

Resilience to Substance Abuse and Criminality

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ABSTRACT

Substance abuse and criminality are critical problems in South Africa, yet little is understood about youth resilience. This study sought to gain an in-depth understanding of resilience in eight men who have disengaged from criminality and substance abuse. Narrative analysis was used to explore how these men made sense of the resilience process. Childhood difficulties, ineffective parenting, delinquent peers, and a lack of commitment to school, all contributed to involvement in risk behaviours. A desire to change, often triggered by a pivotal event, was important in turning away from risk behaviours. Other contributing factors included the negative impact of drug abuse, leadership and social skills, academic competence, access to social support and religious beliefs. Maintaining a prosocial life style was supported by giving back to others, an effective substance abuse programme, and achievements.

Keywords: resilience; substance abuse; criminality; gang involvement; interviews; narrative analysis

INTRODUCTION

Children growing up in adverse conditions are at risk for developing substance abuse disorders and other problems (Tiet, Huizinger, & Byrnes, 2010). However, more recently, attention has focussed on the concept of resilience – the notion that some children growing up in these conditions will not develop psychopathology or other problems (Masten, 2001).

Substance abuse is prevalent amongst South African youth. From 1999 to 2001, 28.9% of Cape Town adolescents and 31.8% of Durban adolescents presenting at trauma units were found to have positive breath alcohol levels; 26.9% of Cape Town adolescents and 44.4% of Durban adolescents tested positive for cannabis, and 15.4% (Cape Town) to 28.6% (Durban) tested positive for methaqualone (Parry et al., 2004). Substance abuse can have devastating effects on the individual, on families and on the broader community (Visser & Routledge, 2007).

Substance abuse has been linked to criminal behaviour (Nurco, Hanlon, & Kinlock, 1991; Sullivan & Hamilton, 2007). Crime rates in South Africa are amongst some of the highest in the world (Demombynes & Özler, 2005). The South African Police Services reported that from 2009 to 2010 there were 16 834 murders, 197 286 assault cases and 18 706 house robberies (Burger, Gould, & Newham, 2010). Crime in South Africa is more likely to be committed by adolescents and young adults (Schönteich, 1999). Engagement in criminal behaviour is damaging to the individual as well as the broader community (Jessor, 1991; Mandisa, 2007).

Substance abuse has also been linked to gang involvement (Bjerregaard, 2010; De La Rosa, Rugh, & Rojas, 2005; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2004; Ward & Bakhuis, 2010). In the late 1990s it was estimated that the number of gangs in the Cape Flats area was 130, with approximately 100 000 members. Often, these gangs recruit youth as members. Gangs pose a serious threat to individuals and communities as they are associated with high levels of crime, prostitution and drug consumption (Standing, 2005).

Despite the high prevalence rates of substance abuse, crime and gangs in South Africa, there appears to be very little South African research on substance abuse and criminality that makes use of a resilience framework. The focus has been possible causes for engagement in substance abuse and criminality and the protective factors that may play a role in this (Mandisa, 2007; Louw, Strydom, & Esterhuysen, 2005; Patrick et al., 2010; Ward &

Bakhuis, 2010). Understanding people who have been resilient to substance abuse and criminality has potential to shed light on effective interventions.

Focus within resilience research has evolved over time. Initially, attention was confined to the personal qualities of individuals that enabled resilience (Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000). These included personality traits, dispositional characteristics and biological aspects of the individual (Theron & Theron, 2010). Increasingly, however, it has been acknowledged that resilience may also derive from factors external to the individual (Luthar et al., 2000). As a result, resilience has come to be understood as involving protective factors that reside both within the individual, and within their families, communities and political setting (Theron & Theron, 2010; Ungar, 2008). This development paved the way for understanding resilience as a process that involves both the capacity of an individual to navigate towards and negotiate for resources that will promote their health, and as a condition of that individual's family, community and culture to provide these resources. Within this understanding of resilience, the individual has agency and accordingly plays an active role in seeking help (Ungar, 2008). The notion of agency argues that human beings participate meaningfully within the world and are able to initiate and affect changes within their lives (Adler, in press; Yanchar, 2011). However, agency is dependent on the individual's context; the individual can only navigate towards what is available to him/her in his/her environment (Ungar, 2008).

Resilience has been defined as positive adaptation in the context of severe adversity (Luthar et al., 2000; Masten, 2001). Researchers working within the developmental sphere have specified that in order for at-risk children to be labelled resilient they must meet the major expectations of a given society or culture, given their age and situation. Other researchers, particularly those concerned with prevention of substance abuse and psychopathology, are concerned with the absence of psychopathology or a low level of symptoms and impairment (Masten, 2001).

To conceptualise the connection between adversity and positive adjustment, some researchers have made use of a variable-centred approach, while others have made use of a person-centred approach (Luthar et al., 2000). With a variable-centred approach, multivariate statistics are used to test for potential relationships between the degree of adversity, outcome and potential protective factors within the individual or their environment that may protect them from the adversity (Masten, 2001). A problem with using this approach is that it cannot provide information about the exposure of resilient individuals to risk factors as well as the experiences of these individuals in terms of risk exposure and adaptation (Hauser & Allen,

2006). With a person-centred approach, variables are understood in their naturally occurring configurations and an attempt is made to capture organised patterns of adaptation that occur naturally (Masten, 2001).

Research to date suggests that risk factors for becoming involved with substance abuse and criminality include the experience of adverse events, associating with delinquent peers, poor parenting and low levels of commitment to school (Anda et al., 2006; Esbenson, Peterson, Taylor, & Freng, 2009; Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Hawkins et al., 2000; Kliewer & Murrelle, 2002; Palermo, 2009; Tiet et al., 2010; Xiamong et al., 2002). Involvement in antisocial behaviour can be divided into two groups: one, smaller group engages in antisocial activities at every life stage (life-course-persistent antisocial behaviour), while another, larger group engage in these activities only during adolescence (adolescent-limited antisocial behaviour). However, “snares” (such as incarceration) can make it more difficult for even this latter group to disengage from antisocial activities (Moffit, 1993). Protective mechanisms play a role in this disengagement.

Academic competence has been identified as one of these mechanisms (Mescheke & Patterson, 2003; Moffit, 1993; Stoiber & Good, 1998). But the focus in more recent quantitative research has been on identifying protective mechanisms external to the individual. Coming from a supportive family environment, low levels of parental discord, greater bonding with teachers and less engagement with delinquent peers have all been identified as protective mechanisms involved in resilience to substance abuse and criminality (Carr & Vandiver, 2002; Meschke & Patterson, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2000; Ryan, Miller-Loesi, & Nieri, 2007; Stoiber & Good, 1998; Tiet et al., 2010; Xiamong et al., 2002).

While the main focus in quantitative research has been on protective mechanisms that reside within the individual’s context, some attention has been drawn to identifying resilience as a process. For example, Kumpfer and Bluth (2004) argue that the transactional processes involved in the relationship between parents and their children are important in promoting resilience to substance misuse. They acknowledge that individuals have agency within these processes to actively make changes in their environments. But in general quantitative research in this area appears to be lacking in its consideration of resilience as a process; little attention is paid to the agency of an individual navigating towards resilience.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, appears to focus on the agency of the individual and on the role of the social context in the resilience process. Self-reflection, in which individuals reflect on the consequences of abusing substances and recognise that they need to make changes in their lives, is a common theme that emerges. Another theme is the

development of a personal sense of control and choice in which individuals actively make changes in their lives. Support from friends, family and mentors as well as religious practices have also been identified as important in overcoming addiction (Mohatt et al., 2007; Stajduhar, Funk, Shaw, Bottorff, & Johnson, 2009; Etherington, 2006).

Qualitative research on resilience to criminality is lacking. However, one qualitative study explored resilience amongst formerly incarcerated youth and found that those who, post-incarceration, had not committed another criminal offence had made a conscious choice to change their lives and had a goal for what they wanted their lives to be like in the future. They also had access to social support (Todis, Bullis, Waintrup, Schultz, & D'Ambrosio, 2001).

Resilience research needs to start focussing on *how* individuals deal with the risks they experience, which includes exploring their personal agency in the resilience process (Rutter, 2007). Research in this area also needs to become more participatory in order to gain a better understanding of the role of the individual's context in resilience (Ungar, 2008). Substance abuse and criminality are problems amongst youth in Cape Town which are in need of intervention. Resilience research that makes use of qualitative methodology could guide this intervention as it would offer insight into the pathways to resilience (Theron & Theron, 2010). Employing a narrative framework would offer an understanding of the individual's personal agency in the resilience process, and it would give insight into the context in which their resilience was shaped.

The aim of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of resilience from the perspective of young men who were resilient to substance abuse and criminality. Specifically, I was interested in gaining an understanding of the role of these young men as active agents, as well as the role of their context, in the resilience process. Through employing narrative methodology I aimed to explore aspects of themselves and their contexts that these young men perceive as important in their resilience.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative methodology aims to understand actions, behaviour and decisions from the perspective of the social actor. It is interested in how people experience the world, how they make sense of it and the meanings they attribute to events (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Willig, 2001). Employing qualitative methodology was accordingly suitable to this research because it allowed for exploration of the experiences of resilient individuals and the meanings they attribute to these experiences. A person-centred framework has been used as it enabled these experiences to be explored as they occur naturally.

A narrative research design has been employed in this research. People, particularly those who experience difficult life transitions, often make sense of their experiences through narrative (Riessman, 1993). A narrative design can shed light on how peoples' experiences inform the resilience process; how their styles of coping and effective use of resources within their environments contribute to their adaptation to adversity (Hauser, Golden, & Allen, 2006). It is through narratives that we can explore the perspective of the narrator, how they understand past actions and how they create and maintain meaning over time. Furthermore, narrative methodology enables the individual's context to be taken into account as within narratives the individual's family, school or community norms are presented clearly (Hauser et al., 2006; Riessman, 1993; Riessman, 2008).

A narrative framework does not offer direct access to another's experience and as a result researchers deal with representations of experience. The individual reflects on his/her experience and then re-presents aspects of it to others (Riessman, 1993). The story they choose to tell is told to a particular audience (in this case, the researcher) and for a particular purpose (Etherington, 2006). The story is then transcribed and analysed by the researcher who presents it in a particular way. It is then read by others who bring their own interpretations to it. Narratives accordingly represent reality partially and selectively. However, this research was interested in gaining an understanding of resilience from the perspective of resilient individuals, and using a narrative design enabled this as within this design the narrator's agency in composing the narrative is central (Riessman, 1993).

Participants

Eight men ranging in age from 18-42 years were interviewed for this research. Seven of these men were coloured and one was black. They were all English-speaking, although it was not a first language for all of them. A program evaluation project provided access to these participants. They were drawn from a faith-based substance abuse program that serves men from a predominantly coloured community. Within this program interactive workshops are used that focus on self-reflection, social support, goal-setting, communication, anger management and spirituality. An aftercare program is also offered in which group counselling sessions are made available and skills are taught in an attempt to help participants integrate back into society.

Purposive sampling was used in this research as the participants were selected on the basis of pre-determined criteria (Cozby, 2009), these being past substance abuse and criminality. Five of the participants had completed the program from which I recruited them and three of them had participated in a different faith-based program. Half of the men also used to be involved in a gang. They have all disengaged from antisocial behaviour and now work for the substance abuse program from which they were recruited. Their work involves facilitating and coordinating the activities that members of the program go through and creating awareness of what the program offers.

In terms of Moffitt's (1993) typology of offending, these participants appear to fall under the classification of adolescent-limited as the majority of them ended their involvement with antisocial activities in their early twenties and adopted more prosocial adult roles. A few participants, however, only stopped their antisocial activities while they were in their thirties, possibly because the transition had been delayed by snares such as substance misuse or incarceration.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the University of Cape Town (UCT) Department of Psychology was granted for this research. Permission to interview the participants was sought from the head of the substance abuse program that the men work for. Before the interviews began, participants were informed of the confidential nature of the interview information, that pseudonyms would be used in the project and that their participation was voluntary. The participants were also made aware of counselling services they can contact, should they have any feelings of anger, sadness, anxiety or discomfort resulting from the interviews (see Appendix A for more details).

In terms of the benefits of this research, the information gained could be incorporated into the teachings and awareness initiatives of the substance abuse program with which the participants are affiliated. Accordingly, a summarised version of the thesis will be given to the head of the substance abuse program.

Data Collection

Narrative interviews were used in this research. The interviews were unstructured as less structure within an interview enables the emergence of narratives through inviting the participants to voice their opinions and thoughts, through giving them control over the introduction and flow of topics, and through encouraging extensive responses (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 1993).

Following this unstructured method, several broad questions on the topic of inquiry were formulated (see Appendix B). These questions were open-ended as these are more likely to encourage narratives (Riessman, 1993). In addition, probe questions were included in the interviews in case the participants had any difficulty relaying their stories (Riessman, 1993; Parker, 2005).

Once a draft of the project had been formulated, a focus group discussion took place in which the findings of this research were presented to five of the participants. No convenient time could be found for all the participants, and so a time was chosen in which most could attend. Conversation on these findings amongst the participants was facilitated by the researcher (see Appendix C) (Babbie & Mouton, 2008; Riessman, 1993).

Procedure

The participants were interviewed individually over a period of four days. Each interview ranged in length from 30 to 60 minutes. The interviews took place in private rooms at their place of employment, and they were recorded. The first interview was used as a pilot. It was reviewed by both the researcher and her supervisor and it was determined that appropriate information was gathered and so the interviews continued.

During the interview (see Appendix B for the full schedule) the participants were asked how they came to be involved in substance abuse and criminality and how they turned away from these things. The emphasis was on hearing their story, but as the above review demonstrates, it is important to gain an understanding of their context. The researcher asked them questions related to their context if they did not divulge much information about this. Once all the interviews were completed, they were transcribed by the researcher.

The findings of this research were then taken back to five of the interview participants and their comments were incorporated into the project.

Data transcription and analysis

Transcription allows for exploration of the way in which stories are told, which provides us with clues as to their meaning (Riessman, 1993). Accordingly, during transcription the researcher paid attention to the participants' tone of voice, the sorts of words they used, whether there were silences, gaps or pauses in their narratives and which words or phrases were emphasised (Fraser, 2004; Riessman, 1993).

The data was analysed using narrative analysis and thematic narrative analysis. Narrative analysis draws attention to how individuals make sense of their lives (Hauser & Allen, 2006). It does this firstly by preserving narrative accounts rather than fragmenting them into thematic categories that would prevent the individual's agency from emerging (Riessman, 2008). And secondly by paying attention not only to the content of the narrative but also to how and why it is structured in a particular way. The analyst looks for meanings within the narrative accounts. In this way the participant's experience is privileged (Riessman, 1993). Influential contextual elements can also be explored with narrative analysis (Hauser et al., 2006). The researcher can look for aspects within narratives that involve other people, cultural conventions and social systems (Fraser, 2004).

Thematic narrative analysis was also used as it allowed for exploration of particular aspects of the individual as well as their context which have been associated with resilience in past literature. With thematic narrative analysis the analyst explores each case individually, making use of prior theory to inform the interpretation, but also looking for novel theoretical insights within the narrative accounts (Riessman, 2008).

I began the analysis by identifying personal narratives within the interviews. Personal narratives are brief, topically specific stories (Riessman, 2000). In order to identify these stories I looked for words that signalled that the participant was going to explore a new topic (for example "But you know what always used to happen?" [Luke]), and words that signalled that the topic was ending (for example "ya that is where I am today" [Peter]) (Jefferson, 1978). I also looked for parts of the interviews that had a story-like feel – a beginning, middle and end. My research questions informed which topically specific stories I chose to include (Riessman 1993, 2000). During the analysis procedure I looked at not only the content of the participants' narratives but also at the structure. I also looked for similarities across their narratives in order to identify common themes.

Within this project, pseudonyms have been used for the participants, for the program with which they are affiliated and for suburbs to which they refer. This is so to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Ellipsis dots have been used to indicate where parts of their interviews were excluded and square brackets have been used to indicate words that were not used by the participants.

Reflexivity

While a narrative research design privileges the perspective of the narrator, interpretation cannot be avoided (Riessman, 1993). It is important, therefore, that the researcher reviews her role in the research process (Willig, 2008). In terms of personal reflexivity, I occupy an academic position within UCT which could have affected how I related to the participants (Parker, 2005) and how they related to me. One of the participants appeared to implicitly acknowledge my academic positioning:

Andrew: I've got a friend she studied psychology...She's got her honours and that...[When] you study psychology you only work one on one.

Jane: Ya.

Andrew: You always in the office, you like a shrink and go on the couch and do that. Here Andrew seems to be aware of my background in psychology which may have affected his stories. Indeed during the interview he drew on psychological terminology in that he spoke about how he turned to substance use in an attempt to “numb [his] senses” to “subconscious” and “conscious” problems he had growing up. My academic position, therefore, may have affected the stories these participants told.

Another important aspect of personal reflexivity is acknowledging that I am a white, middle class female who interviewed predominantly coloured, working class males. These differences between us could have had an effect on our interactions. The following story in which Richard explores the crimes he and other gang members committed during apartheid illustrates this:

Richard: ...the money that we steal wasn't for the struggle it was for our drug habit, ya. But there when we got familiar, more, it seems right to steal from, uh, with all respect, from the white people.

Here Richard is clearly aware of my race and the phrase “with all respect” indicates that he wishes to ensure that this story does not offend me. My racial positioning, particularly given the historical context of apartheid, may have had an impact on these men's stories. What the above also illustrates is that these stories are situated within a particular socio-political

context (Riessman, 1993). These men have grown up being exposed to the negative repercussions of apartheid and this context shapes their stories.

A further aspect of reflexivity is the interactional nature of the interviews (Enosh & Buchbinder, 2005; Riessman, 1993):

Steven: And then this gang that I initially then joined, they wasn't so *effective*.

Jane: So what you mean it wasn't effective?

Steven: They wasn't like um (pause) like, having the, the, the drawing the crowd, everybody looking there, you know, um.

Jane: Oh I see, ok alright.

Steven: Because that was my main objective now that was my goal to, to-

Jane: You wanted to make friends?

Steven: I wanna make friends and I wanna be popular amongst the girls and I want to have you know, just people around me.

The above is an example of how I had an effect on Steven's storytelling; the questions that I asked shaped the story he told. These participants' narratives, therefore, are situated within an interactional context (Riessman, 1993, 2003) and should not be understood within a vacuum.

In an attempt to ensure that my interpretation of these men's stories was valid, the findings generated from this research were taken back to five of the participants, and their feedback was then incorporated into the final project (Riessman, 1993).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The structure and organisation of the narratives

A commonality across the participant's narratives is that they all explored how their experiences shaped their lives and the decisions they made. This sort of self-reflection is emphasised in the program with which they are affiliated, and their engagement with it in their stories may also indicate that it is an important aspect of the resilience process. Indeed it is a concept that is evident in other qualitative research on resilience to substance abuse (Mohatt et al., 2007; Stajduhar et al., 2009).

Another commonality is that the participants presented conversion narratives in which a personal transformation takes place (Bryant & Cox, 2004; Snow & Machalek, 1986). This transformation involves a change from being a delinquent youth to becoming a prosocial adult. For example, at the beginning of Steven's interview he discussed how he used to take part in "gang violence, gang activities...selling drugs on streets". And he ended his interview by discussing how he now goes into the communities and "share[s] information...that this is the effects that...drugs gives...". This illustrates that there has been a shift in the way in which the participants understand themselves.

A further commonality is that the participants' narratives were generally organised temporally (Riessman, 2000) and followed a common trajectory: they began their conversations with me with a discussion of their childhood experiences in which many of them explored the difficulties they endured growing up as well as the positive aspects of their childhood. They then moved on to discuss their introduction to drugs and criminality, the drug and crime-related activities they took part in and the difficulties they experienced as a result of these activities. Many of them went on to discuss their desire to stop these activities which was often triggered by a pivotal event in their lives. Many also discussed an intervention they experienced. They all generally ended their narratives with a discussion of their present-day challenges, their achievements and their desire to "give back" to their communities. In general the stories they told were quite rich in detail and complexities.

The general temporal arrangement of these stories along this common trajectory, as well as their attention to detail may indicate that these participants understand their resilience as a coherent but complicated process with many different aspects, and do not see it as a fixed trait. What this would imply is that the resilience process they experienced involves active navigation of their environment in an attempt to overcome adversity (Ungar, 2008).

It is important to note, however, that the participants followed this narrative trajectory to varying degrees; not all of them explored each of the steps in the trajectory and not all of them explored them in the above order. A few participants did not tell many stories and the stories they did tell tended to focus on specific events that had impacted the decisions they had made. Indeed they would often, in response to my questions, return to these stories in their interviews (Riessman, 2003). This would imply that they view these significant events as playing an important role in their resilience.

This analysis follows the common trajectory that the participants tended to follow in their interviews. Drawing on the stories they told I discuss how they became involved with substance abuse and criminality, how they disengaged from these things and how they are managing to keep their lives on track. Common themes that emerge across their narratives are also discussed. I acknowledge that the interpretation I offer is one of many. I offer this particular interpretation in an attempt to highlight the resilience process followed by men who have disengaged from delinquent behaviour.

Becoming involved with substance abuse and criminality

The participants' substance abuse and criminal activities began in their adolescent years. Adolescence is a critical period of development often marked with high levels of instability and change (Meschke & Patterson, 2003). This period may put youth at risk for engaging in antisocial behaviour (Moffit, 1993). A further risk factor may be the environment in which these participants grew up.

Although the system of apartheid has long been dismantled, for many non-white South Africans life has not changed substantially and inequality still exists across racial categories in terms of employment, housing and access to adequate health care and education (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). The participants in this study have had to endure these sorts of inequalities. Indeed seven out of the eight participants grew up in low socioeconomic suburbs where they were exposed to substance use, crime and gang-related activities. As Liam notes "growing up here in Oakhurst it was about gangs all the time". And as Luke acknowledges "Greenoaks was *filled*...with drug merchants...". One of the participants grew up in a more middle class background but moved around quite frequently with his family. Some of the participants were also exposed to substance abuse and gang-related activities within their family environment: Steven and Liam's fathers were both alcoholics and Peter's father was a drug addict. Peter's father and brothers, Luke's father and Liam's brother were also involved

in gang-related activities. Some of the participants acknowledge that the environment in which they grew up may have contributed to their delinquent behaviour. For example, Steven discussed how youth can “model” the behaviour of their parents and family members and “what [they] see in [their] communities”. This indicates the importance of ensuring that youth have access to positive role models.

The participants’ substance use tended to begin with cannabis and alcohol. They then went on to abuse a range of drugs including methamphetamine, methaqualone (mandrax), heroin, ecstasy and crack cocaine. This finding is consistent with previous research which has shown that alcohol and cannabis use is often a “gateway” into other illicit drugs (Hall & Lynskey, 2005; Patrick et al., 2009).

Those participants who were involved with gangs participated in various activities including the selling and transportation of drugs, the ordering of executions, engagement in gang fights, murder and rape. These ex-gang members also spent time in prison: Peter and Steven were both in prison for several months, and Liam and Richard were in prison for approximately 13 years. Those participants who were not gang members were involved with minor criminal activities such as stealing money and possessions from their family members and from their places of work. It appears that these non-gang members were generally unwilling to commit more serious crimes. Liam, an ex-gang member, stated that those who join a gang “like risk”. Similarly, Steven (also an ex-gang member) stated that gang members “work from adrenalin”. But those who were not gang members appeared to not want to engage in risk-taking behaviour. Gary, for example, notes that “one thing I never used to like doing is... breaking houses...breaking cars stuff like that...I would stay away from the stuff”. An unwillingness to commit serious crimes may have contributed to half the participants choosing not to become involved with a gang.

For many of the participants it appears that the experience of childhood difficulties contributed to their substance abuse and criminality. This is consistent with previous literature which has found that the experience of adversity contributes to antisocial behaviour (Anda et al., 2006; Tiet et al., 2010). In the present study, Gary discussed how his mother left him to be raised by an abusive uncle. He appeared uncomfortable, however, when talking about the abuse, stating at one point “But that’s...another story”. His discomfort and avoidance in discussing it suggests that the experience was a traumatic one (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). Gary felt as though he “wasn’t receiving...that father figure love” from his uncle and so when he was five years old he ran away and lived on the streets for roughly a year. Child Welfare then took him in and he was placed in a foster home. He discussed how

his foster parents were good to him, but the feelings of “reject[ion]” persisted. He then “end[ed] up with the wrong friends” and amongst them he “felt like this is [his] place”. When he was with these friends, he chose to use drugs. Steven also experienced difficulties with his parents who divorced when he began high school:

Steven: ...At the end of the day there was not a lot of attention you know, being shift on us at that particular time. Because it was all about working double shifts just to provide that there may be food on the table...and because of... the male mentor not being there, that absent you know, absent, father...I went into the, the wrong avenues looking for that um, that role models and so on.

It is evident that Steven felt rejected because of the lack of attention he received from his mother, as well as his father being absent in his life. As a result he, like Gary, sought acceptance elsewhere. Gary found his acceptance through becoming involved with drug-taking peers, while Steven found his through becoming involved with a gang. He joined a gang soon after his parent’s divorce and began taking drugs thereafter.

This theme of wanting acceptance is evident amongst most of the other participants’ stories too. Trevor, for example, discussed how he “wanted to *fit* in with [his older friends]. And in order for [him] to fit in [he] had to do certain things with them”. It was with these older friends that Trevor first tried drugs. The participants’ desire to be accepted by delinquent peers appears to have contributed to their substance abuse and criminal behaviour. This is consistent with previous literature which has found that associating with delinquent peers is a risk factor for drug use and criminality (Esbenson et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2000; Kliwer & Murrelle, 2007; Palermo, 2009; Tiet et al., 2010; De La Rosa et al., 2005).

Previous literature has also shown that becoming a gang member puts youth at risk for drug use (Bjerregaard, 2010; De La Rosa et al., 2005; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2004). In the present study it was found that becoming associated with a gang appears to play a role in drug-taking. Steven, for example, discussed how the senior gang members would “*pump* [the junior members] in with drugs to get us addicted...”. The implication of these findings is that youth need to be encouraged to associate with more competent peers who do not engage with delinquent activities. A further implication is that senior gang members need to be encouraged to change their lives. As Richard notes “the older people that are still involved in gangsterism, their mindsets need to be changed...because the younger guys are looking up to them”.

Liam told a slightly different story in terms of his peers: it appears that he did not join a gang in order to find acceptance, but rather to find protection. Liam and a friend were

sexually abused by two men when they were roughly eight years old. It seems that the event had a profound effect on Liam:

Liam: I never told anyone I just kept it a secret. But...what I did do...I started to um, get me friends...that is stronger than me and. But I was always, always the one, with the *mind* that have control over them, so they could... protect me, all the way...

The above suggests that the sexual abuse Liam experienced was traumatic as he avoided talking about it with others, and also sought to gain control over his peers; the experience of trauma can result in feeling a lack of control (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). Throughout most of the interview Liam kept returning to this theme of wanting to be in control. In high school he went on to join a gang and became a gang leader. He also, at a later stage, joined one of the prison gangs.

This desire to be in control was evident amongst the other ex-gang members. Steven, for example, noted that he “saw [him]self on top of the food chain, [he] saw [him]self *running* the organisation”. The ex-gang members all, at some point during their involvement with a gang, took on more senior roles. Interestingly, Steven called the gang an “organisation”. Later on in his interview, he also referred to his fellow gang members as his “colleagues”. The use of such formal terms may indicate the importance he attached to being involved with a gang.

Luke also experienced a childhood difficulty in that his father was murdered when Luke was six years old. He, like Gary, also appeared to find it difficult to discuss as when asked how he had felt about it, Luke said that he could not remember. Those who experience trauma may avoid not only talking to others about the event, but also avoid any distressing feelings associated with it by detaching themselves from their emotions (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). He did, however, go on to tell the following story which explores the effect the loss of his father had on him:

Luke: ...Like I even think that like plays a big role in my, um, going onto drugs man...all the children would come and they would talk about their daddies...And then you know what I would do I would sommer lie man and I would sommer say, no and “my daddy but you know *my* daddy’s overseas”, then I would *lie* man like that...In order to cover maybe the hurt or the pain of not having a father.

Losing a parent can be very traumatic for youth and can contribute to delinquent behaviour (Ellis & Granger, 2002). For Luke, this seems to be the case as he links the negative effect of losing his father to his involvement with drugs. Lying to his peers about his father’s death may indicate that he felt ashamed of it as shame is a common reaction to trauma (Platt &

Freyd, in press). What is clear from the above stories is that these young men lacked effective parenting in their lives, in particular for some from their fathers, which contributed to their substance use and criminality.

A lack of parental involvement has been linked to substance abuse and delinquent behaviour amongst youth (Hawkins et al., 1992; Hawkins et al., 2000; Xiamong et al., 2002). Parents play an important role in their children's lives, and involvement and engagement by parents has been found to reduce the frequency of behavioural problems, criminal activities and substance use amongst youth (Leidya et al., 2011; Sarkadi, Kristiansson, Oberklaid, & Bremberg, 2008; Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2004). This highlights the importance of effective parenting strategies in the lives of youth, particularly amongst youth who are at risk for engaging in antisocial behaviour. An example of an effective strategy is parent-adolescent communication as it has been shown to be a protective factor in resilience to substance abuse and gang involvement (Meschke & Patterson, 2003; Ryan et al., 2007; Xiamong et al., 2002). While the circumstances within which these participants and their families live may make it difficult for parents to be actively involved in their children's lives, it is nevertheless important to encourage them to do so, perhaps through parenting skills workshops, as ineffective parenting may have a profound effect on their children's development.

Schooling is another key contextual factor in children's development. A lack of commitment to school has been identified as a risk factor for substance abuse and delinquent behaviour (Esbenson et al., 2009; Hawkins et al., 2000; Kliwer & Murrelle, 2002; Palermo, 2009). The majority of the participants in this study either decided to leave school or were expelled, after which their involvement in drug and crime-related activities heightened. However, these participants were nonetheless intelligent students. Peter, for example, stated how in school he was "an A student". Academic competence has been found as a protective mechanism in resilience to antisocial behaviour (Mescheke & Patterson, 2003; Moffit, 1993; Stoiber & Good, 1998). This particular sample, therefore, presents with an interesting contrast: they showed low levels of commitment to school, but were nonetheless academically competent. It is possible that they became so deeply involved with drug and crime-related activities that their academic competence was not able to act as a protective factor at that time. Indeed Richard discussed how his delinquent behaviour "became a lifestyle...so [he] lost interest [in] going to school".

The above discussion highlights the importance of ensuring that youth have access to positive role models within their families and communities, and that interventions are made available for youth growing up in adversity that help them recognise and cope with childhood

stressors such as abuse, divorce and neglect (Dube et al., 2006). It also highlights the importance of offering parenting skills workshops and after-school care and activities within low socioeconomic areas. Steven discussed how trips to "...colleges and universities" should be arranged for youth so that "they can now see, this is where they can still end up". It also demonstrates the importance of strengthening schools so that they may act as a protective mechanism in the resilience process, and encouraging youth to finish their schooling careers and to associate with peers who will have a positive influence on them.

Turning away from substance abuse and criminality

When the participants began talking about their disengagement from delinquent behaviour, most of them discussed how their drug-taking started to have a negative impact on their lives. Andrew, for example, mentioned how he "hit rock bottom" as a result of his drug abuse. The other participants generally expressed similar sentiments. This is consistent with previous literature which has demonstrated that recognising the negative consequences of drug abuse is an important aspect of the resilience process (Mohatt et al., 2007; Stajduhar et al., 2009). For most of the participants in this study the negative impact of their drug-taking contributed to their desire to stop. For example, Steven, Liam and Gary all stopped using drugs soon after they had experienced this "rock bottom" stage. However, all three of them relapsed and began using drugs again. It appears, therefore, that there are other factors that need to be considered.

One of these factors may be the experience of certain events that appear to trigger a desire to change. Some of the participants' discussions indicate that this desire to change is an important aspect of the resilience process. For example, when asked whether his parents tried to put a stop to his drug and gang involvement, Liam's response was, "My mother...always want to help and stuff but, I followed my own way". As Luke notes "...those people that want to come right, they come right". This is consistent with Stajduhar et al.'s (2009) study in which the participants expressed the importance of having a genuine desire to quit drug use. Given that those intervening amongst delinquent youth are unlikely to be aware of when the individual wants to change, repeated intervention attempts are important.

The experience of events motivating an individual to stop using drugs is evident in past literature (Mohatt et al., 2007; Tebes, Irish, Puglisi Vasquez, & Perkins, 2004). In this study, Peter lost three people close to him to murder. After discussing the third murder he stated, "So I thought no...I'm getting out of this, this is the *last* now, because this can't just happen every time". When describing these murders, Peter went into a large amount of detail

which may be an indication that the experience was a traumatic one as traumatic events can be remembered quite vividly (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). After these murders Peter decided to move suburbs and was soon approached by other young gang members to join their gang.

Peter's thoughts on this are as follows:

Peter: I *pictured* already...the first day when I started using drugs and like, when [a close friend] came to me and he gave me the drugs also. And, *everything* that happened in Kingsford, so it's like do I want the same thing to happen for me in Oakhurst?...I started really thinking of like, no, it's like, this I don't want.

Peter accordingly chose not to become involved with the gang but he did carry on using drugs for a little while.

Steven also experienced a negative event which appeared to prompt him into leaving the gang culture. He was shot by a rival gang member and labelled the event a "turning point". Like Peter, he also went into a lot of detail when describing the shooting incident which again may indicate that the event was traumatic for him. While he was recovering in hospital, none of his fellow gang members visited him, and when he wanted to take revenge for the shooting, none of the gang members were willing to do this. This seemed to have a profound effect on Steven as he told the other gang members, "*this* is the reason why I don't wanna be [in the gang]". He stated this within the interview in a rather threatening and angry tone of voice which may indicate how upsetting the experience was for him. It appears that the theme of wanting to be accepted has returned. Low levels of family cohesion and satisfaction may prompt youth to turn to gangs in an attempt to find social support, but because of the group dynamics of gangs this desire is not met (Cox, 1996; Xiamong et al., 2002). This speculation can be applied to Steven: he joined a gang in an attempt to find acceptance, and when he realised that he could not count on his fellow gang members, he decided to leave the gang. After leaving Steven became quite heavily involved with drugs and overdosed. Soon after that he joined a substance abuse program and a church where he seems to have found acceptance.

Gary told a story along similar lines to Steven. He joined a substance abuse program but relapsed soon after completing it. He discussed how he felt as though his "family wasn't there for [him]" when he was in the program and how this was "discouraging" to him. At this point Gary decided to leave the program and return home to work on his relationship with his foster family. However, he began using drugs again soon after this. Gary and Steven were both looking for people who they could depend on and who would care for them. When they felt that this had not materialised, they both turned to drugs again, and Steven left the gang.

When Gary started using drugs again, he was living on the streets for a few weeks. He spoke about how this had a big effect on him as it was “a place [he] don’t wanna go back to”. He then sought help from a friend with whom he worked in the substance abuse program. Thereafter, he started volunteering at the Riverdale substance abuse program and has not gone back to drugs.

Similar to Gary, Trevor was kicked out of his home for his drug-taking habits and lived on the streets for some time. While on the streets he felt as though he had “lost everything”. He became involved with a gang member who would provide him with drugs and after a while, this gangster wanted to make Trevor a gang member. Trevor discussed how he was not “keen for that”, and how “that was the breaking point” for him indicating the significance of the event. He then approached his aunt for help, after which he joined the Riverdale substance abuse program.

Liam also experienced a particular event which seemed to motivate him to make changes within his life. For Liam, this event was becoming a father:

Liam: And I found myself not having a cent...for my boy...I had nothing and my shoes were broken I was totally wasted...and I came to a place where I want to commit suicide, I want to take my own life.

Jane: Mmm.

Liam: But I couldn’t have the heart to do it and so I check ya I must do something. So I went to my mother...I said mommy I need help.

After turning to his mother for help, Liam became involved with the Riverdale substance abuse program. A common theme that emerges from Liam’s, Trevor’s and Gary’s stories is the importance of social support in turning away from substance abuse and criminality as all three of them turned to family members or friends for help. The importance of social support in resilience is evident in past literature (Mohatt et al., 2007; Todis et al., 2001; Xiamong et al., 2002).

For some participants, effective social support came from their communities. Peter and Luke were both motivated to stop using drugs after they attended a church service which appeared to speak directly to their situation:

Peter: So they ask like, “Is there anyone that really wanna make a change in their life and like, really feel that you wanna give up”...So I like, yoaw, it’s like, this is exactly what I’m going through like, this can’t be man...

After hearing this Peter went forward and committed his life to God, after which he joined the Riverdale substance abuse program. Luke, like Peter, also joined the same program after

attending a church service which had a significant impact on him. Both participants when describing being invited to church and attending the service went into a lot of detail which may indicate the importance of the events to them. For Luke, the minister who gave the service was a recovered drug addict. This seemed to motivate Luke to change as he noted that “this man changed so there is a possibility to change”. For Richard it appears that this was also the case as a friend who was involved in similar activities to Richard made a change in his life:

Richard: So this desire was already in me, now I've seen, here's a person who's come out of the same, uh system that I were in and I thought ya I must give this a try.

For both Luke and Richard, seeing people who had had similar experiences to their own, but who had managed to make a change in their lives appeared to be a motivating factor for them to make a change within their own lives. For Richard, other motivating factors were that conditions within the prison system began to improve when the apartheid laws were abolished. He spoke about how the prison wardens became more “human” towards them, how their living conditions improved considerably and how social services began offering Life Skills training. As a result of these things Richard said that he “started realising [he] need[s] to change [his] life”.

Previous literature shows that religious beliefs and practices are an important aspect of resilience to substance abuse (Meschke & Patterson, 2003; Mohatt et al., 2007). This finding is evident in this study too as all of the participants described religion as a key part in their disengagement from substance abuse and criminality. Andrew, for example, spoke about how when he joined a substance abuse program he had a spiritual encounter with God where he confessed all his “wrongs” and “shortcomings”. After this event he experienced a “total mind shift”. It appears that this experience was important to Andrew in terms of his recovery. Indeed he explored the event twice more within his interview. Richard in his interview discussed how he gives talks to prison inmates and that he “go with the message that there *is* a way out [of gang involvement], but with God”. The participants' identification with religious beliefs indicates that faith-based organisations may be able to play an important part in encouraging youth to disengage from substance abuse and criminality.

A further way of disengaging from substance abuse and criminality may be through occupying prosocial adult roles. Research has shown that job stability and strong marital attachment inhibit criminal and deviant behaviour (Sampson & Laub, 1990). In this study, Richard discussed how if a gang member “find[s] [him]self [a] job and get[s] married” the other members will generally respect this decision. Adolescent-limited individuals tend to

possess adequate social skills, academic competence and the ability to forge close relationships (Moffit, 1993). The participants in this study appear to possess these skills: some of them are married, they are all actively involved in their communities, they are academically competent, they are currently employed and some of them appear to be in possession of leadership skills as indicated by the senior roles they employed within their gangs. Perhaps it is these sorts of skills that contributed to their ability to turn away from substance abuse and criminality. This indicates the importance of developing these skills in youth who are at risk for engaging in antisocial activities.

What the above discussion highlights is the importance of repeated intervention attempts amongst youth involved in antisocial activities. What it also highlights is the importance of developing academic, leadership and social skills amongst youth, ensuring that youth wanting to turn away from delinquent behaviour have access to adequate social support, and encouraging delinquent youth to become associated with faith-based organisations.

Staying on track

Once the participants had finished discussing their turn away from substance abuse and criminality the majority of them went on to discuss their present-day involvements. For some this included delving into challenges they have experienced recently. Gary, for example, wishes to mend his relationship with his foster parents:

Gary: ...as I learned in the program...about restorative justice. That, it's not about, being forgive[n] man, it's about letting them know, that you did it and, allowing them to...giving them... that space man.

Gary has gone about dealing with this challenge in a proactive manner as he is communicating with his parents and giving them space to understand his past drug addiction. Dealing with these sorts of challenges in a proactive manner is consistent with one of the findings in a study on resilience amongst formerly incarcerated youth where the participants showed a willingness to confront their problems and an ability to cope with them (Todis et al., 2001).

What is clear from Gary's story is that he has been drawing on his experiences of the substance abuse program to mend his relationship with his foster parents. Luke delved into something similar: he discussed how the substance abuse program gave him the necessary "tools" to overcome the obstacles he experienced after stopping drugs. What this points to is

the importance of having an effective substance abuse program that equips ex-drug addicts to handle the challenges they may face even after treatment.

Most of the participants expressed a desire to give back to their communities. For example, Andrew stated how “[his] passion is today helping others out there”. The participants are all giving back to their community in that they are working for the Riverdale substance abuse program. Helping others may be an important factor in former drug addicts’ and criminals’ ability to stay on track. Frankl (1964) argued that human beings’ primary motivational force is to find meaning within their lives. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through becoming involved with altruistic social causes: Survivors of trauma often decide to help others as it provides them with a sense of value and purpose (Kaminer & Eagle, 2010). Indeed a previous study on resilience to substance abuse found that one of the motivations amongst recovered alcoholics for continuing with their sobriety was a desire to serve their community (Mohatt et al., 2007). In this study, Liam discussed how if he were to go back to drug and gang involvement he would be disappointing a lot of people because “[he’s] actually the guy that encourage[s] others...a lot of them believe in [his] past...” and if he were to go back to these things “it can destroy their lives too...they can lose faith in recovering...” The fact that others are dependent on Liam appears to give him a sense of purpose. What this points to is the importance of ensuring that youth who used to engage in antisocial behaviour are encouraged to become involved with their communities.

Aside from helping others, a few of the participants also went into some detail on the other activities with which they are now involved. Luke, for example, discussed how he started an interior decorating company part time. Similarly, Trevor discussed how he started a Gospel group and has also been attending night school in order to complete his matric. One could speculate that the reason these participants chose to discuss their present-day involvements is that they wanted to indicate their successes and achievements. In line with the conversion form of their narratives, these participants began their interviews by constructing themselves as drug addicts and criminals who endured hardships and were often involved in violent activities. Most of them then went on to discuss significant events in their lives which appeared to be turning points in their move away from delinquent behaviour. Towards the end of their interviews they began constructing themselves through their stories as recovered and successful adults. The purpose of ending with these sorts of stories may be to indicate how far they have come since they began their delinquent behaviour.

The above discussion highlights the importance of ensuring that recovering addicts have access to an effective substance abuse program that provides them with the necessary

means to overcome challenges they may face during and after their recovery. What it also highlights is the importance of encouraging youth who have disengaged from delinquent behaviour to become involved with their communities.

CONCLUSION

A few of the participants in this study found sharing their stories with me difficult. They may have been more forthcoming if a structured method had been employed (for example, asking them to explore their involvement with delinquent behaviour by drawing a picture of their lives, as if they ran along a train line with stations). Consideration was given to this before the project commenced, but a concern was that these sorts of methods may be too abstract for the participants.

Given the small sample size, and that the sample was drawn from a faith-based program that serves predominantly a coloured community, these findings cannot be generalised to the greater population. However, the information gained from this in-depth exploration of resilience could inform future research. It would be interesting to explore the narratives of youth who used to engage in delinquent behaviour and who are of a different faith, class and ethnicity, and also the narratives of those who have gone through non-faith-based substance abuse programs. One could explore views amongst different samples on the role of repeated interventions, parenting practices, peers, the school environment, individual skills, social support and community involvement in the resilience process.

This research focussed on the narratives of men who have turned away from substance abuse and criminality. Future research could explore the narratives of females who have disengaged from delinquency to determine whether any gender differences exist across their stories. It would also be interesting to explore the narratives of men who are still involved with delinquent behaviour and compare them with those who are no longer involved.

This narrative analysis has shed light on how experiences of adversity contribute to delinquent behaviour. It has also shed light on the resilience process in which the individual navigates their way towards more health-sustaining behaviours by drawing on both qualities within themselves and qualities within their environment.

The stories these men shared demonstrate that cannabis and alcohol use may be a precursor for other illicit drug use. They also demonstrate that an unwillingness to engage in risky behaviour may contribute to youths' decisions not to become involved with a gang. Their stories further indicate that having family members who are drug addicts and/or gang members, the experience of childhood difficulties such as abuse and parental neglect, ineffective parenting, association with delinquent peers, a lack of commitment to school and

a desire to be in control of and lead one's peers are all contributing factors to becoming involved with substance abuse and criminality.

These men's stories have shown that the negative impact of drug abuse contributes to turning away from drugs. They have also shown that the experience of specific events trigger a desire within the individual to disengage from substance abuse and criminality. Factors which help these individuals make a change in their lives are academic, social and leadership skills, religious beliefs, access to social support within their families and within their communities and encouragement from ex-drug addicts and gang members. Their stories further demonstrate that maintaining a prosocial lifestyle is supported by achievements, having an effective substance abuse program and giving back to others.

The above highlights the importance of ensuring youth have access to positive role models and that adequate support is made available for those enduring childhood difficulties and for those who wish to disengage from antisocial behaviour. It also highlights the importance of improving schools so that they may act as a protective factor, providing parenting skills workshops, social and leadership skills training, aftercare programs and extra-mural activities within communities facing adversity. Furthermore, youth should be encouraged to finish their schooling careers and associate with peers that will exert a positive influence on them. Interventions amongst delinquent youth need to be made repeatedly and intervention programs need to provide their participants with skills training that will enable them to manage challenges they may face during and after their recovery. Delinquent youth should also be encouraged to become involved with faith-based organisations and encouraged to give back to their communities.

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APPENDIX A

Consent form

University of Cape Town

Consent to participate in a research study

Dear staff member of FCRC

Formal title: Resilience to substance abuse and criminality

Study Purpose

You are being asked to participate in a research study being conducted by a student from the Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town. The purpose of this study is to determine how young men came to turn away from substance abuse and gang criminality

Study Procedures

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be interviewed for approximately 60 minutes. The interview includes broad questions about how you became involved with substance abuse and criminality, and how you managed to turn away from them. All information obtained from you will be kept strictly confidential.

What will you be asked to do: Participation will require that you meet with the researcher at the Resource Centre in Hanover Park at a time set up by you and the researcher. The researcher will interview you for approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be tape recorded. Once the interview has been transcribed, the recording will be erased. Your real name will not be used in the transcript. Instead, we will use a made-up name. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the recording while it exists.

Possible Risks

Participating in the interview may bring on ideas or thoughts that make you upset, anxious or angry. You may also feel uncomfortable or embarrassed talking about some aspects of your life. If this happens, Ursula Engel is available for you to talk to, or, you can contact your local day hospital on 021 692 1250, or the U.C.T Child Guidance Clinic on 021 650 3900. Participation in the study will also take away 60 minutes of your regular work schedule.

We may talk about criminal activities with which you were involved. If we do that, please don't tell me any specific details (such as the date and place); If I don't know the details, I cannot be asked about them by the police.

Possible Benefits

There are no direct benefits to you in participating in this study, but my hope is that information gained from this study will be incorporated in some way into the substance abuse

program run by Craven Engel. And that this information could be used to encourage individuals to stay away or turn away from substance abuse and criminality.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to refuse to answer any question. If you decide to participate, you are free to change your mind and discontinue participation at any time. Whether you decide to participate or not, your decision will not affect your employment or your relationship with FCRC in any way.

Confidentiality

Information about you obtained for this study will be kept confidential. Your name will be kept separate from the interview information and when the interview is transcribed and reported on, a pseudo-name (fake name) will be used. The interview information will be made available to the supervisor of this research, Dr Catherine Ward, the person who will be marking this research project and those who this project is presented to. However, these people will not have access to your name and they will in no way be able to link you to the interview information.

Questions

Any study-related questions, problems or emergencies should be directed to:

Jane Kelly 072 170 2105
Dr Catherine Ward 021 650 3422

Questions about your rights as a study participant, comments or complaints about the study also may be presented to the Research Ethics Committee, Department of Psychology, University of Cape Town, which can be reached on 021 650 3417.

I have read the above and am satisfied with my understanding of the study and its possible benefits and risks. My questions about the study have been answered. I hereby voluntarily consent to participation in the research study as described. I have been offered copies of this three-page consent form.

* * *

Signature of participant

Date

Name of participant (printed)

Witness

* * *

This interview will be recorded. This is so that the interview can be transcribed by the researcher. The only person who will listen to the recording is the researcher. Until they listen to it, it will be stored on a password-protected computer. After they have listened to it, it will be destroyed.

I agree that the interview can be recorded.

Signature of participant

Date

Name of participant (printed)

Witness

APPENDIX B

Interview Schedule

Firstly I'd like to thank you for giving up your time to do this interview, I really appreciate it. My name is Jane, and I'm from the University of Cape Town. I am here because I am interested in hearing about how young men came to turn away from substance abuse and criminality. Before we get started properly, I'd like to run through the details of the study and the consent form with you. I have two copies of the consent form, one which you can take away with you and one which I will take home with me once you have signed it.

What this interview entails is me asking you to tell me about how you became involved with substance abuse and crime and how you turned away from these things. I'm interested in hearing your story.

The interview will last for approximately an hour and it will be tape recorded. Only I and my supervisor will have access to this recording. Once I have transcribed it I will erase the recording. The transcription will also be kept strictly confidential: only I, my supervisor and the person who marks my project will have access to it. However, I will be using a made up name in the transcription, and not your real name – I will be keeping your name completely separate from the transcription, so there will be no way of linking you to the interview.

If you would like, you can give me a made-up name that you would like me to use in the transcription?

Participant is given an opportunity to give their made-up name.

Thank you. Your participation in this research is completely voluntary, and should you wish not to answer my questions, or withdraw from the research, please do let me know because you can discontinue the interview at any time and it will in no way be held against you.

It is possible that the things you talk about today might make me you feel upset, angry or embarrassed. If this does happen, Ursula Engel is available for you to talk to. Alternatively, you could go to your local day hospital and ask to see the psychologist there. I have provided you with the contact details. I have also provided the contact details for the Child Guidance Clinic in Rondebosch, should you feel you need any counselling.

We may talk about criminal activities with which you were involved. If we do, then please don't provide me with any specific details (such as the time or place). If I don't know these details, then I cannot talk about them to the police.

There are not any direct benefits to you in participating in this study. However, the information that comes from these interviews could potentially be used to inform the substance abuse program that you work for. And it could be used in other ways (perhaps with other programs) to encourage young people to stay away from substance abuse and gangs.

Would you like to take a few minutes to read through the consent form yourself and see if you have any questions?

Participant is given a few minutes to go through the consent form

Is everything clear to you? Do you have any questions you'd like to ask?

Participant is given an opportunity to ask questions

Ok. Well if you don't have any (other) questions, would you please sign the consent form?

Participant is given an opportunity to sign the consent form.

Thank you. I'm going to switch the tape recorder on now and we can get started with the interview.

I know you've all gone through a substance abuse programme, because you've all had problems and have managed to overcome them successfully. I want to hear about that story. Perhaps you can start by telling me where you were in your life, what your life was like and what you were doing before you joined a programme.

Could you tell me about how all of this started? – How did you become involved with substance abuse crime?

The participant will be given an opportunity to respond to this question. If they have difficulty answering or keeping their story going, the interviewer will make use of probe questions such as "Where did all of this begin?"; "When did you start using alcohol/drugs and become involved with crime?"; "How old were you?"; "What was happening in your life?"; "Who introduced you to drugs/alcohol?" "Can you tell me a little bit more about that" and "Can you explain what you mean by that?"

Could you tell me about how you came for treatment for your substance abuse and how you turned away from crime – How did you reach these decisions?

If the participant has difficulty answering this question or in keeping their story going, probe questions will again be used such as "When did you decide to turn away from these things?"; "What was happening in your life at that point in time?" and "Were there people in your life who helped you with this decision?"

If the participant does not delve much into their context (their family, friends etc), the following questions will be asked:

I wonder if you could tell me a bit about your family life/friends/school experiences/neighbourhood when you were involved with substance abuse and crime?

I wonder if you could also tell me about your family life/friends etc when you turned away from these things?

Thank you very much for sharing your stories with me. I really appreciate you giving up some of your time to do this.

APPENDIX C

Focus group discussion outline

Thank you all for giving up some of your time to be here. The aim of us meeting today is for me to present my project findings to you and then to incorporate any feedback you may have into my project.

Copies of a summary of the project findings are distributed amongst the participants. Before running through this summary the participants are reminded of the aims of this research. The summary they were presented with is as follows:

Becoming involved in substance abuse and gangs

- Childhood difficulties – death, abuse, neglect, divorce
- Feeling rejected in family environment - seeking acceptance with drug-taking friends/gang members
- Wanting to fit in with friends
- A lack of parental involvement
- Senior gang members get junior members addicted to drugs
- Wanting to be in control and to lead others
- Dropping out of school/being expelled, but still being a good student.

Turning away from substance abuse and gangs

- Not turning away from both at same time
- Negative impact of drug-taking
- Specific event/series of events that triggers a desire to change - becoming a father, being shot, losing someone to murder, living on the streets.
- Wanting to change is important
- Importance of social support – friends, family members, ex-drug addicts and gang members, church.
- Importance of religion and God
- Importance of marriage and employment
- All academically competent
- All in possession of leadership skills

Staying on track

- Challenges – dealing with in a proactive manner.
- Importance of having an effective substance abuse program – gives you tools.
- Giving back to community – sense of meaning and purpose.
- Achievements – going back to school, working.

Implications of all of this

- Providing support for those who go through difficulties in childhood
- Encouraging youth to associate with friends who will have a positive influence on them
- Providing parenting skills workshops
- Providing after school care and activities
- Encouraging youth to stay in school
- Repeated attempts at intervening
- Ensuring adequate social support
- Encouraging positive adults roles
- Importance of having a good substance abuse program
- Encouraging community involvement
- Encouraging achievement.

While the above findings are presented and elaborated on, the researcher asks the participants questions such as “Do you all agree with this?” and “Is there anything you would like to add here?”

Thank you all for your valuable feedback

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is using another's work and to pretend that it is ones own.
2. I have used the American Psychological Association (APA) as the convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this essay/report/project/... from the work, or works of other people has been attributed and cited and referenced.
3. This essay/report/project... is my own work.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow, anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as his or her own work.
5. I acknowledge that copying someone else's assignment or essay, or part of it, is wrong, and declare that this is my own work

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____