from learning aggression from the material* (2000, p. 136).

Here we see that neither realistic violence nor humorous violence is directly linked to aggression in a straightforward way. We might expect that the use of humour and the corresponding decrease in modality would diminish the impact, yet humour is consistently linked to *increasing* the negative effects of violence. Gerbner considers what he calls 'happy violence' to outweigh responsible depictions of violence and to be problematic: 'This happy violence is cool, swift, painless, and often spectacular, even thrilling, but usually sanitised. It always leads to a happy ending. After all, it is designed to entertain and not to upset' (2006, p. 46). While it is difficult to generalise or to predict how the introduction of humour and 'happy violence' might modify the effects of watching violent media, a modality analysis sensitive to the emotional responsiveness of the audience suggests that humour acts as a safety valve, releasing pent-up tension and offering some respite from anxiety resulting from narrative conflict. It works to render the fear more pleasurable, but it would be erroneous to assume that this *necessarily* trivialises the material, desensitises viewers or makes it less suitable for young audiences. Humour is highly culturally specific and responses to humour depend on viewers' taste, age and experience, therefore this is an area where qualitative ethnographic and textual analysis studies sensitive to cultural nuance may well qualify and enrich existing approaches to empirical research.

## PARTICIPATION VERSUS IDENTIFICATION

Research into the way young audiences understand screen violence has mainly been undertaken in studies of film and television. In the world of digital video games, 'play occupies a zone known to be one of make-believe or unreality' (King & Krzywinska, 2006, p. 19). However, increasing technological sophistication is leading to hyper-real, three-dimensional game worlds with graphic, intense player interfaces. The interactive, participatory nature of such

games has given rise to considerable moral panic and to fears regarding the interplay between game violence and real violence.

The narratives of digital games are partly based on genres and conventions established in film and television. However, while action genre conventions dictate that characters such as Peter Parker will conquer the bad guys and survive to the end of the *Spider Man* films, the *Spider Man* games belonging to the same genre and modelled on the films invoke quite different conventions and expectations. Players expect their character to die many times before mastering the game, which heightens uncertainty and suspense but diminishes the plausibility of the game events in relation to real life. Digital game simulation technologies aspire to replicate the perceptual experience of the 'real' world, augmenting this experiential participation with immersion in spectacular adrenaline-charged action without attempting to represent plausible scenarios.

Unlike film spectators who witness characters enacting violence, game players *participate* in the violence. In many popular digital games, violence is frequently used as a problem-solving device and many action games emphasise the development of fighting skills (King & Krzywinska, 2006). Unlike game players, film and television audience members cannot alter the course of the narrative. The distinction between identification and participation is thus a significant difference between the consumption of these different types of media texts.

The research reviewed above gives considerable weight to the importance of viewer identification with screen characters, based on the insights about observing and learning from role models developed in social cognitive theory. The nature of character engagement in gameplay can vary substantially from this model. In first person shooter games, players see from the character's point of view and control their actions in the narrative. While one might expect a high level of identification to result, this is complicated by the lack of character back story, psychological development and narrative complexity in comparison with film and television. In addition, games can offer the ability to change player position, character allegiance and viewpoint:

*You can choose to engage the action from behind the eyes of the character you're playing, or you can step back and watch the action from a distance, or from either side, or from above: in other words you can be yourself, or you can be someone else looking at you, and follow the action (Piot, 2006, p. 323).*

Rather than resulting in the likelihood of narrative identification with powerful, attractive screen protagonists and the desire to emulate their actions

off screen, the enhanced audience agency and the less developed narratives and characters of many digital games may lead to aggression as a response to physical arousal from the adrenaline and suspense of gameplay.<sup>7</sup>

Once players are immersed in the game, events tend to unfold in real time, similar to the immediacy of live television. The impression of 'liveness' and presence in the game world arises from the experience of acting as a protagonist in the narrative:

*Seeming to move 'inside' the fictional world on screen is sometimes seen as a defining characteristic of games, especially those based recognisably on individual films, franchises or film genres. The player can, at one remove, 'become' the central figure in a cinematic environment, following and extending the kinds of experiences offered in film* (King & Krzywinska, 2002, p. 4).

Digital games require narrative intervention, not just interpretation, which shifts the emphasis away from story and character towards participation. Quantitative studies and media effects theories cannot encompass the differences between identification with characters and active participation as a protagonist, nor can they fully account for the kinaesthetic, experiential intensity and technological dimensions of gameplay. For this reason, qualitative ethnographic research and cultural studies approaches have much to contribute to understandings of the impact of screen violence across media forms.

## CONCLUSION

To summarise, recent empirical research by leading North American media effects researchers indicates: 'Greater use of media violence in childhood predicted more delinquent acts, more physical violence towards others, beliefs more accepting of aggression and more aggressive fantasising during adolescence. This pattern of results was obtained for both male and female delinquents' (Huesmann et al., 2011, n.p.). However, media scholars and researchers in cognate disciplines such as criminology rightly point out the difficulty in controlling for variables that affect youth violence in the real world, and they challenge the applicability of such studies to widely varied social and media contexts.

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<sup>7</sup> One Dutch study finds 'identifying with violent video game characters makes players more aggressive' (Konijn, et al. Bijvank & Bushman, 2007, p. 1038). However, this study is problematic as it focused on Dutch boys age 12–17 years with low-education ability, thereby stacking the odds in favour of a positive result for aggression.

As emphasised throughout, whether South African youths are exposed to the same type and degree of media influence as American audiences, and how this relates to the impact of lived experiences of violence in South African culture, are issues that must be taken into account when evaluating the relevance of international media effects research. This review of research in the field suggests screen violence is of most concern and has the most significant impact on behaviour, attitudes and the transmission of cultural norms for those exposed to significant levels of screen violence and actual violence over a long time, and for young children. Prior to commencing primary school, children are more susceptible to influence and are less able to differentiate between fantasy and reality, or to understand the causes and consequences of violence and control their own impulses. In relation to South African youths, the key message to be drawn from the research findings is that young children who are exposed to actual violence in the family and community may be particularly vulnerable to the influence of screen violence and should therefore be the focal point of protective measures, regulatory interventions and media literacy programmes for the prevention of youth violence.

The context, intensity and frequency of violence within the narrative and whether the violence is 'realistic', 'graphic' or 'gratuitous', are taken into account when classifying screen texts in South Africa. South Africa's regulatory body, the Film and Publication Board (FPB), attempts to protect minors from texts that promote violence as a means of conflict resolution and from screen violence set in domestic or sexual contexts, or contexts with particular relevance to children, such as schools and playgrounds (Department of Home Affairs, 2009). In response to a research report by the Human Sciences Research Council (Dawes, 2003), the FPB recently strengthened and revised their classification guidelines by introducing a '10M' conditional restriction, which requires 'accompaniment by an adult to provide a reassuring counter-balance to the potentially distressing or upsetting scenes' (Department of Home Affairs, 2009, p. 6). The Film and Publications Act stipulates that in films classified 10M 'there may be very brief scenes of mild, whether physical, psychological or verbal violence but not in domestic, racial, religious or sexual contexts that form part of childhood "comfort zones", such as school or playgrounds. Bloodletting is extremely limited and there is no focus on the effects of violence on humans or animals' (Department of Home Affairs, 2009, p. 7) The FPB guidelines for classifying media texts are, of necessity, very general, yet they are also specific to individual texts. Case-by-case classification can offer helpful

consumer content information that enables informed choices to be made about categories of age-appropriate content, but cannot ameliorate the potential cumulative effects of consuming texts that, together, repeatedly trivialise the consequences of violence, associate violent action with a titillating thrill, or convey a pervasive sense of threat.

While the purpose of bodies such as the Film and Publication Board is to protect vulnerable audience members from the potential harm media texts may cause, ratings are informed by perceptions of 'community standards' and 'cultural norms, values and virtues' (Chetty & Basson, 2007, p. 4). This results in the application of restrictions to films that contain strong language, blasphemy or nudity as well as content that might conceivably be harmful if imitated. There is no credible evidence to suggest legal restrictions on the age of viewers are warranted in such cases. However, consumer content advice is a helpful intervention. Regarding the potential harm of screen violence, more appropriate content advisory warnings could be offered if informed by research into how humour, narrative complexity and other factors moderate the impact of scenes containing violent content. Such research requires both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, with sensitivity to genre, narrative context, medium specificity and reception contexts. Similarly, questions about the relationship between realism, fantasy and the impact of violent content must consider modality markers within individual texts and genres, as well as attending to patterns of content and to the developmental process that children move through as they come to grips with distinctions between fantasy and reality. In many cases, the degree of identification with screen characters or the level of personal involvement and participation in the action can play significant roles in determining the nature and extent of a screen text's negative or positive influence, and these factors are dependent on the medium itself as well as variables such as personal experiences of violence.

Media texts themselves do not send uniform messages about violence, nor do young audience members interpret and respond to screen violence in uniform ways, because many different factors influence socialisation. The most effective intervention into the media's socialisation influence involves improving critical media literacy, enabling audiences to cope with media experiences by making informed, selective decisions about what to consume, and developing skills to reflect on, question and evaluate the media's role and content, and moderate their own responses (Buckingham, 2006; Van Vuuren, 2005; Webb, Martin, Abdelmonem & Kraus, 2010). In South Africa, one such media literacy intervention is

everyone *Can Learn to Access and Interact with Media* (CLAIM). This programme, which is part of the National Media Education Initiative led by the Film and Publication Board, fosters and advocates for media literacy and education. Future media literacy programmes in South Africa could productively draw on lessons learned from successful media literacy interventions such as *Beyond Blame: Challenging Violence in the Media*, which was designed specifically to address youth violence as a public health problem in schools in the United States (see Webb et al., 2010).

In addition to formal media literacy programmes, South Africa has made important advances at the intersection of media and education by mainstreaming pedagogical material and embedding messages about the damaging effects of violence within educational soap operas and entertainment television programmes: 'Rather than considering educational broadcasting as a specific niche of programme schedules, it has been redefined as a basic element of general programming. This has been the distinctive impetus of recent South African educational broadcasting initiatives' (Barnett, 2004, p. 257). *Yizo Yizo* is an example of a popular SABC drama series which depicts violence in realistic contexts that are relevant to the local audience, drawing on media effects research and audience impact surveys to model 'the relationships between actions, consequences and solutions' (Barnett, 2004, p. 264). One salient outcome of such programmes is their demonstrated capacity to engage the public in debate and critical discussion about the interrelationship between media, violence and education. As media and democracy scholar Clive Barnett writes, education-entertainment programming makes visible 'a range of issues, enabling children, educators and parents to become informed participants in a public debate around a shared set of reference points' (2004, p. 266).

As the research and examples throughout this chapter have demonstrated, enhancing media literacy and using the media in proactive ways to educate the population and prevent youth violence requires more than classificatory labels, age restrictions or limiting the exposure of youths to violent media. It calls for education about how to interpret and evaluate narrative content, styles and genres of representation, and it necessitates communicating with the public about research into issues specific to young children and particular communities, as well as the broader influence of the media and the ideological and economic interests served by media violence.

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# Chapter Eleven



## INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT ‘WORKS’ IN DIVERSION PROGRAMMES

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*‘Doing something is not always better than doing nothing.’  
(Elliott & Tolan, 1999, p. 6)*

### INTRODUCTION

A great deal of resources are dedicated to the prevention and treatment of antisocial behaviour, including youth violence. Farrell and Flannery (2006, p. 147) point out in their critique of US violence prevention and treatment that:

*Despite good intentions, the widespread implementation of programs of unknown effectiveness may lull policymakers and members of the community into falsely believing they are addressing this problem, when the resources committed to such efforts could be better used to develop more effective programs. Indeed, there is evidence to support the notion that some interventions may have unintended effects that produce more harm than good.*

This is not only true of international interventions, it also holds true for those in South Africa. The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine ‘what works’ in treating young violent offenders in the criminal justice system, with particular emphasis on diversion.

### DIVERSION LEGISLATION AND POLICY IN SOUTH AFRICA

Diversion is regulated by the Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008) and refers to the process of diverting children (over the age of 14 and under the age

of 18), who have committed offences away from the criminal justice system. It is important to note that children under the age of 18 have always been considered a distinct group in the eyes of the law, and subject to special provisioning. Those aged over 18 are considered by the criminal justice system to be adults, although there may be some minor special provisioning for those aged between 18 and 21. But generally, older youths have received little special attention or protection. However, as is the case for adults, they are afforded the right to receive up-to-standard care while incarcerated, which is compliant with guidelines and regulations for correctional facilities, as outlined in the African Charter, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the South African Constitution (Department of Correctional Services regulations), the Regulations in terms of the Child Justice Act, the Criminal Procedure Act, the Probation Services Amendment Act, and the Children's Act (No. 38 of 2005 as Amended). Indicators for monitoring the standard of services are presented in detail by Muntingh (2007).

There are a number of different types of diversion initiatives, including life-skills models, peer/youth mentorship, wilderness/adventure therapy, skills training/educational and entrepreneurship programmes, restorative justice processes, counselling and therapeutic programmes, community service, restitution, oral or written apologies and multimodal programmes (Mbambo, 2000). It is clear that diversion initiatives not only include programmes or interventions (for example, cognitive-behavioural therapy or counselling), but also processes (for example, family group conference or victim-offender mediation) and enforced prosocial activities (for example, restitution or oral or written apologies).

Despite the provision of diversion initiatives since the early 1990s and substantial increases in the number of children and young people referred to such initiatives, until very recently there was no regulating legislative framework in place in South Africa to ensure their coherent and standardised implementation (Wood, 2003). An audit of diversion initiatives between 1999 and 2000 suggests that diversion programmes were being implemented in a somewhat haphazard and disjointed manner due to the lack of guiding frameworks (Mukwevho, 2001). The recently enacted Child Justice Act (No. 75 of 2008) that was 10 years in development is the most significant legal advance in child criminal law since 1994 (Wood, 2003). The Act represents a substantial shift in criminal justice policy as it relates to children, since it promotes a crime prevention and restorative justice approach. It also makes substantial changes to the management of children in the criminal justice system, in terms of assuring their protection as they engage in the criminal

justice process. The Act additionally provides for the diversion of children from the formal court procedures in certain criminal matters (diversion does not apply to certain serious violent offences). Diversion is not automatic, but as outlined in Clause 52 of the Act, requires at least that the child accepts responsibility for his or her acts. The objectives of diversion as stated in Chapter 6 of the Act include:

- Deal with a child outside the formal criminal justice system in appropriate cases
- Encourage the child to be accountable for the harm caused by him or her
- Meet the particular needs of the individual child
- Promote the reintegration of the child into the family and community
- Provide an opportunity to those affected by the harm to express their views on its impact on them
- Encourage the rendering to the victim of some symbolic benefit or the delivery of some object as compensation for the harm
- Promote reconciliation between the child and the person or community affected by the harm caused by the child
- Prevent stigmatising the child and preventing the adverse consequences flowing from being subject to the criminal justice system
- Reduce the potential for re-offending
- Prevent the child from having a criminal record
- Promote the dignity and well-being of the child, and the development of his or her sense of self-worth and ability to contribute to society.

Diversion is important for another key reason: it reduces the risk of exposure to violence while the child is in the criminal justice system (Steyn, 2005).

Among the Diversion Options contained in Section 55(1) of the Act, is 'compulsory attendance at a specified centre or place for a specified vocational, educational or therapeutic purpose'. The remainder of this chapter addresses the effectiveness of therapeutic and other interventions in changing the behaviour of young violent offenders whether or not they are diverted from the criminal justice system. A major challenge for South Africa is the fact that diversion programmes are available in relatively few jurisdictions (Muntingh, 2007) and the range of therapeutic options is extremely limited. With the exception of the *South African Young Sex Offenders Programme* (SAYStOP) (see Chapter 9), diversion programmes are not specialised. As a result, different types of offenders are likely to attend the same type

of intervention, making it difficult to refer children to interventions on the basis of individual need.

## **INTERVENTIONS FOR YOUNG OFFENDERS: WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT WHAT 'WORKS'**

Large-scale meta-analytic studies (of over 400 outcome evaluations) have demonstrated that regardless of intervention type, interventions targeting offending behaviour produce, on average, a 10% reduction in recidivism (Lipsey, 1992a; Lipsey, 1995). Although not great, this effect is not negligible and suggests that these types of treatment generally do 'work', if modestly. It should be noted that because meta-analytic studies do not take variability in programme effectiveness across programmes into account, this result masks important distinctions between effective and ineffective interventions and should be treated as conservative. Specific intervention characteristics have been identified as distinguishing more effective programmes from less effective programmes and will be discussed below (Andrews et al., 1990; Lipsey, 1992b; Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000).

### **What are the characteristics of the most effective interventions?**

Programmes that are theoretically grounded and rely on research evidence have been found, on average, to be five times more effective in reducing antisocial behaviour than those without a theoretical basis (Izzo & Ross, 1990). Many researchers have emphasised the need for interventions targeting violent young people to be evidence-informed, as this is often not the case (Farrell & Flannery, 2006).

Interventions that are informed by our knowledge of the way in which violent conduct develops through childhood and adolescence are particularly important (Dodge, 2001). A considerable literature indicates that risk and protective factors for violent and other antisocial behaviour operate on multiple levels, and that different factors may be particularly salient at different stages of development (Farrell & Flannery, 2006). A strong argument for the importance of developmental theory-driven intervention for treating youth problem behaviour, including violence, has been presented by authors of the Social Development Model (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996) – a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding the aetiology of a range of high-risk behaviours in childhood and adolescence (see, for example, Huang, White, Kosterman, Catalano & Hawkins, 2001).

Other models that have guided the design and implementation of youth violence prevention programmes include the *States of Behavioural Change*, the *Theory of Reasoned Action*, and the *Information, Motivation, Behavioural Skills Model* (Cooper, Lutenbacher & Faccia, 2000).

All these approaches are informed to a greater or lesser extent by ecological orientations to human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which describe the multiple contexts (family, school, peer group, wider society) that influence the developing person at different points in the life cycle. These sources of influence need to be understood in the design of interventions. The source of the trouble is not just in the individual youth, but is powerfully determined by the contexts within which s/he is developing and acting (Swartz, 2009). For example, contact with antisocial peer groups in adolescence plays a key role in promoting and sustaining deviant conduct (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). This knowledge can inform interventions that seek to assist the young person to cope with the real pressures placed on him by peers when trying to 'go straight'.

So what types of programmes have been found to reduce violent and other antisocial behaviour in young people? Methodologically rigorous outcome evaluations and meta-analyses of outcome studies have consistently indicated that *multimodal, structured, cognitive-behavioural interventions*, particularly those that include interpersonal and social skills training, are effective in reducing violent and other antisocial behaviour by up to 40% (Kurtz, 2002; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000). Educational, vocational or undirected therapeutic approaches are much less effective. And in the case of serious violent young offenders, these treatments reduce the probability of re-offending by 15% to 20% (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998).

In keeping with an ecological approach to understanding and rehabilitating violent youths, understanding of the role of the family is important in many instances. Therefore an important component of multimodal programmes targeting violent youths is parenting skills training. Antisocial and violent youths are often (though not always) products of dysfunctional home environments, where parenting is very harsh and often chaotic (see Chapter 3). Parent training interventions occur alongside other components, and focus on the development and maintenance of non-punitive and consistent disciplinary strategies, enhancing monitoring and supervision of youth activities and reinforcement of prosocial behaviour (Herrenkohl et al., 2001; Huang et al., 2001).

Other effective young offender programme types include: provision of employment, which not surprisingly is one of the most effective interventions (38% reduction in target/antisocial behaviours); and skills-oriented approaches

that target the skill deficits that caused or contributed to offending behaviour (20% reduction in target behaviours) (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998).

### **What are the least effective interventions?**

Lipsey's (1995) meta-analytic study showed that deterrence, involving interventions that aim to threaten or scare the child into abandoning his/her antisocial behaviour are associated with a 25% increase in offending, while vocational counselling alone is associated with an 18% increase. Family counselling, group counselling and individual counselling have negligible or inconsistent effects on antisocial behaviour.

Single-component insight-oriented and relationship-focused individual therapeutic approaches have been found to be particularly ineffective with violent adolescents (Tate, Reppucci & Mulvey, 1995). Group therapy interventions are commonly used. However, there is the risk that they provide opportunities for antisocial bonding among already deviant youths (Chamberlain, 2003; Fisher & Chamberlain, 2000). Wilderness/adventure therapy programmes have repeatedly been found to have weak or negative outcomes when they are not combined with other intervention components known to be effective (Lipsey & Wilson, 1998; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000).

### **Restorative justice initiatives**

There is a great deal of support for restorative justice initiatives in South Africa, and the Child Justice Act encourages all diversions to include a restorative element. Zehr and Mika (2003) have a comprehensive definition of restorative justice, which includes three main elements:

- 1) Crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationships
- 2) Violations create liabilities and obligations
- 3) Restorative justice seeks to heal and put right wrongs.

There are a number of restorative justice practices, but this chapter will only include reference to victim-offender mediation and family group conferences because firstly, they are more commonly used for diversionary purposes, and secondly, because studies focusing on other restorative practices are largely descriptive and provide only anecdotal evidence of effectiveness (Kurki, 2003). They are also referred to in the South African Child Justice Act.

Victim-offender mediation refers to the process whereby the victim of a property crime or another minor crime meets with the perpetrator in a safe and

structured setting with a trained mediator present (Umbreit, 2001). During the meeting, the perpetrator is held accountable for his/her crime and the victim is given the opportunity to tell him/her how the crime affected him/her and a restitution plan is jointly developed (Umbreit, 2001). The perpetrator is required to take responsibility for his/her actions and follow through with the restitution plans, otherwise court-imposed consequences are implemented (Umbreit, 2001). Family group conferences also typically occur in response to less serious crimes, but are more inclusive than victim-offender mediation (Umbreit & Zehr, 2003). These processes include both the families of the perpetrator and the victim, any involved professionals, advocates or lawyers, as well as police officers (Umbreit & Zehr, 2003). Goals of the process, which are typically mediated by a youth justice or social/welfare worker, include accountability, restitution and prevention of future offending (Umbreit & Zehr, 2003).

Restorative justice represents a distinct movement away from traditional criminal justice procedures in both principle and practice. Since restorative justice emerged as a critique of traditional forms of justice, it is often defined in terms of what it is not, rather than what it is. However, one established definition of restorative justice is 'a process whereby the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of the offence and its implications for the future' (Crawford & Newburn, 2002, p. 22). This definition includes three key elements in restorative justice, including ensuring stakeholder inclusion (not only the offender/s), the importance of participatory and deliberative processes and the emphasis on restorative outcomes (Crawford & Newburn, 2002).

Restorative justice initiatives used for diversion purposes are frequently criticised for 'widening the net' of social control to include children and adolescents that would normally have been excluded from intervention and released with a caution (Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Levrant, Cullen, Fulton & Wozniak, 1999; Umbreit, Coates & Vos, 2001). Consequently, a key issue in academic debates focusing on restorative justice initiatives is the basis of (offender) case selection for participation in restorative programmes or processes.

A possible shortcoming of the majority of these programmes and processes is their exclusion of higher-risk cases, for example, psychiatrically impaired, serious, chronic, violent and/or sex offenders (Corrado, Cohen & Odgers, 2003; Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Umbreit & Zehr, 1996). Important reasons for excluding offenders who have perpetrated serious and violent crimes are public safety and the danger of secondary traumatising of the victim, through manipulation, intimidation and/or reminders of the event

(Corrado et al., 2003; Mirsky, 2000). Although understandable, the exclusion criteria reduce the accessibility of restorative processes to a large proportion of offenders who could potentially benefit from facing up to the harm they have caused and from doing reparation.

Most evaluations of restorative justice initiatives emerging in the international literature (New Zealand, Australia, US, UK and Europe) have studied participant satisfaction with the process, procedural justice and the restorative quality of the process. Fewer evaluations have focused on the effects of these interventions on longer-term behavioural outcomes such as recidivism by young offenders (Bonta, Wallace-Capretta, Rooney & McAnoy, 2002). This is likely a result of the relative emphasis placed on restorative justice processes as opposed to restorative outcomes in both theory and practice (Crawford & Newburn, 2002). Methodologically rigorous studies on the effects of restorative justice programmes or processes on recidivism are lacking (Bonta et al., 2002; Umbreit et al., 2001).

Evaluations that have assessed procedural outcomes such as participant satisfaction, and/or the perceived fairness and restorativeness of the process generally indicate high offender and victim satisfaction with the process and outcomes (Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Fercello & Umbreit, 1998; Umbreit & Fercello, 1997; Umbreit et al., 2001). However, participant satisfaction is usually dependent on voluntary and equal participation (Kurki, 2003). Many evaluations of restorative justice programmes tend to focus on measuring the number of sessions required to reach consensus and the number of agreements achieved (Bonta et al., 2002). Reviews of victim-offender mediation initiatives have demonstrated that restitution (either symbolic or material) is a central part of most agreements between the victim and offender, that an agreement is reached in practically all cases and that agreements are completed between 75% and 100% of the time (Fischer & Jeune, 1987; Kurki, 2003; Umbreit et al., 2001). In addition, mediation has been shown to significantly reduce victims' anger, anxiety, fear of re-victimisation by the same offender and crime in general (Kurki, 2003). Although these studies provide the reader with information about the restorative justice process, they do not tell us anything about the success of these processes in reducing violence, re-offending or other offence-related outcomes.

A rare exception is Latimer, Dowden and Muijs's (2005) meta-analytic study that compared the effects of restorative justice practices and traditional criminal procedures on victim and offender satisfaction, restitution compliance and recidivism. Interestingly, restorative justice practices were found to be more effective in producing each of these effects than non-restorative

practices (Latimer et al., 2005). However, because participation in restorative justice practices is by its very nature a voluntary process, random selection is not a possibility and self-selection is a significant problem. There are a number of further concerns. Many scholars are concerned that such a time-limited intervention cannot realistically have a long-term impact and longitudinal studies are lacking. Furthermore, other meta-analytic work has shown that theoretically informed work can have a much more powerful (and possibly enduring) effect than restorative justice practices. Latimer et al. (2005) acknowledge this point, but argue that rather than abandoning restorative justice practices, professionals should use them in conjunction with theoretically informed interventions. This may be a promising area for future research and practice.

Findings from existing outcome studies are mixed. A preliminary experimental evaluation of the ongoing Canberra *Reintegrative Shaming Experiments* (RISE) in Australia (a diversionary conferencing approach) has demonstrated both positive and negative findings. Although participation in RISE produced a statistically significant decrease in offending rates by violent offenders (up to 30 years of age), this intervention did not produce significant reductions in repeat offending for young property offenders and shoplifters, in comparison to court-assigned controls (Sherman, Strang & Woods, 2000).

In contrast, the more positive results of Nugent and Paddock's (1995) experimental evaluation indicated a reduction in victim-offender mediation participants' likelihood to offend, as well as a reduction in the seriousness of repeat offences. The results of Bonta et al.'s (2002) quasi-experimental evaluation similarly indicated significantly lower recidivism rates in youths participating in individualised restorative justice initiatives compared to a matched control group of youths receiving standard probation services. Dolling and Hartmann (2003) also found a moderate reduction in re-offending among youths participating in victim-offender mediation as opposed to those constituting the matched control group (standard juvenile criminal procedure).

Other findings present a less optimistic picture (Kurki, 2003; Mulvey, Arthur & Reppucci, 1993). For example, reporting the findings of a rare meta-analytic study, Bonta et al. (2002) demonstrated an average reduction in recidivism across 30 restorative justice programmes of no more than 3%. In addition, recent research focusing on adult community panels and family group conferences for young offenders demonstrated that at six years follow-up, three-fifths of the juvenile sample had been reconvicted (Maxwell & Morris, 2002).

## Mentoring programmes

Like restorative justice programmes, there is a great deal of popular support for mentoring diverted youths in South Africa at present. *Big Brothers Big Sisters* (BBBS) is the most established international mentoring programme, with branches in 36 countries, of which one is in South Africa (Steyn, 2005). Typically, youths are referred by the court to a diversion programme and on completion of the diversion programme, they are referred by the diversion provider to the mentoring programme (Steyn, 2005). In their meta-analysis of the effects of mentoring programmes, DuBois, Holloway, Valentine and Cooper (2002) established that unless evidence-informed best practice is used and unless strong bonds between mentors and mentees are established, effects are modest.

BBBS is a community mentoring programme that matches an adult volunteer, known as a Big Brother or Big Sister, to a youth aged between six and 18 years, known as a Little Brother or Little Sister. Little Brothers/Sisters are typically 'at-risk' youths, such as those who come from single-parent homes (consequently, for youths already displaying violent behaviour, mentoring would be indicated in addition to other interventions). The Big Brother/Sister and the Little Brother/Sister will then meet for three to five hours per week for approximately one year. It is expected that the Little Brother or Sister will draw support from the relationship and that the Big Brother or Big Sister will act as a prosocial role model. Consequently, ensuring an appropriate match between volunteer and child is an essential feature of the intervention. Equally important is the ongoing supervision and monitoring of the relationship by a staff member. This staff member selects, matches, monitors and terminates the relationship with the volunteer and child (typically after one year) and communicates with the volunteer, caregiver/guardian and the child throughout the relationship (McGill, Mihalic & Grotzinger, 1998).

The results of controlled US studies show that at-risk Little Brothers and Little Sisters are less likely than controls to have started using drugs or alcohol, less likely to hit another person, felt more competent in their schoolwork, improved school attendance and performance and improved family and peer relationships at the conclusion of the 18-month study period (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Tierney, Grossman & Resch, 1995). The intensity (high level of contact) and infrastructure of the programme (thorough volunteer screening; matching procedures that take into account the preferences of the youth, his/her family and the volunteer; close supervision and support of each match by a case manager) were identified as the key ingredients of effective mentoring (Grossman & Tierney, 1998).

Preliminary findings from a recent evaluation of BBBS South Africa indicated a decrease in involvement in property damage, an increase in intimacy with peers, an increase in mastery and coping (self-concept) and an increase in time spent engaging in social and cultural activities across three groups receiving different levels of the intervention (one group received no intervention and functioned as the control group) (Louw, 2003). The group who received the highest level of mentoring received more emotional support from their peers and experienced less conflict with their peers, while the wait list control group displayed the lowest level of attachment to school (Louw, 2003).

The results of the South African study should be interpreted with caution due to the preliminary nature of the findings and the small sample sizes that were the basis of analysis. In addition, young offenders did not constitute a significant group in this evaluation.

It is very important to point out that these outcome evaluations of mentoring programmes, much like restorative justice initiatives, have not taken violent young offenders into account. Mentoring this category of multiple-risk children and adolescents poses particular and significant challenges. These children and adolescents would typically require multimodal interventions, and not just mentoring.

## MODEL INTERNATIONAL YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAMMES

### **Generic principles and findings for effective and ineffective interventions**

It is important to bear in mind that differentiating between programme types, or proclaiming the merits of one programme over another can be problematic, as single programmes commonly include multiple ingredients or components. Consequently, a number of principles (as opposed to programme types) have been identified as underpinning the design and delivery of the most effective intervention programmes. The principles are outlined in Box 11.1.

As a South African evidence base is lacking, our focus in this section is on interventions that have been successfully implemented in the USA and Western Europe and identified by the Centre for the Study and Prevention of Violence (CSPV) at the University of Colorado as *model programmes* (see <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/model/overview.html>). These programmes have been chosen on the basis of: evidence of deterrent effect

### BOX 11.1

#### GENERIC PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE DIVERSION PROGRAMMES

- 1) *Risk principle*: Match offender risk levels with the *intensity* of the intervention; offenders representing a higher risk of recidivism and/or committing serious/violent offences need more intensive services; lower-risk individuals should receive less intervention (Andrews et al., 1990; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Rutter, Giller & Hagell, 1998).
- 2) *Need principle*: Focus on factors that *cause, support or contribute to offending behaviour* and not on factors that are distantly related or unrelated to this behaviour (Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995).
- 3) *Responsivity principle*: Staff should use a warm, flexible and enthusiastic interpersonal style and a *firm but fair approach* (Andrews et al., 1990). Staff and offender *learning styles should be matched*. Active participatory methods rather than either didactic or unstructured experiential methods should be used (Andrews et al., 1990; Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Rutter et al., 1998). *Key elements of effective programmes* include: anti-criminal modelling; reinforcement of desired outcome behaviours; concrete problem-solving; prosocial skills training; verbal guidance and clear explanations (Andrews et al., 1990).
- 4) *Community based principle*: Programmes that have close links with the child's community are most effective. Proximity to participants' homes promotes real-life learning and generalisation of positive skills (Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Mulvey et al., 1993; Rutter et al., 1998).
- 5) *Multimodal intervention principle*: The most effective programmes are *multimodal and social skills oriented*. Highly structured, cognitive-behavioural treatments directed at development of concrete skills have been shown to be at least twice as effective as other interventions, and to have more lasting effects (Gendreau & Andrews, 1990; Izzo & Ross, 1990; Lipsey, 1992a; Lipsey, 1995; Lösel, 1993; McGuire & Priestley, 1995; Mulvey et al., 1993; Rutter et al., 1998; Tate et al., 1995).
- 6) *Intervention integrity principle*: Indicators of integrity – the intervention should be research-based throughout; have sufficient resources to achieve objectives; objectives should be linked to intervention components and desired outcomes; and the intervention should be systematically monitored and evaluated (McGuire & Priestley, 1995).

with a strong research design, sustained effect, and multiple site replication. We will also provide a short reflection on South African initiatives. Finally, based on the characteristics of model programmes, recommendations will be made for best intervention practices for South African programmes targeting violent young people.

Intervention programmes for youths at risk of poor outcomes of any kind can be classified into three categories:

- 1) Primary prevention (universal, population-level programmes designed to prevent a particular problem from occurring)
- 2) Secondary prevention (programmes targeting youths who are at risk of the poor outcome, in this case, for example, children who have been abused or exposed to high levels of violence)
- 3) Tertiary prevention interventions (targeted programmes for youths who are already displaying the target behaviour, in this case, for example, young people committing a violent offence) (Farrell & Flannery, 2006).

The top programmes selected by the CSPV include:

- Primary (*Midwestern Prevention Project; Life Skills Training*)
- Secondary (*Big Brothers Big Sisters, Nurse-Family Partnership*)
- Tertiary prevention programmes (*Multisystemic Treatment, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, Functional Family Therapy*).

Since the focus of this chapter is on violent young offenders, and thus, by definition, the population in question has already begun to display the target behaviour, only the tertiary intervention programmes will be described. It is interventions of this nature that would be most effective in reducing violent behaviour in young people.

## **Multisystemic Treatment (MST)**

MST targets families with youths displaying severe antisocial behaviour; and those at risk of out-of-home placement (residential care, psychiatric placement or correctional facility). MST is an intensive, comprehensive, flexible, individualised family intervention that is responsive to the unique needs of each family system. The programme is typically delivered by trained and supervised Masters-level therapists, who have a caseload of four to eight families. The therapist's central task is to deliver mental health services and supporting and empowering them to bring about therapeutic changes, as well as assisting the family in accessing other needed services. MST is

usually delivered in the youth's home, but the setting may vary according to the family's needs. The therapist is available to the family 24 hours a day, but his/her availability decreases towards the end of a three- to five-month course of MST (Borduin, Heiblum, Jones & Grabe, 2000; Henggeler, Mihalic, Rone, Thomas & Timmons-Mitchell, 1998).

MST has received a great deal of empirical support as an effective family-based intervention for serious antisocial behaviour (Borduin et al., 2000). Most studies evaluating MST have been randomised controlled trials with a range of difficult to reach populations, including violent young offenders (Borduin et al., 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998; Woolfenden, Williams & Peat, 2002). Cost-benefit analyses have indicated that MST is a highly cost-effective intervention (Borduin et al., 2000; Henggeler et al., 1998).

### **Functional Family Therapy (FFT)**

FFT targets families with youths who are at risk for and presenting with antisocial behaviour, violence, substance abuse, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, or Disruptive Behaviour Disorder. In brief, the programme aims to increase supportive interactions, promote parental monitoring and supervision and ensure effective discipline in families with children exhibiting serious antisocial behavior (Brosnan & Carr, 2000).

FFT is a brief family intervention consisting of 12 one- to two-hour sessions provided over a three-month period (Mihalic, Irwin, Elliott, Fagan & Hansen, 2001). It includes three components:

- 1) *Engagement and motivation*: the first phase of the programme focuses on altering maladaptive attitudes, perceptions, beliefs and emotions. Family members are encouraged to develop a trusting relationship with their therapist, and are taught how to respect individual differences, reduce resistance to change and raise expectations for change (Mihalic et al., 2001).
- 2) *Behaviour change*: the second phase of treatment involves developing and delivering intermediate and long-term behaviour change plans that are sensitive to the individual characteristics of each family member. The therapist implements problem-solving skills training, communication skills training, contingency management and contracting, limit-setting and reinforcement training (Gordon, Graves & Arbuthnot, 1995; Haas, Alexander & Mas, 1988).
- 3) *Generalisation*: the last phase of the intervention focuses on assisting families in applying the skills they have learnt in a range of contexts and

encouraging the maintenance of behaviour change by linking family members with the necessary community resources and services (Mihalic et al., 2001).

FFT has demonstrated its effectiveness in treating youths with a range of behavioural disorders; in reducing recidivism; preventing or reducing the use of more restrictive, higher-cost services and other care systems (for example, social services); and siblings' use of social services (Gordon et al., 1995; Mihalic et al., 2001).

### **Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)**

MTFC places the child in a family setting (away from the family of origin) and aims to provide adolescents who have serious or chronic behavioural problems with intensive supervision, fair and consistent limits, predictable consequences for rule violation, a supportive relationship with at least one adult, and limited access to, and contact with, antisocial peers (Fisher & Chamberlain, 2000; Chamberlain, 2003; Moore, Sprenghelmeyer & Chamberlain, 2001). The intervention also includes work with the family of origin to facilitate the successful return of the child.

MTFC is a highly intensive intervention. It includes the participation of foster parents, behaviour support specialists (responsible for youth problem-solving, social skills training), youth therapists (acting as advocates for youths), family therapists, consulting psychiatrists (monitoring youth medication regimes), Parent Daily Report callers (telephonic interview/progress report) and case managers (clinical team supervisors) (Fisher & Chamberlain, 2000). Ongoing consultation, supervision and support is given to foster families and target youths to monitor progress and to ensure that problems are identified and resolved. Family intervention is also provided to the youths' biological or adoptive families, as well as basic MTFC training to facilitate youths' successful transition home post-intervention. Case managers additionally remain in contact with parole/probation officers, educators, work supervisors and other involved adults to monitor participating youths' activities and progress outside of the foster placement (Chamberlain, 2003; Mihalic et al., 2001).

MTFC's aims are to:

- Provide the youth with close supervision
- Monitor peer associations
- Reinforce prosocial behaviours and associations

- Specify clear and consistent limits and follow through on rule violations with non-violent consequences
- Encourage youths to develop positive work habits and academic skills
- Support family members to increase the effectiveness of their parenting skills
- Decrease familial conflict
- Teach youths new skills for forming relationships with positive peers and for forming attachments with adult mentors and role models (Fisher & Chamberlain, 2000).

Outcome evaluations, some of which have included randomised controlled trials, indicate that MTFC is a highly effective intervention for antisocial and criminal behaviours (Chamberlain & Reid, 1998; Fisher & Chamberlain, 2000; Moore et al., 2001).

### **COMMON FEATURES OF MODEL PROGRAMMES**

A critical feature of the model programmes described above, firstly, includes a relationship with an adult/s, who models prosocial behaviour. Secondly, these programmes all have high programme intensity to correspond with high participant risk status. Thirdly, barring BBBS, they involve multi-disciplinary teams of trained programme staff. Although these interventions are typically resource-intensive, the involvement of teams of trained staff members, each with their own and equally relevant area of specialisation, increases the likelihood that multiproblem youths are effectively treated. Cost-efficiency studies indicate that although these interventions typically cost a great deal to implement at the outset, overall they are a highly cost-effective alternative to incarceration. They involve high levels of staff support and supervision. Regular and intensive supervision provided by experienced staff members or team leaders is a significant feature of the most effective interventions.

Effective interventions focus on established determinants of antisocial, including violent, behaviour (for example, antisocial peers, caregiver monitoring and supervision, disciplinary and reinforcement practices) and acknowledge that these risk factors occur in multiple settings (for example, the home, the school and the community). Consequently, most model programmes are multimodal and target multiple contexts. They focus on developing close links with the young person's home and community, and are delivered as close in proximity to the young person's home and community as is possible, so that on completing the intervention, the lessons learned can be successfully generalised.

Most of the model programmes incorporate the youth's primary caregivers, and pay particular attention to recruiting and sustaining their involvement.

The majority of model programmes are based on social learning principles, and tend to incorporate systemic and ecological approaches. They also often utilise cognitive-behavioural approaches, which focus on strengthening youths' social skills (for example, prosocial attitudes and behaviour training) and parenting skills training (for example, non-punitive and consistent disciplinary practices; adequate monitoring and supervision of child activities).

### **SOUTH AFRICAN DIVERSION PROGRAMMES**

Recent investigations indicate that good (outcome) evaluation practice is lacking for South African programmes (Farr, Dawes & Parker, 2003; Steyn 2005). Research conducted by Steyn (2005) and Dawes and Van der Merwe, (2004) indicates that South African diversion programmes are commonly multimodal, but typically do not incorporate the other characteristics of the most effective international violence prevention programmes referred to in the discussion of model programmes. For example, there is no evidence of highly structured cognitive-behavioural approaches or interpersonal and social skills training in the South African programmes. Few include a parenting component (*NICRO* and *Khulisa* are exceptions).

It is particularly concerning that local diversion initiatives lack an evidence-based approach to programming and tend not to have explicit theories of the change process they seek to bring about. In addition, desired programme outcomes (a reduction in antisocial and/or violent behaviours) are not directly linked to programme activities and objectives. It is important that local programmes focus on changing the most robust predictors of antisocial and violent behaviour, rather than much more indirect influences on such behaviour, such as, for example, self-esteem, or constructs with tenuous, if any, links to antisocial or violent behaviour, such as an ability to forgive others' wrongdoings. Consequently, South African diversion programmes have some way to go in terms of basing interventions on systemic and ecological approaches and having an adequate programme theory at the programme design stage (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2009).

It is also of concern that programme staff are reportedly overloaded and frequently do not feel skilled to do the work they are required to do (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004). There is little evidence of multidisciplinary teams of

staff working together, and regular supervision of staff members. Instead, diversion programmes are plagued by chronic staff shortages (Dawes & Van der Merwe, 2004; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2009).

The Child Justice Act requires service providers to be accredited with the Department of Social Development. Criteria for accreditation include the requirement that programmes comply with minimum standards, including that their effectiveness can be measured (Section 55). While the Act is a significant advance in securing the rights of children in trouble with the law to diversion in appropriate cases, much needs to be done to ensure that the programmes on offer are of an acceptable standard and that they are based on evidence of what is likely to change the child's problematic behaviour, and if possible, its causes. The same applies to interventions for violent young offenders who are not diverted, but who are held in Child and Youth Care Centres and receive therapeutic services in terms of the Children's Act.

## CONCLUSION

On the basis of the reviewed findings, we would recommend that one diversion programme specifically designated for violent young offenders be designed, bearing in mind the common features of the most effective international programmes. We argue that this is a special group of youths, with specific intervention needs. The following should inform the design of such an intervention:

- Restorative justice initiatives and mentoring are more appropriate for lower-risk youths than violent young offenders. There is scant evidence of their effectiveness in reducing youth violence in part because they were not designed as tertiary prevention programmes.
- Wilderness/adventure therapy programmes, particularly when implemented as a single component intervention, are not recommended for violent young offenders.
- Insight- or relationship-oriented therapeutic interventions, as well as group therapies of any kind are not indicated for violent young offenders. There is an additional danger in group therapy that antisocial bonding will occur.
- Intervention content should consist of transferring prosocial skills, (which is one of the reasons why deterrence interventions do not work to reduce antisocial behaviours), thus creating an alternative behavioural repertoire to violent and other antisocial behaviour.

- The intervention should be based on the risk, need, responsivity, community base, multimodal and intervention integrity principles.
- The programme should involve researchers from the design phase, so that programme objectives are explicitly linked to programme activities and outcomes and a culture of monitoring and evaluation is developed from the outset.

Diversion is designed as an alternative to the incarceration of young offenders and aims to promote children's rights to be treated in a manner that promotes dignity and self-worth, that enhances the likelihood of their reintegration in the community and constructive participation in society (as articulated in Article 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of which South Africa is a signatory). Young offenders may only be diverted once. Interventions that are ineffective thus undermine the youth's right to reintegration and constructive participation in society. As such, access to appropriate diversion interventions of a satisfactory quality constitutes a basic right of all diverted youths, including those who have committed violent offences. Consequently, it is our duty to provide the most effective interventions based on the knowledge that is available to us.

What the evidence on effective interventions for antisocial, including violent, youths seem to be telling us is that optimal development is promoted by large-scale, primary prevention efforts throughout childhood, usually implemented at school and family levels, and secondary and tertiary prevention interventions for those youths (typically by adolescence) who display risk behaviours. What the research is also showing us is that it is a very small amount of young people who have persistent and very serious behavioural problems throughout childhood and adolescence. These are the youths we need to target with interventions such as MST, MTFC and FFT. However, South Africa is a low-resource context. High-intensity interventions such as MST, FFT and MTFC that – according to the international literature – require multiple intervention sites and highly skilled professionals, are too costly to be implemented without being adapted to the local context.

There are three matters that merit consideration here. Firstly, a thorough assessment of possible participants in the intervention is key. Young people referred to these interventions need to be very carefully screened for participation because the intervention is too costly to be implemented in great numbers. Such interventions are only appropriate for serious, persistent, chronic and violent young offenders (that is, the minority of offenders). It is estimated that around 15% of crimes in South Africa are committed by children

(persons under the age of 18 years) (Pereira, 2000 in Steyn, 2005). The majority of these offences are non-violent property offences and the perpetrators of these offences are suited to less intense, less specialised and less resource-intensive community-based interventions. The most important aspect of any intervention for all young offenders is that interventions are delivered outside of prison, in the community. Recent data indicates that in South Africa, 38% of prisoners were under the age of 25 years (Muntingh, 2008).

Secondly, although it may be ideal to have highly trained and specialised professionals delivering the programme, it may be adequate to recruit less-specialised volunteers, who nevertheless display the qualities captured by the responsivity principle. Finally, there is an urgent need to develop a robust local evidence base. However, conducting methodologically sophisticated outcome evaluations to monitor the effectiveness of each and every diversion programme is not realistic. Instead, the South African diversion initiative should dedicate efforts towards conducting a small number of carefully designed outcome studies of different diversion programme types to inform good practice. If future interventions are based on reliable local research, we are far less likely to waste the limited resources available to us on ineffective programmes.

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# Chapter Twelve



## ADDRESSING YOUTH VIOLENCE IN CITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS

*Margaret Shaw*

### INTRODUCTION

One of the most welcome recent developments in our understanding of youth violence and victimisation, as this book has underlined, has been the greater recognition and application of an ecological public health approach. This shows that youth violence is much more complex than being about a group of violent individuals, or their close family dynamics, but is also a product of the historical, social and economic contexts into which they are born and grow up. It also emphasises that changes to some of these broader community and environmental factors can reduce the likelihood of violence. Internationally, while this view is now more widely accepted, it is not always politically understood, nor its implications fully implemented in practice.

This chapter looks first at the important impacts of the local environment and social relations on young people as they grow up, and the constraints and opportunities afforded by rapidly expanding cities and urban areas. This includes some of the correlates of neighbourhood characteristics of disruptive and violent behaviour, and the risk and protective factors that offer opportunities for intervention and prevention. The chapter also examines the principles that should guide interventions, some of the characteristics of effective intervention in neighbourhoods and cities and the growing range of types of approaches that are now being used. It argues that cities need clear strategic intervention plans, built on good diagnosis of the issues and an integrated series of approaches and that neighbourhoods are an important locus for such interventions.

The second part of the chapter considers some examples of effective intervention strategies from a number of cities and regions of the world that

have some characteristics in common with South Africa. Significantly, the overall aim of this chapter is to argue for the crucial importance of building strong and vibrant cities and neighbourhoods, with their residents and young people, rather than seeing the young people themselves as the problem. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of emerging approaches to the evaluation of the effectiveness of complex strategies in cities and neighbourhoods.

### **YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, THE SLUM AND THE MEGACITY**

A number of events occurred in 2007, but one of the most important was that a tipping point for the world's population was reached. For the first time, the majority of people now live in cities rather than rural areas (UN-HABITAT, 2006; 2007). Secondly, the world is a young population, with some 1.2 billion young people aged 15–24, representing 18% of the world's population.<sup>1</sup> Children and youths under the age of 18 comprise up to 50% of urban populations in developing countries. It is further estimated that 60% of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030 (United Nations Population Fund [UNFPA], 2007). Among the most disadvantaged populations, the proportion of young people is even greater. This includes those living in informal settlements, in which some one billion slum dwellers now live in extremely deprived and difficult conditions. The Kibera slum in Nairobi, for example, is home to two million people, 20% of the city population, occupying less than 1% of the city area, at a density of 3 000 persons per hectare (Biau, 2007). In South Africa, urbanisation similarly has had very unequal effects that raise considerable public health challenges, including chronic health problems and violence, as has been well demonstrated in a Johannesburg study (CSV, 2009; Mathee et al., 2009).

There is no question that the city as an organism is challenging our ways of conceptualising crime and violence and that we do not have a choice but to develop different kinds of approaches. Yet in many cities, especially those that are growing too fast for city authorities to provide the infrastructure,

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<sup>1</sup> There are many different ways of defining 'child' and 'youth' in different countries and regions, and in relation to criminal and other legislation. The UN defines young people as those of 10–24, and youth as those between 15 and 24 years of age (UN *World Youth Report*, 2007). The Convention of the Rights of the Child defines a child as anyone under the age of 18. UNICEF and other international organisations define children as those under the age of 10. Adolescent is often used to refer to those aged 10–19.

services and supports needed for their citizens, many young people grow up without access to good housing, health and education, or jobs and sufficient income. They are vulnerable to being exploited and victimised, to becoming involved in offending, to be trafficked, abducted as child soldiers, or killed by guns, HIV and AIDS or drugs. As the 2007 report of the Small Arms Survey *Guns in the City* (p. 161) also underlined: ‘cities are becoming a focal point for violence prevention and reduction policies and programmes’ and ‘urban violence is ... highly segmented and spatially concentrated’. Chapter 8 in this book, on the multiple experiences of violence faced by young people growing up in the townships and their modes of adaptation, provides ample support for the importance of working at the city and neighbourhood level.

Some of the strongest models currently impacting crime internationally, include integrated public health approaches, urban regeneration and human security approaches. What is similar in each is the *methodology* of the approach, which combines interdisciplinary and multisector partnerships, often with strong participatory community group and NGO involvement, medium- and long-term planning and a strong evidence-based approach requiring good data collection and analysis, monitoring and evaluation. In practice, elements of all three approaches are often found together – and look at violence in a similar way – as the outcome of a range of risk factors.

*Public health approaches* start from the premise that violence is a public health rather than a justice issue, requiring a range of strategies to reduce and prevent it. Thus, reducing all deaths in a city whether from violence or accidents becomes a priority (Gouveia, Nethavhani, Bowman & Seedat, 2008; Griffin & Sands, 2006). The work of the *Armed Violence Prevention Programme* (AVPP), which has grown out of the WHO *World Report on Violence and Health*, exemplifies this approach (AVPP, 2003) and aims to work with national and local governments, linking communities and NGOs. The AVPP sets out a results framework, aiming to enhance national policies and action plans on violence prevention, and develop national and civil society capacity to prevent violence, using more integrated approaches. Six projects have been piloted. The *Alexandra Township Urban Renewal Project*, for example, focuses on the role of the social fabric in violence reduction, including better housing and health services, employment and sanitation (AVPP, 2003).

The concept of *human security*, used by UN-HABITAT among other organisations, has also been applied more recently to understanding violence in cities. It focuses on the need to reduce people’s vulnerability to a broad array of risks (Canadian Consortium on Human Security, 2007), including:

*conflict and poverty, protecting people during violent conflict and post-conflict situations, defending people who are forced to move, overcoming economic insecurities, guaranteeing the availability and affordability of essential health care, and ensuring the elimination of illiteracy and educational deprivation and of schools that promote intolerance* (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements [UNCHS], 2003 quoted in UN-HABITAT, 2007, p. 7).

Human security marks a shift from the rights of the state to those of individuals and the expansion of roles and responsibilities beyond the state, and recognises that the security of individuals and communities crosses borders and cannot be ensured only from within the confines of one state.<sup>2</sup> The unequal distribution of political and social resources is seen as a major factor in vulnerability to violence (Berkman, 2007; Moser & McIlwaine, 2006).

As has been made clear in earlier chapters, the majority of perpetrators of urban violence are young men aged 15–25 years and they are also the majority of victims of that violence. This is the age group at greatest risk of exploitation, crime and victimisation, for both girls and boys. In some countries, levels of violence associated with young people have reached extraordinary levels and occur disproportionately in low- and middle-income countries (International Centre for the Prevention of Crime [ICPC], 2008a; Shaw & Travers, 2005; UN-HABITAT, 2007). As the World Health Organization has underlined, some 199 000 youth murders took place globally in 2000, with around 565 children and young people aged 10–29 dying each day of the year (*World Report on Violence and Health*, 2002).

The growth of transnational organised crime, including trafficking in small arms, drugs and persons, has facilitated the involvement of young people and exacerbated urban violence (Bevan & Florquin, 2006). This has been the case especially in regions with very high levels of violence, such as Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa. The seriousness of the situation is clearly illustrated in countries such as South Africa, but also in Brazil, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago and Nigeria (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC] & World Bank, 2007). In Brazil, for example, according to Silvia Ramos of the University of Candido Mendes, the number and rate of homicides increased from some 13 000 in 1980 to over 50 000 in 2003 (Ramos, 2006a). This increase starkly illustrates what she terms the ‘age of death’, the ‘colour of

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<sup>2</sup> UN-HABITAT looks at security from risks associated with crime and violence, land tenure, natural disasters and in terms of the geography of risk and vulnerability.

death', the 'gender of death' and the 'geography of death' (Ramos, 2006a). The increase in homicides has primarily involved young black men in the *favelas* – the crowded and poorest areas of Brazilian cities.<sup>3</sup> These are young men being killed primarily by other young men from the same neighbourhoods. Compared with other countries, a high proportion are also killed by security forces, including the police (Ramos, 2006a). The rate of homicides in Brazil has been higher than that of some countries at war.

In response to these trends, the public and politicians tend to demand short-term or repressive responses to youth violence, with increasing use of surveillance and technology. This is especially evident in parts of Africa and Central and Latin America, where the growing populations of male youths in cities seem inevitably to be mistrusted and feared and to require 'security-driven responses' (International Human Rights Clinic [IHRC], 2007; Sommers, 2006). The resort to 'tough on crime' policies in South Africa well illustrates such responses and its failures have been called into question (see, for example, the conference on 'Action for a Safe South Africa', August 2008). These responses have also been accompanied by increasing resort to the exclusionary privatisation of public and semi-public spaces and the creation of gated communities. Yet in relation to the youth, it is increasingly clear that the exclusion of young people and the escalation in punitive responses to youth violence is *unsustainable* and ultimately *counterproductive*. *Mano duro* policies have been the primary response to urban youth violence in Central America and the Caribbean in recent years, yet there is now ample evidence that such repressive policies work against the long-term interests of those societies (IHRC, 2007; Shaw, 2005; UNODC, 2007a & b; Washington Office on Latin America [WOLA], 2008).

The work of the Children in Organized Armed Violence (COAV), group among others, has provided a more nuanced understanding of youth gangs and violence in some of the most entrenched settings and demonstrated the importance of context (Dowdney, 2005; Hagedorn, 2005, 2007; Leggett, 2005; Standing, 2003, 2005, 2006; Ward, 2007). What their work suggests is that we need broader models and empirical material to help us understand the phenomenon of youth violence among groups and gangs in different countries of the world. Explanations are much more complex than US theories of adolescent rebellion, or social disorganisation.

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<sup>3</sup> The Brazilian term *favela* is usually translated as 'slum', but is officially used to refer specifically to unplanned settlements with illegal land occupation. Other poor and disadvantaged areas of cities are also vulnerable to crime and victimisation and not to be excluded from safety planning.

The COAV project has examined the existence of institutionalised, embedded youth gangs in countries such as Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nigeria, the Philippines, South Africa, Northern Ireland and the USA (Dowdney, 2005). As research in the Cape Flats has underlined, for example, such gangs have clear historical roots in earlier apartheid policing tactics. They often have strong ties with the local communities and receive support from them, and they play both a philanthropic and social and economic role, apart from their criminal activities (Standing, 2003, 2005, 2006). Studies of gangs in Nicaragua and Central America similarly point to the importance of historical and contemporary factors, with the evolution of violent activities from rural areas to urban slums (Rodgers, 2006, 2007), while the role of deportation policies or tough *mano duro* policing in increasing gang activities is receiving more recent attention (WOLA, 2007, 2008). Such gangs also provide security to socially excluded populations in the absence of state security in such settings (Berkman, 2007; Moser, Winton & Moser, 2003).

Increases in violence involving young men associated with guns and drugs, or youth gun-related crime, raise considerable public concern in all countries, including those with far lower levels of youth-related violence or homicides. For Canada, for example, see the conference 'Safe Cities for Youth: A culture of smart choices', March 12–13th 2007 at <http://www.toronto.ca/scfy/>. For England and Wales, see 'Killings in Manchester and London raise gang feud fears', (*The Guardian Weekly*, 3 August 2007, p. 17).

There has also been a recent trend to increase the range of behaviours by young people regarded as uncivil and the target of government intervention, whether at the local authority, regional or national level. This tendency is especially evident in England and Wales, with the use of the *Anti-Social Behaviour Order* or ASBO. As has been argued by Crawford, this forms part of a trend to 'define deviance up' and resort to deterrent measures to ensure order and civility (Crawford, 2006). Such approaches often appeal to the public and politicians, with their promise of delivering 'swift, summary and straightforward justice'. However, recent analysis of some 10 years of youth justice reforms in England and Wales suggests that it has resulted in the increasing *criminalisation* of young people involved in minor delinquency (Allen, 2006; Newburn, 2007). A recent review of international trends in a number of developed countries suggests a toughening of their sentencing policies in relation to young people, which is perhaps politically driven in the face of some major social and economic changes in the region, including immigration and cultural and ethnic patterns (ICPC, 2008a).

Thus, while the incidence of youth violence is clearly closely associated internationally with cities, disadvantaged neighbourhoods and overcrowded slums, there has been a pronounced tendency among governments to see young people themselves as the problem, to resort to tough deterrent measures in the hope that, as rational individuals, they will think twice about using violence. Rarely are the conditions in cities and neighbourhoods themselves – the lack of infrastructure, schools, health and recreation facilities, long-term unemployment and lack of skills and job opportunities, the presence of drugs and guns, and an informal economy that offers alternative prospects for recognition and advancement – all place young people at considerable risk (Gouveia et al., 2008). And rarely are young people themselves seen as constructive citizens in these neighbourhoods and cities.

### **WHY INTERVENTIONS IN CITIES HAVE OFTEN BEEN IGNORED**

There are a number of reasons for the lack of attention to the importance of neighbourhood and city interventions. Some clearly relate to political agendas and the need for short-term action to respond to public demands. Some relate to the narrow conception that violence is a criminal justice matter, requiring criminal justice responses, rather than one that can, with careful planning, be approached in terms of the causal relationships and levers to increase protection, using strategic approaches encompassing public health models, or those grounded in urban regeneration, for example.

Further, there has also been a long-standing focus by many researchers on interventions directed at individuals. In part, this relates to the dominance of psychological research and practice in the field. The latter has often dovetailed well with the requirements of the criminal justice system in terms of diagnosis and treatment. But it also relates to the difficulties of evaluating complex interventions. Thus there have been strong claims, based largely on North American and European literature, that we ‘know what works’ in reducing crime and violence, especially among young people.

There is indeed good evidence that early childhood intervention programmes targeting high-risk children and families can be shown to be effective and cost-beneficial, as have some situational interventions, such as street lighting. But those making such claims often make equally strong claims that more complex community-based prevention programmes and some social and educational prevention programmes do not show clear evidence of crime reduction, are difficult to evaluate using the high

standards of controlled trial research designs, and are therefore ineffective and not worth investing in (Farrington & Welsh, 2007; Holloway, Bennett & Farrington, 2008; Sherman, Farrington, Welsh & Mackenzie, 2006). Thus, projects that introduce a range of interventions within communities, or work to increase the capacity of local residents and young people, can be difficult to measure and are less easy to evaluate, or do not show 'value for money' in the short term when compared with single-measure interventions. They also require long-term investment. A related issue has been the focus on replication of programmes that appear to have worked elsewhere, rather than the development of context-specific programmes responding to the particular characteristics of areas and neighbourhoods.

Yet as David Kennedy recently concluded, in relation to the issue of tackling youth gangs and violence in cities in the United States:

*We cannot continue as we have been with respect to gangs, gang violence, and the communities most affected by both. Gangs and our response to gangs alike have grave implications. The lives of individuals and of a community can be destroyed by gang violence. But those lives can also be destroyed by the demonisation of offenders and what follows in its wake ...* (Kennedy, 2007, p. 2).

Nevertheless, internationally, there has been growing recognition of the importance of paying attention to the geography of violence and the possibilities for influencing the structural factors associated in youth violence, through preventive strategies.

## **INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR STRATEGIC CITY AND NEIGHBOURHOOD INTERVENTION**

*Crime prevention is 'in constant development'* (Frank, 2006, p. 1).

The importance of developing strategic planned interventions in cities and neighbourhoods, which aim to *prevent* rather than just deter violence, has received attention since the 1980s (Shaw, 2002; 2006). This underpins the work of UN-HABITAT's *Safer Cities Programme*, of the European Forum for Urban Safety, and the International Centre for the Prevention of Crime, as well as the WHO Violence Prevention Alliance. It informs the city security contract system developed in France and Belgium, and Bogota, Colombia, the *Neighbourhood Renewal Programme* in England and Wales, and the AVPP in Alexandra Township, Gauteng, for example. It also formed the basis of South Africa's 1996 National Crime Prevention Strategy and the 1998 *White Paper on Safety and Security*. A lot of experimentation has taken place since that time, with

very variable results, as the 2002 assessment *Crime prevention partnerships: Lessons from practice* shows (Pelser, 2002). Some more recent discussions have focused on the role that key national and provincial departments can play in prevention and how they might improve their service provision to targeted sectors at risk (Frank, 2006; Redpath, 2007). Others have drawn lessons from the experiences of non-governmental organisations working at the community level (Griggs, 2003). There has been perhaps less emphasis on the role of the city and small neighbourhood jurisdictions and their populations. The city of Durban's *iTRUMP* programme and Johannesburg's *City Safety Strategy* are notable exceptions (Dobson, 2007; Johannesburg City Safety Strategy, approved in 2004, see <http://www.joburg.org.za>). So too is the work of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) used in their development and use of the *Local Safety Strategy Tool Kit* (Holtmann, 2008; Holtmann & Badenhorst, 2010).

It is perhaps important to recall that there are now a number of international norms and standards to guide the development of interventions to prevent youth violence. The 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child provides the human rights foundation for all policies and practices involving young people, as does the 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (Skelton, 1999). These principles underpin the African Union Youth Charter adopted in 2006, and the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment 2007–2015. The United Nations has adopted two sets of guidelines for the prevention of crime: in 1995 the technical guidelines for the prevention of urban crime (The Economic and Social Council [ECOSOC] 1995/9) and more recently the 2002 UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Crime (ECOSOC 2002/13). The 2002 Guidelines set out the basic principles for developing prevention policies, including the importance of:

- Government leadership
- Socio-economic development and inclusion
- Co-operation and partnerships
- Sustainability and accountability
- Use of a knowledge base
- Human rights and a culture of lawfulness
- Interdependency
- Differentiation.

The Guidelines argue that effective urban crime prevention requires strong leadership from national and local governments; strategic planning based

on good analysis of problems and causes and comprehensive strategies that include the whole range of services and institutions affecting people's daily lives; community-based and problem-solving policing, and strong partnerships between policymakers and providers and civil society (see UNODC 2008 and 2010). It also requires governments to uphold the human rights of citizens and to work against the exclusion of vulnerable groups, including the urban poor, children and young people, women and minorities.

These principles were exemplified in the strategies and projects on urban crime prevention and for youths at risk, presented at the crime prevention workshop at the 11th and 12th UN Congresses in Bangkok in 2005 and Salvador in 2010 (Shaw & Travers, 2005, 2007; Shaw & Carli, 2011). Such examples also underlined the spread of strategic crime prevention in many parts of the world, and the increasing number of urban areas that have placed city strategies, including specific and targeted youth strategies in place, and this is further demonstrated in more recent international reports published by the ICPC (ICPC, 2008a & b).

More recently, there has been a shift to try to understand the fundamental importance of everyday safety and security in cities. International development organisations and donors are now seeing it as fundamental for the achievement of other development goals (UNODC, 2007a & b; WOLA, 2008; World Bank, 2007, 2008). They argue that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals is inextricably linked with issues of human rights and good governance, and will not be possible unless safety and security in countries and cities is addressed (UN-HABITAT, 2006, 2007; UNODC, 2005, 2007; World Bank, 2006; Willman & Makisaka, 2010). For Africa, this was explicitly addressed at the Roundtable for Africa in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2005.

In addition, the different contexts and needs of countries in development, transition and post-conflict are now much more explicitly recognised. The earlier easy assumptions of many academics and policymakers that projects developed in the North could be replicated effectively in other settings have been resoundingly shown to be wrong. The experience of South Africa over the past 10 years has provided some of the best evidence of the failure of direct project replication or policy transfer (Pelsler, 2002).

There is also better recognition of the importance of the views of recipient countries on their needs, and respecting their timetables, rather than imposing those of donor countries and organisations (Shaw & Dandurand, 2006).

In terms of the principles guiding policies in relation to children and youths at risk more specifically, these have received some formal attention in South Africa and the continent as a whole.

### **PRINCIPLES GUIDING INTERVENTION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE**

In terms of youths at risk, the characteristics of effective intervention in urban areas and identified by the 11th UN Congress workshop include:

- Inclusive approaches that reduce youth marginalisation
- Participatory approaches
- Integrated multisectoral strategies
- Balanced strategies that include early intervention, social and educational programmes, restorative approaches and crime control
- Targeted and tailored strategies and programmes to meet the needs of specific at-risk groups
- Approaches that respect the rights of children and young people.

The World Development Report (2007) and a more recent World Bank report on interpersonal violence prevention (Willman & Makisaka, 2010), similarly underline these principles in their assessments of the issues facing the next generation of young people. In South Africa, the South African Child Justice Act 2008 came into operation in April 2010, after a number of years. This is a significant piece of legislation that offers hope for young people who offend, as well as for the communities in which they live. What is important is that this legislation not only creates a system for managing children when they come into conflict with the law, but also sets in place principles for the broader social project of crime management in the country.

So what can strategic city interventions contribute to preventing youth violence? In a review of violence prevention in Latin American countries, Moser and McIlwaine (2006) recommend an *integrated framework for intervention* that combines analysis of the local context and an assets-based analysis of the causes, costs and consequences of violence and discuss seven 'ideal' policy approaches:

- Criminal justice
- Public health
- Conflict transformation (for example, through peace building)
- Human rights
- Citizen security

- Crime prevention through environmental design
- Social capital/community-driven development.

Each of these approaches can impact different categories of urban violence. Extending the analysis of the WHO on the predictors of violence, the *Armed Violence Prevention Programme* aims to develop a series of pilot projects that focus on strategic area interventions. The Alexandra Township Urban Renewal Project (AVPP, 2003), for example, brings together three levels of government with the community and NGOs. It uses a comprehensive approach that includes the role of the social fabric in violence reduction, including better housing and health services, employment and sanitation, which have the potential to positively influence individual, relational, community and broader societal factors.

Thus, strategic city interventions can provide an over-arching framework for intervention, so that attention is given to the range of risk factors. They need to focus on: families, schools, providing specific interventions for those identified early on as at high risk of violence or victimisation, the geography of risk or the ecology of violence; and neighbourhood and city contributions. This may include attention to environmental hazards, housing, health, recreational facilities or employment and job skills. It involves the types of intervention that can be initiated, the kinds of approach used, and the range of activities. It includes attention to the impacts of violence on the community as a whole: on the girls and young women, the family members and small businesses, and not just the young men (Jeffthas & Artz, 2007). The inclusion and participation of young people in such initiatives is one of the factors emphasised by many observers as an important step to capacity-building and for other residents, too (Cabannes, 2006; UN-HABITAT, 2004; World Bank, 2006). UN-HABITAT's *Youth Resource Guide* (2010) contains many examples of the kinds of youth-led and youth-participatory projects and initiatives now in existence.

### **EFFECTIVE AND PROMISING INTERVENTIONS IN CITIES AND NEIGHBOURHOODS**

There are some examples of integrated city and neighbourhood strategies that have been effective in reducing violence and working to support young people. They utilise good analysis and planning, and a range of approaches that include activities such as mediation, sports, education, employment and skills training, to involve and build the capacities and resilience of children and young people, and other local citizens, often in the most challenging

neighbourhoods. A number of the examples come from Latin America, including Brazil and Colombia, countries with levels of violence in common with South Africa.

One of the most effective integrated city strategies was developed by the city of Diadema, in the Sao Paulo metropolitan region of Brazil. In the late 1990s the city had the highest rate of homicide among all cities in the metropolitan area. Under the leadership of its mayor, Jose Philippe Junior, the city established a 10-point Security Plan to reduce homicides (Shaw & Travers, 2005). The plan included creating a municipal security department, the use of geo-coding to map all criminal activity on a daily basis, integrating the police forces in the city and increasing and developing the municipal police force, legislating the closure of bars and restaurants between 11.00 pm and 6.00 am (identified as the peak period for homicides) and instituting a range of social, educational and environmental policies. These include a young apprentice programme targeting young men and women in the poorest neighbourhoods. In particular, this has involved the unplanned settlements, or *favelas*, where increased resources and support to schools, and householder-municipal upgrading programmes, have provided jobs and skills training. A series of public education campaigns against guns and violence have also been instituted.

The plan has brought about an 80% drop in homicides in the city, as well as other crimes, and by 2004 it dropped to number 18 in terms of its homicide rate among cities in the area. The security plan had a second phase, which added the use of conflict mediation approaches to its other innovations. Throughout this period there have been intensive and ongoing consultations between the mayor and city council and the population. The city uses participatory budgeting mechanisms, with regular meetings in every local ward, allowing a percentage of the city budget to be allocated to projects chosen by the wards. In 2009, however, the mayor responsible for this project reached the end of his mandate, and there is no guarantee that the policies put in place will be continued by successive governments.

In the city of Belo Horizonte, in the State of Minas Gerais, *Fica Vivo (Stay Alive)*, is another programme developed to respond to the increase of youth violence and victimisation (Beato, 2005; Shaw & Travers, 2005). From 1997 to 2001, there was a 100% increase in the number of homicides, with 3 256 violent deaths between 1998 and 2002. Again, they were primarily young males under the age of 24, in the most disadvantaged *favelas*. Beginning in 2002, the programme was developed and implemented in partnership between the Study Centre on Crime and Public Safety at the Federal University at

**BOX 12.1**  
**CITY OF DIADEMA, BRAZIL**  
**10-POINT CRIME PREVENTION STRATEGY**

- The creation of a Municipal Department of Social Policies & Public Security; mapping all criminal activity
- The integration of all police forces in the city (municipal, military and civil regional)
- New law enforcing the closure of all establishments selling alcohol from 11:00 pm to 06:00 am
- Launching the Municipal Council for the Safety and the Prevention of Crime
- Increasing the municipal police force by 70% and establishing 'The Neighbourhood Angels'
- Establishing 'The Young Apprentice Project'
- Social and environmental policies including *favela* and school projects
- The installation of surveillance cameras
- Inspections and law enforcement operations
- Launching three major campaigns:
  - Disarmament of Fire Arms Campaign
  - Children's Disarmament of Toy Guns Campaign
  - Drugs and Alcohol Awareness Campaign.

Minas Gerais (UFMG), the state and city authorities. Municipal, federal and military police have all been involved, as well as the public prosecutor's office, business organisations, NGOs and local communities.

The Stay Alive programme was modelled on the successful *Boston Gun Project* in the United States, but very carefully adapted to local Brazilian contexts and needs. The six *favelas* with the highest rates of violence were identified, and police and justice strategic action groups established to intervene quickly when events took place, and community mobilisation groups set up to develop medium- to long-term projects. It uses a problem-oriented approach, including scanning, crime mapping, analysis and assessment of priorities and has implemented a series of projects targeting the youth in these areas. The projects include social support, education, leisure and sports, workshops on issues affecting youth, including violence, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases, sports, performing arts and computers.

Job training has been provided for more than 3 000 young people. Thirty months after the implementation of the project, there has been an overall decrease in violent crimes, especially homicides and attempted homicides in the targeted areas. This includes a 47% decrease in homicides, a 65% decrease in attempted homicide and a 46% decrease in bakery robberies in one of the slum areas. This was over a period when there was an 11% increase in violent crime in the non-violent areas of the city (Beato, 2005). The success of the programme has been attributed mainly to the use of an integrated approach and to the involvement and participation of community members. This prompted the state and federal government to support the expansion of the Stay Alive programme to four other clusters of violent slums in the metropolitan area of Belo Horizonte.

Among the components of the programme has been a strong youth-initiated and youth-led project developed by the hip-hop *Afro Reggae Cultural Group* from Rio de Janeiro. The cultural group was founded in 1993 in the Vigario Geral *favela*, where 21 residents were killed by the police in that year (Ramos, 2006b). The group decided to develop a project *with the police*, to bridge the gap between police and young people through dialogue, music and culture and were invited to develop the project in Belo Horizonte. *The Youth and the Police* project was piloted in 2004 in the city of Belo Horizonte, and trains police in percussion, graffiti art, street basketball, street dancing and theatre (Ramos, 2006b). Since 2006, a permanent group of police work for two weeks every month with young people in the slums and give joint performances in schools, in public and on police premises.

The main aim of the project is not to change young people and steer them away from crime, as most youth crime prevention projects do, but to *change the relationships* between the police and young people. On both sides there has been considerable change in attitudes in terms of how they view each other. The project is being monitored and evaluated, but preliminary results reported by Silvia Ramos (2006b) suggest 'strong positive impact on changing the image of the police, both among young slum dwellers who have direct contact with police, and the population at large, when policemen appear in cultural activities in the media.' The impact upon the police services themselves is more mixed, especially among those not directly involved in the project, although a high percentage of police in the state do see such cultural activities as encouraging greater integration between the police and communities.

What many of these projects have in common, and others in Sao Paulo, is strong participatory components involving local populations and youths

themselves. The value of involving young people directly in the development of youth gang reduction strategies has been underlined by many other studies as one of the criteria for ensuring commitment and change among young people, and achieving the outcomes anticipated (UN-HABITAT, 2004; Winton, 2004).

In Colombia, which is still one of the countries with the highest levels of violence in the world, levels of violent deaths – including among young people – have clearly impacted on city policies. The ‘citizen security’ strategy developed in the city of Bogota, Colombia, has seen a very marked reduction in violence and deaths since the late 1990s, under the direction of a series of mayors, back to the level experienced in the mid-1980s. It has combined strong leadership with a comprehensive strategy. Under the first of the mayors, Antanas Mockus, the city applied epidemiological analysis of violence to assess causal and geographical factors, and created a permanent city observatory to monitor and analyse trends. Mockus has also stressed the central importance of developing a culture of lawfulness and civic responsibility, and used a range of very imaginative approaches. This included clowns to model behaviour in public places, to help change attitudes to public transport and traffic behaviour, and the creation of a taxi cadre that prides itself on good service.

Other major components introduced under subsequent mayors, such as Enrique Penelosa, have used urban regeneration and environmental design approaches to create public parks, libraries and pedestrian streets and dedicated, safe public bus routes (the *Transmilenio*). Again there has been an emphasis on citizen quality of life, rather than modernisation for its own sake. A local neighbourhood-based policing system (the Cai system), similar to the Japanese police box approach, is in place. Other strategies that have been linked to violence reduction include campaigns to promote citizen disarmament and to control alcohol consumption; neighbourhood crime-monitoring committees working with local police and family police stations; and the professionalisation of the police (Buvenic, Alda & Lamas, 2005). A series of local contracts with borough mayors, similar to the French security contract system, have been instituted to support projects targeting specific neighbourhood problems.

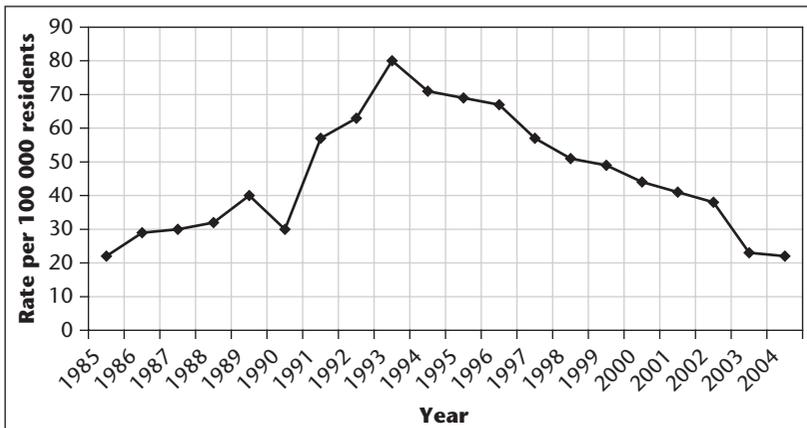
The use of local contracts, and the development of a long-term strategy, the *Libro Blanco*, launched in 2008, are seen as essential ingredients for ensuring the long-term sustainability of the public safety plan (Bogota, 2008). Velasquez has argued that crime has effectively been taken out of the political party agenda (Velasquez, 2008), becoming a responsibility of the city. Another factor, and one affecting other Colombian cities, has been changes

in national legislation that have given greater powers to cities, enabling them to take greater control over their use of resources.

In Cali, Colombia, the mayor instituted a programme called *Development, Security and Peace* in 1993, which has had a clear impact on reducing homicides in the city. This placed restrictions on the carrying of firearms at certain times and on the sale of alcohol and set up mechanisms to increase judicial responses to disputes in the poorest and most violent neighbourhoods (Armed Violence Prevention Programme [AVPP], 2003).

The city of Medellín has also seen marked reductions in violence, including youth violence (Perez, 2011). This has been brought about by a range of interventions, from taking back areas formerly controlled by gangs, and the inclusion of poor populations into areas with significant urban infrastructure investment, to the use of community policing and better information systems, local neighbourhood policing systems in some of the most deprived areas such as Communa 13, an emergency phone system, and neighbourhood alarms. The Brazilian NGO *Viva Rio*, as part of the COAV project, is currently working in Medellín to develop a public policy plan with the city, involving children and young people using a rights-based approach (see <http://www.comunidadessegura.org>). Their aim is to build a strategy from the ground up.

The *Safer Cities Programme* in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, was set up in 1997 to co-ordinate and strengthen local crime prevention capacity, in partnership with local stakeholders and communities. The local



**Figure 12.1: Bogota, Colombia, rate of homicides per 100 000 inhabitants 1985–2004**

Source: Instituto do Medical Legal y Ciencias Forenses. Fiscalía General de la Nación

co-ordinator has a permanent office within the municipal council, as well as a network of neighbourhood co-ordinators. The project has used safety audits and victimisation surveys of crime and insecurity to develop the city safety strategy. The programme has focused on changing attitudes to crime, promoting a culture of adherence to the law, and skills training and cultural activities to respond to high levels of youth unemployment. The last includes the recruitment and training of unemployed local youths, to form the *Sungusungu*, to act as night-time security guards, as well as giving them skills training through a series of income-generating projects that provide them with day-time activities and economic support.

The gains to be made by cities working together are also worth considering. A network of 13 major Californian cities, the *California Gang Prevention Network*, was created in 2006 to combat gang violence and victimisation. Each city is led by its mayor and police, and a five-member team of key stakeholders who meet twice yearly, and interact monthly to learn from each other and exchange experiences. The network uses the key elements of successful strategies: a clear message from city leaders to end violence, identifying the small percentage that cause the most violence, using intervention services for those most at risk, and starting prevention early with families, children and youths (see <http://www.nlc.org> and <http://www.nccd-crc.org>).

An integrated framework of intervention has also been put in place in Toronto, Canada, with some beneficial results. This has been in response to a serious increase in youth gun-related violence in recent years, primarily affecting the young male, black population. The *Community Safety Plan* was initially established in 2004 as a multisectoral and targeted plan, focusing on youth engagement and cultural competence ([http://www.toronto.ca/community\\_safety](http://www.toronto.ca/community_safety)). It has four key priorities: building strong neighbourhoods, creating youth opportunities, ensuring youth justice and putting in place a community crisis response.

The plan focuses on 13 priority neighbourhoods where most of the incidents have occurred, and which are disadvantaged socially and economically compared with other areas of the city. It works to strengthen neighbourhood supports and works in partnerships linking the government, local communities and the private sector. There is a strong emphasis on providing opportunities for young people in the targeted neighbourhoods, through education and apprenticeship programmes, recreation and cultural involvement, and building on youth participation and engagement. Since the plan was instituted, there has been a drop in youth violence and gun-related deaths in the city, apart from other benefits, and an evaluation phase was initiated in 2008.

Montreal has similarly established an integrated plan of action with a strong neighbourhood approach. *Villes-gangs de rue* combines the work of city and local service providers, community representatives and organisations, the police and researchers, to tackle issues of youth street gangs in the five areas of the city most affected by gang activities. They use a partnership approach and a combination of community policing and social and educational approaches (Chamandy, 2006).

Some South African examples include the *Proudly Manenberg* project in the Western Cape, initiated in 2005. The project uses many of the approaches found in successful neighbourhood or city prevention initiatives. In this case it does not target the youth gangs themselves living in the municipality, even though it has been estimated that 30% of young males between the ages of 10 and 30 belong to a gang (COAV at <http://www.coav.org.br>; Ward, 2007). Instead, the project works to strengthen the capacity of the community, provide alternatives for young people, including employment options, building partnerships with the police, local government, schools and the private sector. Local volunteers, many of them women, have agreed to take part in the Safety Sector Community Brigade, to provide patrols and help improve and reclaim public spaces. A scholarship programme has been initiated providing bursaries for young people, and a community garden site and recreation space. The project works closely with the local police station and other national provincial government departments, and has received funding from the Western Cape. Formal evaluation will begin after the five-year development phase, but the project is already able to see a number of changes taking place in terms of community supports.

The *Community Peace Workers* project in Nyanga, Western Cape, began in 1997, expanded to Soshanguve in 1999 and Khayelitsha in 2004. Supported by German Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and the Department for Safety and Security, the programme's major goals are to prevent crime and support youth development in low-income areas. The project aims to provide young people with skills to identify and mediate conflict situations in their community. The recruits receive initial training and then work half of the day providing community service foot patrols, and the other in further training sessions, in conflict mediation and leadership skills.

The recently launched *Grobbershoop Youth Resilience Pilot Project* involves a partnership between the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP), the !Kheis municipality and !Kheis Youth and Community Development Project and other partners. The holiday programme project aims to provide a range of constructive and engaging alternatives for young people during school

holidays, strengthening local communities and increasing resilience to risk (Groblershoop Youth Resilience Pilot Project, see <http://www.cjcp.org.za>).

In KwaZulu-Natal, a series of training workshops on Youth and Local Crime Prevention Capacity Building have been developed with youth co-ordinators to manage and prevent youth involvement in crime. Organised by the CSIR Crime Prevention Research Group with the KZN Department of Community Safety, and using the Local Crime Prevention Tool Kit, they aim to increase communication between the police and the community, and to develop local crime prevention partnerships on youth crime and violence. The workshops have included aspects of building youth capacity, communication, the process of forming a local crime prevention partnership, developing a shared vision and mission, and the kinds of tools that can be used to sustain the partnership and develop and implement strategies. At the end of the first training session, the participants are required to implement what they have learned in their district municipalities. The project aims to enable the youth to participate in the central processes of local government decision-making.

The *International Youth and Cities Summit* in Durban, in June 2008, highlighted some of the many projects that are working to change the way young people see themselves and their role in cities, and some of the achievements of young people as actors and participants in urban life. The aim was to shift the way the world thinks about them, as children and young people who are actively participating in creating a better world, rather than as a problem generation (organised by the Provincial Government of KwaZulu-Natal and UN-HABITAT, <http://www.yourcitysummit.co.za> and <http://www.unhabitat.org>).

## EVALUATION – A MORE REALISTIC APPROACH

Some of the main preoccupations and disputes in crime prevention and youth violence prevention in recent years have centred around questions of evaluation. Issues of replication or policy and project transfer have been rife, and are notable in South Africa. Claims that community crime prevention is not effective because it cannot be evaluated using the high standards of random allocation and controlled trial research continue to be reiterated (Holloway et al., 2008; Sherman et al., 2006). Yet randomised controlled trials are neither feasible nor necessarily appropriate for these kinds of complex and multilayered city or neighbourhood strategies. The authors of these claims exclude many of the projects that have been undertaken and which do show impacts, because they do not fit their selection criteria. The failure to show impacts when projects are scaled up has been another

concern. Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for youth violence prevention in cities and neighbourhoods in the near future lies in accepting that projects take time, require sufficient and ongoing resources, including for monitoring and evaluation, and may lead to a number of positive and cost-beneficial outcomes, apart from reductions in violence and victimisation.

A number of researchers have begun to tackle the problem of evaluating complex city and neighbourhood programmes. Denis Rosenbaum, for example, has been working for some time on the evaluation of multi-agency partnerships and on the ways in which citizens can help to assess the accountability of community police using Internet feedback mechanisms (Rosenbaum, 2002, 2004). Recent Australian discussion of community-based crime prevention programmes makes some recommendations about the evaluation of national or state-funded programmes. They suggest that it is important to measure the overall impact of the programme, to evaluate some but not all individual projects closely, and in other cases to look at clustered groups of projects to assess the efficacy of the particular kind of approach (Hemel & Morgan, 2008). The requirement that every project should undertake or be subjected to high-quality evaluation, rather than maintaining a basic monitoring and project feedback process, is seen as unnecessary and counterproductive, and can impede service delivery. Such a conclusion is supported elsewhere (Cherney & Sutton, 2007; Hemel, Webb, Tilley & Nutley, 2004; Liddle, 2008). These researchers recommend the use of performance indicators rather than evaluation frameworks for community-based projects, as a way of managing projects, providing feedback and laying the basis for later outcome evaluation.

Other researchers have also looked at the use of benchmarks and indicators grounded in logic models that underpin good project development and assessment, to ensure that theory is linked to objectives and planned outputs and outcomes. There is much to be gained from examining the issue of youth violence from the neighbourhood and city perspective, to gain leverage on the drivers for youth violence and the protective factors, and the need for a broad and inclusive strategy. Research (or political interests) cannot be the only driver for project development. It is also clear that the distribution and relative weight of risk factors, even in quite deprived areas, can never be the same in the United Kingdom or North America as they are in the Cape Flats.

As Barbara Holtmann has underlined, on the basis of the analysis of problems of crime and violence facing municipalities in the Central Karoo, and their impact on young men and women, 'community involvement is essential in both understanding the problems and finding solutions'

(Holtmann, 2008, p. 17). The neighbourhood and the city are a central part of the process of preventing youth violence.

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# Youth Violence

## Sources and Solutions in South Africa

*Youth violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* thoroughly and carefully reviews the evidence for risk and protective factors that influence the likelihood of young people acting aggressively. Layers of understanding are built by looking at the problem from a multitude of perspectives, including developmental psychology and the influences of race, class and gender. The book explores effective interventions in the contexts of young people's lives – their homes, their schools, their leisure activities, with gangs, in the criminal justice system, in cities and neighbourhoods, the media, with sexual offenders – and the broader socioeconomic context. Thoughtful suggestions are made for keeping an evidence-based perspective, and interventions from other contexts are (necessarily) adapted for developing world contexts such as South Africa. *Youth violence: Sources and Solutions in South Africa* is a valuable source of information for practitioners, academics and anyone who has ever wondered about youth violence or wanted to do something about it.

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