UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
IYUNIVESITHI YASEKAPA • UNIVERSITEIT VAN KAAPSTAD

Department of Social Development

Exploring How Youth Experience and Perceive Peer Social Support at a Holistic Youth Development Programme in the Western Cape: The Chrysalis Academy

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WNSELL001

A minor dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements to the award of the degree of Masters in Social Science in Social Development

Faculty of Humanities

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University of Cape Town

2022

PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to and quotation in this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:_Signed by candidate_ Date: _____January 15, 2022_____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to give my gratitude to the youth and staff at the Chrysalis Academy who welcomed me and allowed me to be a part of their journey. I was incredibly moved by their openness and vulnerability.

Thank you to my fellow colleagues in the Department of Social Development who gave me support on my journey living in Cape Town and throughout the process of writing this dissertation.

Special thanks to my supervisor Professor Ndangwa Noyoo for his guidance, wisdom and encouragement during the research process and throughout my entire journey at the University of Cape Town.

A final thank you to all of the youth who took part in this study. I felt honored to hear their stories of struggle, learning and resilience. They fight every day to overcome circumstances that are out of their hands. God bless them. The future is brighter because of them.

ABSTRACT

In this study, the main goal was to explore youth experiences and perceptions of peer social support in the Western Cape region of South Africa at the Chrysalis Academy youth programme. The youth in the Western Cape face many obstacles to their development such as gangsterism, drugs, unemployment, lack of social support, volatile living environments and insufficient positive youth development programmes. It was assumed in this study that positive peer social support aligns with the 'stress-buffer' model which claims social support as a buffer to these types of stressful live events and situations. This study sought to magnify the phenomena of peer social support versus the more researched phenomena of parental and teacher support. Research has emphasised parental and teacher support as playing more important roles of social support buffers for youth. The other goal of this study was to explore the ways in which this social support helps to foster resiliency and positive youth development. This study aimed to add to existing research on youth development by providing personal experiences youth had with peers; a facet of social support the researcher assumed was overlooked and was lacking overall in the context of South Africa. This would aid in creating a more in depth understanding of the role of peer support in youth development and help to create programmes and policies that utilise peer support as a main pillar in development to foster resiliency for youth. To this end, semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with twenty participants who lived in different communities throughout Cape Town and the surrounding areas. The participants were graduates of the youth development programme at the Chrysalis Academy; a programme that integrates peer support into their development framework.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction

This study sought to explore how youths experienced and perceived peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape province of South Africa. It is important to note that throughout an individuals' life, there are many stages of human development that he or she passes through. Arguably, the phase of adolescence is an extremely crucial time where youth are finding their way through the world and are challenged and shaped by a myriad of influences. Bronfrenbrenner's ecological approach developed in 1974 recognises that youth are involved in an interconnected network of micro and macro systems and that their "lifestyle choices are shaped by a complex interplay of social norms, economic, gender and spatial inequalities, poor physical environmental conditions and inadequate access to services" (Cooper, De Lannoy & Rule, 2015:60). It is therefore paramount during this developmental phase to harness thoughtful and intentional interventions to promote positive youth development. One of these interventions is positive peer social support. In the context of the Western Cape, an interplay of the existing ecologies in the lives of the youth presents many risks to their development. This dissertation consists of several sections namely the main research question, objectives of the study, clarification of concepts, literature review, theoretical framework, research design, analysis of data and ethical considerations.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Since the end of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) has focused on reforming and redressing the racialised laws and the equitable redistribution of services and rights to the formerly oppressed people in South Africa. In the South African Constitution, sections 7.1 and 7.2 of the Bill of Rights guarantee the rights and values of dignity, equality and freedom of all citizens which are respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled by the state (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996:5). However, these rights seem to be romanticised policy jargon, as the majority of South Africans, including the youth, still do not fully enjoy the benefits of these rights and continue to live in a world fraught with injustices and exclusion. In Cape Town, as in the rest of South Africa, the youth continue to face hardships such as gangsterism, crime, high-risk sexual activity, negative

peer influence, domestic violence, poverty, poor quality education and unsustainable youth programmes. After 1994, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) also responded with programmes to help the youth to overcome the various challenges they faced. One such CSO is the Chrysalis Academy holistic youth development programme, a Positive Youth Development (PYD) organisation in Cape Town, that aims to assist the youth by tapping into their inner potential to foster their resiliency. The PYD program provides a peer support programme as one resiliency protective factor. Nevertheless, this programme has not been extensively researched in the context of youth development in the Western Cape. Specifically the experiences of the youth who have gone through the programme have not been extensively studied.

1.2 Contextualization of the Study

In many parts of the Western Cape, structural inequality institutionalised during colonialism and apartheid has disadvantaged many of these communities' social and economic norms in this area. Social cohesion has been eroded by the apartheid state and this has resulted in volatile environments where it is difficult for the youth to access positive social support. Often a community provides protection, social support, opportunities and a sense of identity for youths (Barrar, 2010). Yet when these communities are unstable and impoverished, illicit behaviours become an outlet for youth and often they revert to peer groups for validation and rites of passage that a healthy community would otherwise provide (Barrar, 2010). Due to these vulnerabilities, Western Cape youth are continuously finding themselves in risky scenarios. Disruptive behaviours such as alcohol abuse and sexual violence are heavily influenced by peer pressure and are rife within the Western Cape (Cooper, De Lannoy & Rule, 2015). South Africa has one of the highest sexual violence rates globally with 40% of girls under 18 reported being raped (Peterson, Bhana & McKay, 2005:1234). Therefore, it is crucial to realise ways in which positive peer support can be created to foster positive developmental outcomes despite these scenarios. In many of these communities, supportive role models and positive peer social support can be hard to access, which is why holistic youth development programmes such as the Chrysalis Academy are so invaluable for youth development.

The Chrysalis Academy was created in 2000 by the Provincial Department of Community Safety in response to the alarming rates of crime in the Western Cape (Kotze, 2003). The Chrysalis

Academy recruits youth ages 18-25 throughout the Western Cape to participate in a three-month programme held three times per year (Meyer, 2017). Each year contains three cohorts consisting of two male groups of 180 participants each and one group of 200 females (Meyer, 2017). The youth are fully boarded and endure five different phases which teach them personal mastery, leadership, therapy techniques, voluntarism, collaboration, technical and vocational training, building agency and reintegrating back into society (Meyer, 2017). During the programme, the participants have access to counseling, career information, bursaries and job opportunities. Whilst learning to develop personal mastery, there is a heavy emphasis on tolerance as the participants are boarded and interact daily with youth and junior instructors from different racial and cultural backgrounds. The mission of the Chrysalis Academy is to provide a space for youth to harness resiliency and unleash their potential through holistic development. The aim is to help develop the participants' "social values and attitudes for their personal growth through provision of knowledge and skills" (Dreke, 2008:4). The mission and aim are accomplished through a holistic approach which recognises the need to integrate the multiple dimensions of a person (mental, spiritual, physical and emotional) into the learning process (Meyer, 2017). The Chrysalis Academy enables these youth to have a safe, constructive and supportive environment to foster positive peer relationships which can help them reach their potential and strengthen resiliency.

Regarding youth resiliency development programmes in the Western Cape, the Chrysalis Academy seems to be of its own calibre that has consistent positive feedback and results of transformative power. Despite extensive research, there have been no youth resiliency programmes equivalent in Africa (Kotze, 2003). There have been four academic studies conducted on the Chrysalis Academy since its inception in 2000. Kotze (2003) conducted a mixed-method programme evaluation with 106 individual interviews, groups interviews and questionnaires. The evaluation found that overall, the programme to be effective because most participants were changed by becoming more confident, assertive, accepting of responsibility and increased community awareness (Kotze, 2003:vii). Also, Dreke (2008) conducted a case study that was a mixed-method research to understand if and how youth-oriented empowerment programmes such as the Chrysalis Academy led to positive integration for 'at-risk' youth (Dreke, 2008:23). During this case study, Dreke (2008) interviewed 11 graduates, conducted a focus group session as well as used a questionnaire with 100 former graduates (Dreke, 2008). Dreke (2008) found a positive

relationship between the Chrysalis Academy as an empowerment programme and social integration when participants went back to their communities after the programme (Dreke, 2008). Hoaeane (2019) conducted an evaluation of the current monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems used by the Chrysalis Academy and the effect on graduates who returned to their community of Lavender Hill (Hoaene, 2019:5). In another study, Mkandawire (2019) evaluated the impact of the outdoor component within the Chrysalis Academy. Furthermore, Davids (2018) conducted an exploratory study with 15 former academy students which focused on the value of the skills training that the youths underwent at the Chrysalis Academy and endeavoured to ascertain if it was a sustainable tool for empowerment (Davids, 2018). Also, Meyer (2017) conducted an exploratory study which sought to specifically explore youth experiences with the holistic approach used at the Chrysalis Academy and if the approach could be used as one developmental pathway for Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) youth in the Western Cape (Meyer, 2017). In this study, Meyer (2017) found out that the youth experienced significant positive mental, emotional and spiritual changes from the holistic approach adopted at the academy.

From the foregoing it can be discerned that there seems to be no previous study that focused on the aspect of peer social support as a resiliency protective factor within the programme and how the youth experience it in transforming their lives. Hence, this research study explored how the youth experienced and perceived peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The overall aim of the study was to explore how youth experienced and perceived peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape at the Chrysalis Academy.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objectives of this study were:

1.4.1 To identify risk factors present in everyday lives of youth.

1.4.2 To explore how youth experienced a peer social support programme offered by the Chrysalis Academy.

1.4.3 To explore how youth perceived peer social support provided by the Chrysalis Academy.

1.4.4 To investigate how peer support fostered resilience in the context of the Chrysalis Academy.

1.4.5 To arrive at particular recommendations for the Chrysalis Academy to strengthen the programme as well as policy interventions for how to engage with youth and build resiliency by drawing lessons from this programme.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

Due to the continuous precarious socio-economic situation in which the youth of the Western Cape find themselves, it was crucial to explore their personal accounts related to the challenges they faced and how they experienced interventions made by the Academy. Therefore, more context based research needed to be conducted due to the unique social ecologies that the youth in the Western Cape found themselves and what kind of forces either hindered or supported their resilience and development (Theron, 2015).

Being a social scientist and development practitioner, the researcher was able to gain insights into the lives of youths during a six-month internship at the Chrysalis Academy. During the internship, she was able to observe the ways in which the Chrysalis Academy nurtured positive peer social support through the PYD design of the programme, and how peer junior instructors and therapeutic care peer groups were used. In existing literature, it can be discerned that peer relationships can have both positive and negative effects on the lives and decisions of youths (Cooper, De Lannoy & Rule, 2015; van Breda & Theron, 2018; Meyer, 2017; Anderson, Sabatelli & Kosutic, 2007). Furthermore, the researcher realised that youth face many risks in their lives and that positive social support is not always available to them in their families or communities. Therefore, due to few exploratory and qualitative studies that personalise contextual youth experiences in the Western Cape, the researcher found it important to explore the programme's ability to harness positive peer social support for their participants and how the participants experienced it (Meyer, 2017). This research could contribute to an understanding of the power of peer social support in youth development programmes and ways that could possibly benefit the youth in their development and resiliency within their social ecological contexts. It could also inform policy and programme design in youth development so that more youths across the Western Cape can also benefit from this type of intervention.

1.6 Research Topic

Exploring How Youth Experienced and Perceived Peer Social Support at a Holistic Youth Development Programme in the Western Cape.

1.7 Main Research Question

How did youth experience and perceive social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape?

1.8 Clarification of Concepts

1.8.1 Youth

For the purpose of this study, youth was defined according to the *National Youth Policy 2015-2020* as persons aged 14 to 35 years old (The Presidency, 2015).

1.8.2 Youth at Promise

In most literature, the term 'at-risk' is often ascribed to youth who are disenfranchised, vulnerable or pre-disposed to environments with high rates of anti-normative social activity. It often denotes a high probability of youth engaging in criminal activities if the activities are present in their environment (Schonert-Reichl, 2000). Giving youth this label further perpetuates the stigma that youth are prone to behavioural problems and is only one factor in larger understanding of adaptation (Meyer, 2017). For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the term 'youth at promise' when discussing youth. This term has more recently been coined in resiliency research to shift the narrative from stigmatising youth towards viewing them in a more positive lens (Bottrell, 2009).

1.8.3 Adolescence

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2011), adolescence exists between the ages of 10 and 19 (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2011). However, a more inclusive and holistic definition that was used for this study categorised adolescence as "the time in which children move toward social and economic independence, develop identity, and acquire skills needed to carry out adult relationships and roles. It is a time of tremendous growth and

potential but also considerable risk during which social contexts exert powerful influences" (DeLannoy, Leibbrandt & Frame, 2015:23). In conjunction with a more holistic definition defined by DeLannoy, Leibbrandt & Frame (2015), Nsamenang (2004) states that the common understanding of adolescence is a "Eurocentric enterprise" which is much more complex in non-Western contexts where youth engage in various cultural practices (Bond, 2017:17). Nsamenang (2004) found that in a non-Western context, youth are often reacting to new challenges as they navigate the balance between tradition and innovation, collectivism and individualism and high suicide rates that are attributed to the change in traditional social roles in their societies compared to their counterparts in industrialised societies (Bond, 2017:17). Therefore, as youth and adolescents around the world experience similar hardships, it is crucial to go beyond the Eurocentric definition of adolescence and explore other ways that adolescents negotiate different influences and ecologies.

1.8.4 Resilience

Michael Ungar defines resiliency as "the outcomes from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (Pinnock, 2016:257). For this study, the process of resiliency shied away from the existing protective factors of individuals and moved towards the current resilience research methods that focused on more contextually specific mechanisms that can foster resiliency (Theron & Theron, 2010:2). Resiliency for this study lies within the constructionist approach which recognises a myriad of negotiations between youth and their environments and the ways youth define resilience for themselves.

1.8.5 Holistic

According to the Chrysalis Academy, the approach to youth development it adheres to is a holistic one. A holistic approach is able to recognise and combine all dimensions of a person's being "into the learning process and meet a variety of needs as a result of their particular socio-economic and psychosocial realities" (Meyer, 2017:iii). This is important since many youth development programmes and interventions focus on one aspect or risk factor and do not address the multidimensional aspects of a person's development.

1.9 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the thrust of the study, the reasons for its undertaking and its importance. It also discussed the main research question, objectives of the study, clarification of concepts, literature review, theoretical framework, research design, analysis of data and ethical considerations. The next chapter discusses the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2. Introduction

This section discusses the literature review of this research study. The purpose of a literature review is to highlight the literature that informs any study. This section focuses on other studies that have been undertaken in youth development, social support, and resiliency and identifies gaps in these areas. It also presents findings of studies and information that are relevant to the youth, in general, as well as South African youth and peer social support.

2.1 Youth Introduction

The period a person is a youth is an extremely crucial one whereby, he or she is challenged, possibly shaped by a myriad of influences and learning to make independent decisions. According to the United Nations, the definition of a youth is persons aged 15 to 24 years old (Sommers, 2015). The population of this age cohort reached 1.2 billion in 2018 and constituted 16% of the world's population and the United Nations estimates it to reach 42% by 2030 (Maluleke, 2020:3). Youths around the world are continuously excluded from key institutions with seven million of them being unemployed and 142 million more out of school (United Nations [UN], 2018:2). According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the youth labour force rates declined by 15% with the gross enrolment ratio rising from 55 to 77% between 1993 and 2018 (DPME, 2020:4). Along with the increase of globalisation, the youth continue to experience the repercussions of political unrest, poor governance, unpredictable socio-economic conditions, climate change and institutional exclusion which are all furthermore exacerbated by the current global pandemic of the Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19). These uncertain and turbulent circumstances have the potential to leave the youth extremely vulnerable.

The United Nation's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development arrived at 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs) with 169 targets aimed at fighting poverty, inequality, and climate change to bring about prosperity (United Nations [UN], 2018:5). Unfortunately, even with the SDG agenda, inequality has in some cases deepened around the world. For example, in emerging markets and developing economies (EMDEs), only 15% of investment needs have been met in

Africa in contrast to 48% in other EMDEs (United National Environment Programme Finance Initiative [UNEP FI], 2018:9).

In a narrower context of the Western Cape, an interplay of the existing ecologies in the lives of youth presents many challenges to their development and resiliency. Many lower socioeconomic communities are rife with societal problems such as gangsterism, crime, high-risk sexual activity, negative peer influence, domestic violence, poverty, poor quality education and unsustainable youth programmes. According to the South African Police Service (SAPS), the Western Cape had 59,4 murders per 100 000 in 2018/19 which makes it eleven times that of the global average (Western Cape Crime Report 2018/19, 2019:14). These high rates of murder are driven by gang violence, drugs, interpersonal violence, and arms proliferation in areas with high socio-economic inequality and high unemployment rates (Western Cape Crime Report 2018/19, 2019:17).

Even with global efforts, literature shows that youth remain in precarious situations while they are simultaneously entering a stage of development and transition to adulthood. They are forming their independence from their caretaker(s) and developing their identities whilst simultaneously facing risks from these multiple sources (DeLannoy, Leibbrandt & Frame, 2015). For some youth, these transitions to adulthood are met with ample support and resources, while other youth do not have access to healthy environments and resources that nurture this transition. However, while the youth are facing various challenges and stages of development, literature has shown that social support and peer social support can act as positive forces in the lives of youth.

Commonly defined as 'perceived support,' social support has been found "to positively affect children and youth's developmental outcomes and well-being" (Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri, 2019:2335). From various studies, it has been found that family, teacher and peer support as an overall net of social support has greatly increased prosocial behavior in youth around the world. In Canada, Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri (2019) found that youth who claimed to have strong social support from various sources reported lower levels of internalising behaviors (Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri, 2019). Anderson, Sabatelli & Kosutic (2007) interviewed inner-city youth in the United States and found that families, urban youth centers and peers were all positive systems of support for youth (Anderson, Sabatelli &

Kosutic, 2007). Another study by Hadebe & Ramukumba (2020) in South Africa found that a commonality between youth with traits of resilience were positive and strong social bonds with family and friends (Hadebe & Ramukumba, 2020:5). It is clear throughout literature that overall social support can be a positive asset in lives of youth around the globe.

More specifically, research has consistently shown and "documented the power of peer relationships to promote positive adjustment, or alternatively, encourage antisocial behaviors (Anderson, Sabatelli & Kosutic, 2007:348). Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld (2006) found evidence that emotional support from peers creates a sense of belonging for South African university students (Wilcox, Winn & Fyvie-Gauld, 2006). In another study conducted on 243 Canadian 7th graders, Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri (2019) found evidence that peer support helps to prevent negative internalizing behaviors in youth (Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri, 2019). In a study on 600 adolescents, Rueger et al. (2010) found similar evidence that peer social support correlates to lower depression levels in youth (Attar-Schwartz, Mishna & Khoury-Kassabri, 2019). In a school context, Wang & Eccles (2012) conducted a study on 1,479 students in the United States where positive peer relationships were directly linked to the increased engagement of youth in school (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

In Mexico, Raffaeli et al. (2013) conducted a study on 6,715 university applicants between 16-21 years old and found evidence consistent with prior studies from the United States and Europe (Raffaeli et al., 2013). The findings showed that depressive symptoms and perceived stress were reduced by social support (Raffaeli et al., 2013:288). However, this study is interesting because in Mexico, families tend to be strongly cohesive and therefore, it indicated that parental support was a larger stress-buffer than peer social support (Raffaeli et al., 2013:288). This finding deviates from other literature that has claimed peer support as more salient than parental support such as in Wang & Eccles (2012) where peer social support was slightly more indicative of prosocial behavioral outcomes than parental and teacher support (Wang & Eccles, 2012:879). This deviation should be highlighted in the context of social support because it exemplifies that in a non-Western context, youth often have varied experiences with social support across different contexts. And as African family systems are increasingly in flux as values shift between traditionalism and

modernism, future studies will most likely be more varied in experiences with social support systems (Bond, 2017).

In this section, the complicated lives of the youth around the world and in South Africa were addressed and the phenomenon of peer social support on youth development and resiliency was explored. Nevertheless, it was also important to delve into the historical context of the country, in order to have a better understanding of contemporary trends of the phenomenon that was being investigated.

2.2 Apartheid Youth History

In the year 1948, the National Party officially implemented the racially discriminatory ideology of apartheid which would erode the lives of youth over decades. This is not to say that racial discrimination did not exist during colonial rule, preceding this era. However, this ideology created policies and state institutions to benefit the white minority population and to disenfranchise the majority African population in a fundamental way. For instance, in 1950, the apartheid government passed the Group Areas Act which relocated non-whites far from the developed city centres and other areas only deemed for whites. During this time, the Group Areas Act broke down the social fabric of communities by nuclear and extended family units, destroying communal spaces and polarising the labour force (Pinnock, 2016).

It is important to note that throughout apartheid, the youth were invaluable protagonists in the resistance against the oppressive state. The youth were the driving force of the liberation movement and were instrumental in forming the militant ANC Youth League in 1943, the Defiance Campaign of 1952 and in helping to create the Freedom Charter (Reynolds, 2012:172). The Sharpeville Massacre of 1960 and the Rivonia Trial of 1964 led to a seemingly victorious period for the National Party when all political opposition was banned (Brown, 2016). The resistance movement relocated underground and the public practiced caution until the country erupted in the Soweto Uprising of 1976. On June 16, 1976, students from secondary schools in Soweto peacefully marched through the township to protest the use of Afrikaans as a medium of educational instruction (Brown, 2016). They were met by state brutality in which 104 children under 16 were killed with the total death count estimated around 300 (Reynolds, 2012:172). The students revolted

against this unnecessary display of force by the State and the township became a war zone. This marked the "moment of transition from apartheid hegemony to popular resistance" as a new generation of youth activists became the centre and thrust of the political movements that created anarchy and eventually overturned apartheid (Brown, 2106:3).

The youth continued to revolt as foot soldiers of the fight against apartheid and in 1985, then Prime Minister, Pieter Willem (PW) Botha, declared the first State of Emergency. The State of Emergencies were used by the apartheid state to use extreme force to maintain control, detained thousands of activists and placed harsh regulations on the freedom of the press. This prolonged draconian rule continued until the late 1980's when the government received international dissent for its human rights abuses and the armed struggle intensified.

During apartheid, in their efforts to dismantle apartheid, the youth were met with merciless violence and unbearable torture from the armed state. The South African Human Rights Commission found that from 1984 to 1988 alone, 19 500 children under the age of 18 were detained; these were 37.5% of the total detainees (Reynolds, 2012:165). Physical and emotional torture was commonplace and the youth were constantly targeted. As a result of this continuous force, the state's solution to criminal youth was incarceration and harsh punishments (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). Therefore, since the end of apartheid in 1994, the reaction to any type of anti-social youth behaviours seem to be rooted in punishment, perceiving youth as problematic and an endangerment to society. These harsh law-enforcement approaches are counter-productive and instead helped to foster a perpetual cycle of violence and have set a precedent for ineffective youth development in South Africa (Foster, 2012).

2.3 South African Youth Post-Apartheid

After South Africa became a democratic society in 1994, the negative effects of apartheid rule remained. It can be argued that apartheid policies and legislation, for instance, the Group Areas Act of 1950, which resulted in the creation of socially disorganised communities, continues to influence communities that are presently incapable of attaining common pro-social values and preserving healthy social controls (van der Merwe, Dawes & Ward, 2012). Thus the repercussions of these relocations is deeply ingrained in these socially disorganised communities even to this

day and can be seen in social ills such as high rates of gangsterism, violence, substance abuse and the loss of informal social control specifically over the youth (Daniels & Adams, 2010).

It can be argued that the political unrest and constant detainment of young people during the apartheid era created major development deficits to the Soweto generation, who are now parents and/or grandparents of modern day youths. The children and/or grandchildren of this generation are known as the Born Frees who were born in the democratic dispensation of South Africa after 1994. Not only do they endure intergenerational trauma experienced by their relatives and significant others, but they also face similar levels of poverty, inequality and unemployment as their forerunners and the cycle of vulnerability continues even with efforts made by the current ANC government (Mattes, 2011).

Furthermore, the socio-economically exclusive nature of the lives of the youth are often a product of an extremely flawed educational system, institutional racism, and structural inequalities in South African society (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). Today, the youth of an African racial background have an average pass rate of 43% compared to white pupils with a pass rate of around 97% (Heaton, Amoateng & Dufur, 2014). The unemployment rate within this group stood at 39.6% in the first quarter of 2019, with just under 30% of the youth having jobs and about half of them (48.8%) participating in the labour market (StatsSA, 2019). Even the percentage of youth not in employment, education or training (NEETs) between the ages of 15-24 has increased from 33,2% in Q1 of 2019 to 34,1% of Q1: 2020 (StatsSA: 2020,9). Panday et al. (2012) along with other literature accentuate that the youths' identity, self-worth, and choices are created by their participation in key institutions such as their schools, communities, social relationships and the labour market (Panday et al., 2012). These authors go on to confirm that employment specifically, creates a sense of self-worth and is the best indicator of transitioning into adulthood (Panday et al., 2012). This linkage between employment and a sense of self-worth and identity is a crucial relationship that is further explored in youth development literature. The lack of employment as validation of self-worth creates a hazardous opportunity to 'hustle' and often get involved with gangs and peers who reinforce anti-social behaviours.

In another study, Panday et al. (2012) found that youth lean towards alternative systems when they cannot participate in formal institutions to establish their identities and give them purpose; the involvement in these systems usually resulting in negative ramifications (Panday et al., 2012). Historically in South Africa, gangs and gang violence has been tolerated as a way to resist apartheid (Pinnock, 2016). In townships like Nyanga and Gugulethu, young black youth are most often on the streets and socially organised in groups which gives way to identity formation (Maringira & Gibson, 2019). Given the current status of poverty and high rates of unemployment, the youth are resorting to joining gangs as a means of protection, financial and material gain and a sense of belonging. In South Africa, 30% of males between the ages of 10 and 30 are involved in a gang and in 2018, Van der Linde found that gang membership in Cape Town ranged between 80 000 and 100 000 members within approximately 130 gangs (Shaw 2012:391; Van der Westhuisen, & Gawulayo, 2020:118). Impoverished communities are breeding grounds for gang recruitment because they appeal to identity issues and a sense of belonging to young people who have not been able to obtain them in other pro-social ways. Arguably, the greatest allurement for the youth to join a gang is a created sense of belonging and often the validation of a masculine adult identity. Maringira & Gibson (2019) highlight the importance that townships are where "young men, criminal activities and dreams and possibilities for the future intersect" (Maringira & Gibson, 2019:61). Therefore, the need is extremely high for multidimensional and holistic youth policy and legislation that could help the youth to fulfil their needs in pro-social and sustainable ways.

Among the many obstacles and risks that South African youth face, the COVID-19 global pandemic has thrown an even bigger curve-ball for youth. According to the South African National Income Dynamics Study: Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey (NIDS-CRAN), it is estimated that COVID-19 pushed one to 1.7million job-losers and their three to 5.5million dependents into poverty since March 2020 (Jain et al., 2020: 17). The consequences of COVID-19 have adversely effected groups such as women, people who work in manual and informal occupations, lower educated people and the poor (Jain et al., 2020). The current social grant system in South Africa accounted for many "social-protection reaching job-losers," however, "one-third of job-losers did not receive any household-level social protection" by April 2020 (Jain et al., 2020: 19). With the current levels of unemployment amongst youth and the current grant system, these statistics are

worrisome for the development and future of youth in South Africa. It is therefore even more important for better programmes, policy and legislation to assist youth.

2.4 South African Policy and Legislation

Since the end of apartheid, the African National Congress (ANC) has focused on redressing the racialised laws and the redistribution of services and rights to the formerly oppressed people in South Africa. The Constitution of South Africa enshrines rights on equality, freedom of expression, political rights, the right to access healthcare, food, water and social security, in the Bill of Rights, along with a long list of other human-centred rights (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996). During these post-apartheid years, the youth of South Africa received slightly more attention in the country's policy frameworks. In 1996, the National Youth Commission (NYC) was established and became responsible for drafting the National Youth Policy 2000 (NYP) and the National Youth Development Policy Framework 2002-2007 (NYP 2009-2014, 2008). The youth policy failed to be implemented due to lack of accountability and integration within departments and parliament, resulting in service collapse (Panday et al., 2012). Not only was the policy not implemented, but the NYC was poorly staffed and was unable to coordinate efforts across different government departments.

As presented in the NYP 2009-2015, NYP 2015-2020 and the draft NYP 2020-2030, transformative youth development is regarded as a crucial underpinning to South Africa's development. The vision for the NYP 2020 is to integrate holistic youth development in which youth can reach their full potential; a vision in complete alignment with the Chrysalis Academy. The main objectives of the NYP 2020 are: to consolidate and integrate youth development into all government facets, strengthen the capacity of youth and institutions, strengthen a culture of youth patriotic citizenship while fostering national cohesion (NYP 2015-2020;2015:5). Alongside this is the development of policies and legislative bodies such as the 2006 African Youth Charter, NYDA Act (2008), the draft NYP 2020-2030 and the Integrated Youth Development Strategy 2030. The NYP 2020 largely recognises the increase in NEET youth and the failure of the Youth Development Forum to coordinate government and private sectors in youth development (NYP 2015-2020, 2015). The government has even tried to implement such initiatives like the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP). The intention of EPWP was to create more youth job

employment but most of the jobs serve as short-term employment in low-skilled jobs (Altbeker & Bernstein, 2017).

It must be noted that most policies and legislation point to the importance placed on positive youth development and the need for programmes to build resiliency and capacity for youths. Even with the creation of youth bodies and institutions, successful and sustainable youth programmes still have yet to be supported and fully realised. This is often due to the disjuncture in departmental efforts and poor service delivery among other inefficiencies. There is also need for a template for South African youth development programmes as stated by David Abrahams who is the head of the Western Cape Ministry of Social Development (Pinnock, 2016). The Chrysalis Academy is a lauded programme and one of its many benefits is that it is funded not only by the Western Cape Provincial Government Department of Community Safety and the Department of Social Development, but also by private trustees and organisations which creates the multi-stakeholder, multi-disciplinary and collaborative design for a more successful holistic youth development programme. There is also the argued point that many existing policies are without sufficient understanding of young people's lived realities through lack of qualitative research and therefore, the Western Cape Provincial Youth Development Strategy (PYDS) and others will fall short (De Lannoy et al., 2018.). Therefore, this research study provides more personal accounts from the youth as to how they experienced this type of programme which could help to fill the gap of existing research and practice.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

The major theoretical underpinnings of this study were the constructionist approach to risk and resiliency, the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach and the stress-buffer hypothesis to comprehend the significance of the phenomena under investigation and research question.

Resiliency is an emerging concept used in the global and South African sphere of youth development. Michael Ungar defines resiliency as "the outcomes from negotiations between individuals and their environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (Pinnock, 2016:257). Resiliency research started to emerge in the 1970's which aimed to understand why certain children and youth had healthy

development or positive outcomes despite adverse conditions (Bottrell, 2009). Since its conception, there have been various ideas of what defines resilience and different theories around how to apply resilience studies in different contexts. Initially, the focus was on individual traits of adaptation. This was however criticised as it was defined by normative criteria and therefore lacked any consideration for cultural diversity and social positioning (Bottrell, 2009:322). Due to this criticism, resiliency research has moved towards considering culture, social positions, buffering and protective factors that can externally affect an individual (Bottrell, 2009).

One prevailing approach to resiliency is the ecological approach which asserts predictable relationships and causal linkages between protective factors and resiliency; reciprocal interplays between an individual and their environments and diverse contexts (Ungar, 2004; Bottrell, 2009). The approach sees the youth as "being nested within a complex network of interconnected systems, ranging from lower order proximal input directly experienced by the individual in a specific microsystem (e.g., school, family) to higher cultural and social belief systems that cut across and influence multiple microsystems" (Schonert-Reichl, 2000:6). A major criticism of this approach claims that it is Eurocentric in nature because it "chooses arbitrary destructions of what are to be accepted as evidence of healthy functioning" and that it excludes complex contexts and meanings that youth themselves negotiate regarding their own resiliency (Ungar, 2004:345). In other words, the approach contains normative judgements imposed on youth regarding their responses to risk factors and resiliency which largely excludes narratives from youth. This is also highlighted by Ungar (2008) who states that entire accounts of youth's experience are lost "when professional experts are understood to be in a better position than youth to assert what are healthy and normal outcomes for youth" (Katwyk & Seko, 2018:610).

Another criticism of the ecological approach to risk and resiliency relates to the debate about whether protective factors and resiliency properly take culture and different contexts into proper consideration. Ungar et al. (2008) highlight that resiliency research has often been conceptualised from a Western and Eurocentric standpoint and a large gap exists to explore other contextual protective factors (Ungar et al., 2008). Van Breda and Theron (2018) support this notion in their critical review of South African child and youth resilience studies conducted between 2009 and 2017. Their findings show that Global North interventions enabling resiliency did not provide

sufficient validity in African cultural contexts (van Breda & Theron, 2018). Theron and Theron (2010) conducted another critical review of 23 youth resilience studies around South Africa. They found in their research that most South African resilience study designs were quantitative and not qualitative in nature (Theron & Theron, 2010). Mosavel et al. (2015) also confirms these findings as they state that resiliency studies have focused on Europe and the United States, while little information is available on youth resiliency in other lower-resource settings (Mosavel et al., 2015:247). All in all, it remains difficult to obtain a better understanding of South African youth resilience with the continued lack of extensive studies and youth narratives (Theron & Theron, 2010). Therefore, it is important to recognise the need for a non-Eurocentric exploration of youth resilience, to understand the interplay of different protective and risk factors, to explore the concept of resiliency in different contexts and to give youth a voice in how they define risk and resiliency.

The ecological approach to resiliency has been prevalent among youth development literature. The transactional-ecological framework developed by Felner (2006) goes beyond the traditional dispensation that resilience is usually individualized and instead draws on theories of human ecologies and these 'nested systems' as previously discussed (Bottrell, 2009). It emphasises contextual factors that both lie in a person's immediate microsystems and the macro-systems such as social structure which can create potential positive adaptation (Bottrell, 2009:325). It is a step in the right direction as it considers multiple contexts that interplay on micro and macro levels with an individual. The researcher recognises the value of the ecological approach in recognising the interplay of ecologies and multiple contexts in the lives of youth, however, if we want to gain a deeper understanding of youth and what they need to flourish, we must first hear their stories and try to understand how best to serve their needs. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the researcher used the constructionist approach as developed by Ungar (2004) to resiliency as a theoretical framework. The constructionist approach recognises the power of "discourse and challenges the normative orientations of dominant ecological models, not in terms of their development approach but arguing that judgements about what constitutes normalcy, deviance and health made by researchers are not necessarily those held by participants" (Bottrell, 2009:325). According to Bottrell (2009), cross-cultural and international studies have demonstrated that a risk in one cultural context does not necessarily equivalate as a risk in another cultural context but in fact, could be found to be a protective factor for resiliency (Bottrell, 2009). This approach to

resiliency puts the power back into the hands of youth to voice their own experiences in dealing with and defining risk and resilience. This is an important distinction in youth development discourse because it removes the Eurocentric definitions of what is normative behaviour and renounces labelling youth as 'at-risk.'

In the 60's and 70's when resiliency theory was just making its way into the development realm, labelling youth as 'at-risk' was popular amongst resiliency literature. In the ecological approach, this label denotes that certain designated risk factors predicted certain deviant or anti-social behaviours that were guaranteed later on in their lives (Foster & Spencer, 2011). It presumes to identify what causes youth to have problematic behaviours or negative outcomes. This strict causality "neglects the freedom and ability of people no matter what age to establish and seek their desired outcomes" (Foster & Spencer, 2011:128). Using the 'at-risk' label excludes room for individual capabilities and fails to understand how youth see themselves in relation to being resilient (Foster & Spencer, 2011). The label of 'at-risk' has prevailed in youth literature and often creates a negative stigma throughout their lives and also throughout youth development. For young people who might not achieve set markers of resilience, the term 'at-risk' has the potential to follow them throughout their lives and further stigmatise them while falsely framing them as the one's responsible for their failure to meet these standards (Howie & Campbell, 2015). Therefore, the emerging use of 'youth at promise' will be used in substitute of youth 'at-risk' in order to destigmatise youth and create a more affirming narrative for youth, academics and practitioners to engage with. The constructionist approach to risk and resiliency perfectly nests within the Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach which utilises a positive framework for viewing youth which focuses more on their strengths.

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) approach "aims at understanding, educating, and engaging children in productive activities rather than at correcting, curing, or treating them or maladaptive tendencies or so-called disabilities" (Damon, 2004:15). It is a strength-based model that accentuates the positive attributes and potential of youth versus seeing them as 'broken' or pieces of a puzzle that need to be glued back together (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). The PYD approach was created due to the disapproval of youth development approaches that focus on youths' deficits. PYD acts as an all-encompassing approach to youth development interventions.

For this study, PYD was regarded as an effective approach used at the Chrysalis Academy because it underpinned the values of the programme in that it saw the youth as already having positive resiliency innately within them versus seeing them as broken individuals.

The third theory that guided the study was the stress-buffer hypothesis which describes social support as having 'buffering-effects.' Social support can be defined as the quality networks and social structures youths have to rely on, to help them navigate challenges and transitions in their lives (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). These networks and relationships create coping strategies and healthy emotional attachments that often are lacking in the lives of youth at promise (Sanders, Munford & Liebenberg, 2017). Social support is derived from family, informal support from social networks and formal institutions such as schools which mitigate the negative impact of stress on adjustment and development (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006:268-269). It is believed that even one or a combination of these social support mechanisms can buffer youths against experiencing negative stressors, risks and internalising behaviours. Supportive relationships can provide positive role models, relatable information on healthy lifestyle choices and safe sexual practices; encourage positive behaviours, coping skills and can act as a channel for youth to discuss issues with non-authority figures (Visser, 2005).

There have been many studies focusing on the effects of social support and peer social support on youth in different contexts as previously stated. At a peer level, the main risk factor is simply becoming involved with a peer or peer group that has or have anti-social and risky behaviours but can be offset with a pro-social peer or peer group (Bogenschneider, 1998). As Bogenschneider (1998) points out, youth who spend time with deviant peers are more likely to take on those behaviours because peer influence is much more considerable than parental influence during this development stage (Bogenschneider, 1998). Therefore, the role of peers as either a risk factor or protective factor can influence the path of development for an individual. In a study amongst 223 Hispanic college students in the southern United States, Ermis-Demirtas et al. (2018) found evidence that social support played a vital role for these students in adapting to negative life events and supports the 'stress-buffer' theory in that it prevented psychological problems (Ermis-Demirtas et al., 2018). Cooley et al. (2015) conducted a study on 152 Latino adolescents between the ages of 14 and 19 to also magnify peer social support in relation to peer victimisation (Cooley

et al., 2015). They found that peer social support was a protective factor against depression and victimisation and possibly internalising problems (Cooley et al., 2015).

In a study by Rojas et al. (2017), all the previously discussed components of social support in relation to victimisation, depression and mental health of youth were present. Their study consisted of 10,148 adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 in the United States and it found that post-traumatic stress symptoms occur in youth who experience low social support (Rojas et al., 2017:96). In other words, lack of social support for the youth and adolescents is found to be detrimental to their mental health, which is why it is so incredibly important to incorporate positive social support into youth development policies and programmes. Furthermore, Leffert et al. (2010) found higher rates of mental health problems when there was a lack of positive peer relationships for youth.

In a 2010 study, resiliency and positive peer influence of twenty Gauteng and Free State street youths was explored by Malindi and Theron (2010) and they found out that street youths put themselves into close-knit social groups that benefited them emotionally and created security (Malindi & Theron, 2010). The benefits of peer influence in these groups were: lifting each other's spirits, teaching each other coping skills, acting as sources of advice and also sharing resources with one another (Malindi & Theron, 2010). Another study conducted by Visser (2005) on implementing peer support programmes in 13 secondary schools in disadvantaged communities in Tshwane, Gauteng found that the youth identified more easily with peers and were more likely to discuss intimate details of their lives and the importance of this ongoing support. It also discovered that peer support provided a safe platform for peers to share information around HIV/AIDS and healthy lifestyles in a way that was understanding (Visser, 2005). This is incredibly important within a South African context where the rates of HIV/AIDS are considerable higher than other countries. From these studies, one can see the benefits of social support and more specifically peer social support in the lives of the youth.

These three theoretical frameworks were used throughout the research to better explain the circumstances that the youth went through, how they experienced the programme offered by the Chrysalis Academy and identified the approaches that could help them in their development in

order to deepen their resiliency. They guided the researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of data.

2.6 Conclusion

The review of literature, in this section, explored literature on youth in a global context and in South Africa. It focused on the youth during apartheid and also their current situation which relates to what modern day youths face in post-1994 South Africa. Even though other researchers looked at certain aspects of the Chrysalis Academy, this study focused on how they experienced this organisation's interventions and their perceptions in the light of resiliency.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology and research design that was used to explore how youths experienced and perceived peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape province of South Africa. It also discusses the sampling and data collection logistics, limitations of the study and reflexivity.

3.1 Research Design and Methodology

In order to adequately address the research topic, a combination of research tools and methods were used in this study. The methodology of an exploratory study, using qualitative research, was chosen as the overarching methodology to explore how the youth experienced and perceived peer social support at the Chrysalis Academy. Since the focus of the study was on the experiences of participants, a phenomenological approach was employed. According to Babbie & Mouton (2001), social science discourse is derived from an 'epistemic imperative' to seek out the truth to understand the world and the people in it (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The phenomenological approach underlined the qualitative research design and was used to understand the essence of a 'lived experience' (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is often used when studying deep emotional human experiences. Therefore, a qualitative methodology hinges on the phenomenological approach with the emphasis on experience and interpretation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

3.2 Data Collection Approach and Instruments

Since the beginning of 2018, the researcher was enrolled in the master's programme at the University of Cape Town and was required to complete a six-month internship with an organization in the Western Cape. The researcher decided on the Chrysalis Academy for her internship, and upon its completion, she chose to focus her dissertation on the youth at the Chrysalis Academy.

Under the qualitative paradigm, the methods used for data collection were individual interviewing, participant observation and complete observation. Individual interviewing consists of an open

interview allowing the participant to speak for themselves without preparation from the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As Babbie and Mouton (2010) suggest, the researcher used a semi-structured interview schedule that had room for flexibility (Babbie & Mouton, 2010: Appendix 2). During her internship with two of the intake groups in 2019, the researcher was a participant observer in a weekly therapeutic class with one male group and one female group. The researcher also acted as a complete observer because she observed other activities of the programme without being involved in any manner, emphasising complete objectivity (Given, 2012). Therefore, to maintain complete confidentiality and anonymity, the researcher did not interview any participants with whom she was in contact with during her internship with the two intake groups in 2019.

3.2.1 Study Population

The population that was sampled during this study consisted of youths aged 22 to 27 years old. This cohort of the youth population was sampled due to the age restrictions for admittance into the Chrysalis Academy. Of this group, there were 11 females and nine males in order to explore possible gender differences in peer social support. Part of the inclusion criteria was that the youth should have already participated in the Chrysalis Academy youth development programme since the beginning of 2017. The researcher chose to include only Chrysalis Academy participants from the year 2017 to 2020 to ensure fresh recollections of their experiences and perceptions. Some peer support components have been changed since its conception in 2000, therefore, interviewing participants since 2017 guaranteed more consistency.

3.2.2 Sampling Procedure

With qualitative methodology working in tandem with a phenomenological approach, in this study, the purposive sampling method was used. With the permission and cooperation of the Chrysalis Academy, the youth who had previously participated in its programme were contacted and invited to volunteer to participate in this study. The researcher also conducted a pilot study to check for gaps and inconsistencies in the research instrument.

3.3 Data Recording

During this study, the researcher used a tape recorder to record the individual phone interviews. The recordings were only heard and used by the researcher when transcribing the information to be included in the final report. This method ensured confidentiality of the participants.

3.4 Data Analysis

When analysing qualitative data, researchers avoid using preconceived categories and instead allow the categories to organically emerge from the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Qualitative data is not usually as straightforward as quantitative data and so content analysis consists more of context-dependent meaning and interpretation (Schreier, 2013:5). Therefore, qualitative data analysis systemically reduces the amount of material into focused categories and themes through a coding scheme (Schreier, 2013). Using a coding scheme is a key component to the data analysis process because it acts as a "translation device that organises data into categories and consists of local and scientific processes" (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1285). The coding results are then finalised and the researcher can present his/her findings in a report (Schreier, 2013).

This conventional approach for data analysis is beneficial because it remains objective by not creating premeditated categories and subcategories by which the data must adhere to (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Instead, the themes and categories are born from the data and can be refined throughout the analysation process. For this study, the Tesch model was used for the thematic analysis. In summation, the eight steps of the Tesch Method consist of a conventional approach in which the researcher follows the steps presented earlier by Schreier (2013) and then provides a written narrative to discuss the findings of research (Theron, 2015).

3.5 Data Verification

To verify the data of the research conducted, the researcher used a few verification strategies throughout the entire process. The researcher maintained awareness of methodological congruence to keep unity between the research questions and the method of research if sampling methods or questions had to be modified or changed (Morse et al., 2002:18). The researcher also ensured that the sample of participants chosen was appropriate and competent in representing the research topic (Morse et al., 2002:18). Lastly, the researcher maintained a strong theoretical understanding of the

findings as was extracted from research as opposed to imposing themes beforehand and therefore pushing subjective theory on the research (Morse et al., 2002). These three strategies verified the data collection and analysis processes. In addition to these three strategies, transcriptions and consent forms were checked by the research supervisor (Appendix 1).

In addition, the researcher obtained confirmability and trustworthiness of the study by explaining theoretical, methodological and analytical choices throughout the study so readers can clearly interpret why the researcher made specific decisions (Nowell et al., 2017:3). The researcher was also able to ensure trustworthiness and credibility through her six-month internship as it included prolonged engagement and persistent observation from the researcher (Nowell et al., 2017).

3.6 Limitations

One significant limitation of this study was the Coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic that began at the beginning of 2020. Individual in-person interviews could not be conducted according to new university and government regulations, and therefore data was collected remotely via phone calls between the researcher and the participants. Due to these newly implemented research restrictions, the researcher carefully considered all methods and obtained approval from the Department of Social Development's Ethics' Committee, her supervisor and the Chrysalis Academy, to ensure the data collection process was ethical, guaranteed confidentiality and was in line with new COVID-19 data collection regulations. The new data collection method via phone calls limited the research because the researcher was unable to build a strong rapport with the participants that she felt would have been present in an in-person interview. In addition, some participants did not have internet access and were unable to fully participate in the study. These limitations required the researcher to spend more time finding participants and conduct interviews which slowed the process of the study.

3.7 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity is based on the notion that as a researcher, no one's viewpoints are entirely objective because we all experience and interpret the world differently (May & Perry, 2013). Therefore, one must mediate their viewpoints and sustain the practice of understanding people's experiences without imposing bias or expectations in qualitative research. During the

interviews, the researcher practiced critical awareness and aligned with Skeggs (2004) as the former encourages researchers to 'stand outside oneself' in order to avoid shaping the interviews with any personal perceptions (Riach, 2009:358). The researcher also critically reflected after the interviews to ensure unbiased viewpoints through data analysis.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

It is the role of applied researchers to ensure the greatest respect for the participants and their interests as they "examine and experiment with issues that directly affect people's lives" (Sieber, 2009:2). It is a key responsibility of the researcher to abide by these guidelines to protect the integrity of the study and of the participants. In this particular study, the researcher gave careful consideration to the individual participants as they were considered a vulnerable population. All measures were taken so that psychological harm was avoided and the integrity of the study was maintained.

Due to the possible sensitive nature of the phenomenon of peer social support, the researcher informed all participants that they were not obligated to answer any or all questions which they did not want. The researcher considered maintaining sensitivity to exert ethical integrity throughout the study. Once this was made clear, the researcher asked the participants to sign a form of consent for the information that was provided by the researcher and was used in the analysis and a writing of a final report. The ethical considerations of anonymity and confidentiality then guided the study according to Babbie & Mouton (2010) and Sieber (2009). In respect to their identity and to avoid any emotional harm from others, all participants remained anonymous and all information given remained confidential. In further consideration to prevent emotional harm, the researcher debriefed the participants after each interview and told them that they were able to access free and confidential professional counseling at the Chrysalis Academy for emotional support. In alignment with Sieber (2009) all identifying information was removed from interviews and identification numbers replaced them to ensure that the researcher could not identify a response with a specific participant (Sieber, 2009). This ensured complete anonymity and confidentiality. Interviews were also conducted in private settings to ensure complete anonymity and confidentiality. To avoid deception of the respondent, the researcher identified herself as an objective observer and did not conceal any information about the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

In relation to the findings, if there were any negative findings related to the analysis, they were reported to maintain objectivity and the integrity of social research (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

3.9 Conclusion

This section of the study provided the methodology that was used throughout the dissertation and the steps the researcher took to uphold the integrity of that methodology. The main aim of qualitative research is to seek understanding of phenomena through data collection, sampling and data analysis process. The researcher's main goal was to uphold a critical awareness throughout this process as an objective observer to be able to provide a content-rich research report.

CHAPTER FOUR
PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the data collected from 20 participants who are also former participants of the Chrysalis Academy. This chapter puts forth the participant profile and then uses themes to discuss the findings of the study. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms are used to protect the identity of participants, along with their areas of residence.

4.1 Participant Profile

The table below shows the participants' profile, providing their pseudonyms, age, race, gender, level of education completed, pseudonym for their area of residence, and their current employment status.

4.1.1 Age and Gender

Twenty participants took part in the study. Their ages ranged from 22 to 27 years old. The age restrictions to participate in the Chrysalis Academy is 18 to 25 years old, however many participants graduated within the past two years and are therefore currently 27 years old. Of the 20 participants, eleven (11) were female and nine (9) were male. The researcher initially sought out for absolute equal representation, but the slight skew in gender representation was due to the sampling methods and thus restricted voluntary participants.

4.1.2 Other Demographics

Of the eleven (11) female participants, nine (9) of them identified themselves as Black and two (2) identified themselves as Coloured. IsiXhosa was the native language of seven (7) participants, Afrikaans for two (2), Sipedi for one (1) and English for the remaining one (1) participant. Two (2) female participants had to delay taking their matriculant exams due to COVID-19, six (6) had passed their exams and three (3) had to re-write their exams. Eight (8) were unemployed at the time of the interviews, one (1) was employed and two (2) were participating in their Chrysalis internship. The eleven (11) female participants lived in six different residential areas within the Western Cape province.

Of the nine (9) male participants, four (4) of them identified themselves as Black and five (5) identified themselves as Coloured. IsiXhosa was the native language of four (4) participants and Afrikaans for five (5). Four (4) participants passed their matriculant exams and five (5) had to re-write their exams. Three (3) were unemployed, one (1) was on a stipend from the Chrysalis Academy, three (3) were employed and two (2) were participating in their Chrysalis Academy internship. The nine (9) male participants lived in five different residential areas within the Western Cape province.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race	Native Language	Education	Employment	Area of Residence Pseudonym
A	Female	24	Black	isiXhosa	Writing Grade 12 in 2021	Unemployed	AA
B	Female	23	Black	English	Writing Grade 12 in 2021	Unemployed	BB
C	Female	23	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Internship	CC
D	Female	24	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Internship	CC
E	Female	22	Black	Sipedi	Matric Passed	Unemployed	EE
F	Female	24	Black	isiXhosa	Re-writing Matric	Employed	CC
G	Female	26	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Unemployed	CC
H	Female	22	Black	isiXhosa	Re-writing Matric	Unemployed	CC
I	Female	23	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Unemployed	EE
J	Female	23	Coloured	Afrikaans	Matric Passed	Unemployed	GG
K	Female	22	Coloured	Afrikaans	Re-writing Matric	Unemployed	FF
L	Male	23	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Stipend	CC
M	Male	23	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Employed	BB
N	Male	23	Coloured	Afrikaans	Re-writing Matric	Unemployed	HH
O	Male	27	Coloured	Afrikaans	Re-writing Matric	Employed	GG
P	Male	22	Coloured	Afrikaans	Re-writing Matric	Internship	HH
Q	Male	24	Coloured	Afrikaans	Matric Passed	Employed	GG
R	Male	23	Black	isiXhosa	Matric Passed	Internship	CC
S	Male	24	Black	isiXhosa	Re-writing Matric	Unemployed	DD
T	Male	23	Coloured	Afrikaans	Re-writing Matric	Unemployed	GG

4.2 Framework for Discussion of Findings

The framework depicted in Table 2 was developed from the interview transcripts for thematic analysis using the Tesch Method discussed in Chapter 3. The researcher discovered themes which correlated to the first four objectives of the study. The themes were created from analysing the responses of the participants. The researcher identified thirteen themes throughout the participants' responses. Table 2 below presents the objectives and themes.

Table 2. Framework for Discussion of Findings

Objectives	**Themes**
Risk factors	• Violence and crime • Gangsterism • Negative peer pressure • Lack of support
Youth experiences with peer support at the Chrysalis Academy	• Building bonds through shared experience • Group cohesion through challenges
Youth perceptions of peer social support at the Chrysalis Academy	• Belonging to a peer family • Peer junior instructors as support • Cultural understanding
Peer support as a resilience factor	• Youth definitions of resiliency • Support created confidence • Making better decisions • Risk adaptability

4.3 Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Findings

This section will highlight the first four objectives and thirteen themes as presented above in Table 2.

4.4 Risk Factors

The participants' responses as analysed in this section were linked to the first research objective which was to identify risk factors present in the daily lives of youth in the Western province. Questions were asked in the beginning of the interviews regarding the participants' communities and the different ecological contexts that they interacted with. Given the unique history of South Africa and the positioning of youth, the backdrop of the youths' everyday lives were imperative

in understanding certain risks that they faced daily. There were four different categories within the overarching theme of risk factors, namely: violence and crime, gangsterism, negative peer pressure and lack of support. All twenty (20) participants mentioned at least one of these risk factors being present in their day-to-day lives.

4.4.1 Violence and Crime

Of the twenty (20) participants, all nine (9) male participants claimed that they did not feel safe in their communities and nine (9) female participants shared this sentiment. Twelve (12) participants specifically mentioned violence and crime in their interviews as an overriding issue. This is important to note as Visser (2005) found South African youth's anti-social behaviours such as crime and substance abuse a result of experiencing a lack of support and guidance (Visser, 2005).

Most of the participants emphasised the prevalence of drugs in their community and the linkages of drugs with aspects of violence and crime. Two (2) participants described how their sense of security was affected by drugs in the community. Van de Merwe, Dawes & Ward (2012) found out that substance abuse is a pathway in which children become gang members in communities where gangsterism is present (van de Merwe, Dawes & Ward, 2012). Only two (2) narratives explicitly talk about drugs, however, it is important to mention that the negative effects of drug use are also mentioned throughout the analysis in other categories as drugs are intertwined in multiple ecologies:

> *"Ja, the community that I'm in, there are many people that are on drugs like tik, I can say that. There's a lot of people on tik and other drugs but you must be able to stay clear of that. I have to be more cautious and vigilant. Because you have to constantly watch where you're going and make sure…of course anywhere you go there's going to be a risk because there are places here and there that you need to stay clear of. So I'm on a constant alert to make sure I am clear." (Participant Q)*

> *"In my community, we are not safe. These guys show up with drugs outside and they rob you and ja." (Participant B)*

When asked how young youth are when they begin using drugs, *Participant R* painted a grim story:

> *"The kids, the thing is that they start using drugs at the age of 14 or 15. So, as they grow, they see there's always like a shooting each and every day here… so they see it as a normal thing to kill someone. Because they grew each and every day seeing those things, like they don't scare of anything and also when they're older, they do the same thing, which is difficult in the community to end that thing because it's a culture to kill someone. So they're also using drugs at the young age." (Participant R)*

Two (2) participants talked in more detail about gun violence in their communities:

> *"There's a lot of gangs happening here. Guns shooting around. We ended up losing two brothers. In Cape Town, it has this duration of time, but it's like due to happen this time, then there's a quiet time, then it picks up again." (Participant M)*

> *"It's been really tough on me and it's hectic because now I'm stressing a lot because I can't also do the things I want in my community. And last time, also a guy nearly died and we had to call an ambulance but then the ambulance couldn't come because it was shooting and they can't enter our community and the guy had to bleed out and passed away. It's just been really hectic." (Participant O)*

When asked what they did not like about their community, *Participant G* and *Participant C* mentioned their experience with stealing:

> *To be very honest, there's nothing that I like about my community. Because there's a lot of crime and you find that a lot of youth they actually doing nothing and most of them are dropouts and it's hectic. There's a lot of violence and then there is crime." (Participant G)*

> *"What I don't like about my community is the fact that there is a lot of thugs. You can't even go to the shop like next to a shop, carrying your phone, carrying your expensive thing or wearing your weave, going around. So when you can't go out with your phone, maybe*

let's say like me, I'm not working so I do have my CV's for a job. So let's say I'm going the shop or I'm going to the mall, so I can't carry my phone with me. If I receive a job call there and I don't answer the phone, or I receive an interview phone call there, I end up losing that job or that interview." (Participant C)

From the responses above, it is evident that there are various types of violence and crime being committed in these communities. The existence of violence and crime impacted various aspects of their lives including their sense of safety, potential job prospects, increased levels of stress and the loss of family members. The use of violence and drugs by gangsters and other people in their communities made them feel cautious, stressed and constantly on alert which made the youth experience a complete absence of physical and mental security. This state of anxiety and precariousness is collaborated by Pinnock (2016) who found that throughout Cape Town, daily violence creates fear that inevitably corrodes communities further and that "personal safety is one of the main inhibitors of neighbourhood agency" (Pinnock, 2016:231). This finding is concerning as Mosavel et al. (2015) state that community connectedness can lessen negative effects of adverse events which leads to resiliency and positive outcomes (Mosavel et al., 2015). Therefore, if these communities are in peril, the youth are potentially at a greater risk. These acts of violence that have become commonplace shape these children and youth to be regularly nervous which leads to behavioural problems, paranoia, lack of concentration at school and other harmful side effects (Pinnock, 2016). Mosavel et al. (2015) also found that risk factors such as violence "increase the likelihood of negative cognitive, behavioural and health outcomes" for youth (Mosavel et al., 2015:246). While youth are constantly on alert, they are being triggered into a fight-or-flight mode of survival which often leaves little room for pro-social development outcomes.

4.4.2 Gangsterism

Out of the twenty (20) participants, eight (8) males and eight (8) females claimed that gangsterism was a serious problem in their communities. There were many issues brought to the surface by participants that resulted from the presence of gangsters in their communities. The youth expressed their concerns about not feeling safe, the alarming prevalence of shootings, the interconnected precarious relationship between police and gangsters, and the role that gangsters play when there are no role models or support.

When asked what they disliked about their communities, three (3) participants mentioned how the presence and activities of gangsters made them feel unsafe:

> *"I don't like the whole thing here by us, there are so many gangsters. They are a problem. Because every time they come stand here, they make noise here and so and so. I feel unsafe here all the time." (Participant J)*

> *"The thing is here, there's a lot of gangsters, all that stuff. So if we are not at home, we must be at home in time, yes. I don't feel safe. We are always feeling uncomfortable when we are not home because we know that if maybe we come back home around night, we know we are not safe. We have to check first to see if there is anyone." (Participant A)*

> *"No, I don't like my community because there are a lot of gangsters here, so we are not safe. There's a lot of things happening. They are around all times of the day." (Participant D)*

Gangsters can transform various spaces into "potential places of violence" which means there is no permanence of safety, and any place can quickly become a spot for violence (Maringira & Gibson, 2019: 60). The participants confirmed this finding when they claimed that they felt that they were in danger at all times of the day. Gangsters and danger are everywhere at any time. Therefore, the potential for a place to be deemed "safe," like a home or a place in the community can almost immediately be deemed as a place of danger.

Other participants mentioned that they felt uncertain of safety because of gangster related shootings and how this affected their emotions:

> *"There's nothing good here. I don't like it. It's about gangsterism and one thing that I don't like about this place. Like, last night, there was a shooting here at night. So I don't feel very safe. It makes me feel unsafe, angry and makes me emotional." (Participant S)*

"In my community, there's gangsterism and also that's what I don't like about it because there's too much crime and also people get shot each and every day so you get worried when you get out of your home that you might be dead. Next person that gets shot, anytime so it's always like that. It's the life that we live in. You always pray when you get out of your home because you never know you could be the one that gets shot."(Participant R)

"Because everyone is capable of joining a gang here because you grow up in it. We don't want to open that side of our life because it goes very bad; it doesn't end well." (Participant M)

Two (2) participants described in more detail about the ways in which gangsters and the police interact and work together:

"In my community, we're not feeling safe at all because there's no security. The police they will take their time when we call them. They take their time so they can't help you. Maybe they take 30 minutes to come so, it affects us a lot and also, I can be at the risk to get robbed. Like, they will take their time, the gangsters know the system of police and how they work and everything so there's no security. I'm not safe at all." (Participant R)

"And also with the police whose working with gangsters. I know about it because out of my past also, I've been working with them. They only come when there's robbing or maybe a house been broken in. But when there's shooting and stuff, they get calls and stuff to tell them, 'Look here, you don't need to come now, we're going to do stuff now.' And so ja, it's just hectic." Where we start now is like the gangsterism, most of the youth can't go to school because of the shooting and being caught in the crossfire and stuff like that. So there's too many gangs even in HH and the surrounding areas like the Cape Flats, and also the police. Their visibility is not so good. They're mixed with the bad guys." (Participant O)

With the increase in private security during the 1990's and the decrease in resources and organisation for the police service, the police became overwhelmed which allowed corruption and inefficiency to spiral out of control (Miringira & Gibson, 2019). Throughout Cape Town, criminologist Lisa Grobler found that gangs were aware they could 'buy' police and that often police and gangsters collaborate with each other (Pinnock, 2016). A few shocking examples of these collaborations are the disappearance of firearms which are later sold to gangsters; the use of police vehicles for drug transportation and smuggling, and even gangsters joining the service with the intention of corrupting and using resources in the gang's favour (Miringira & Gibson, 2019: 63). Therefore, communities today have little faith in the police service due to their constant track record of untrustworthiness and involvement with criminal activity. The lack of efficient government intervention around gangs and lack of police intervention also presents a risk to youth as they have little support even on a national level.

Four (4) participants talked about the lack of support or role models and how that creates a situation for youths to join gangs. Often they join when seeking out emotional or financial support that they are not receiving at home. Gangs provide a safety net when they do not have role models or money to obtain material goods that give them status in their communities:

> *"It is lack of support. It's because their mothers and their fathers are on drugs. Their mothers and fathers are abusing alcohol. They're not worried about their kids, man. Kids often need love. My whole life, I needed that. That's why I lived the way I used to because I didn't have that. My parents are never there for me, I told myself that no one loves me so I'm going to go the wrong way." (Participant N)*

> *"The way I see my community, there's no role models because there's a lot of gangsters where I live so like every time, there's lots of gang shootings in my area so they become impressed by them, the guns and all the stuff. So I don't think there's any role models except maybe their parents." (Participant L)*

> *"There's a lot of gangsterism. Lots of small boys are dropping out of school to join those gangsterism so they can make fast money or they see opportunity to make fast money. They*

rob the shops, they rob everyone and they don't even have role models in my world because everyone at my age have children, they didn't finish school. So we don't even have the role model at my age." (Participant C)

"We try to get them off the streets and not doing the things so they've been, like how can I say, manipulated by the gangsters and the people selling drugs and stuff. Because most of the guys that's going to gangs, don't have father figures in the house, they don't have support really to get clothing and stuff. So, they just get people buying the youth takkies and clothes and nice things to do their things and the dirty work. So it's been really tough because they have lots of money. It's all about the money." (Participant O)

"I have to hustle. Growing up, if I saw that in my life that it didn't end well (his brothers were shot after joining a gang). As much as that life was nice to them because they had nice clothes, that didn't end well." (Participant M)

The foregoing issues were highlighted in Pinnock's (2016) extensive social research. His knowledge of gangs throughout Cape Town made him claim that the youth were driven to do drugs and join gangs because of the "love and emotional support they had been denied" which created a "disease of loneliness and deep sadness" (Pinnock, 2016:207). The vulnerable young boys in these communities are also "cynically targeted and lured with promises of cool clothes, drugs, money and status" (Pinnock, 2016:122). Van de Merwe, Dawes & Ward (2012) also confirm the former in a study which found that gangsterism gave youth access to brand-named goods and material status that normally only wealthy citizens could afford which in turn created a sense of full participation in society (Van de Merwe, Dawes & Ward, 2012: 78).

These narratives from the youth demonstrate the overwhelming presence of gangsterism in communities in the Western Cape and the detrimental effects it has on their everyday lives. Most participants mentioned ways in which gangsterism eroded their sense of security and left them feeling unsafe in their communities. Youth have a complicated relationship with gangsterism because as mentioned by participants, some of them often seek out a life in gangsterism for emotional and material security due to lack of support in their home lives. A real worry is that

these gangs act as a form of emotional and financial support that fills a void in their lives not filled by family, community or peers. Another concerning aspect is the constantly shifting legal and illegal relationship between gangsters and police officers that leave their communities in a fragile, anarchist state of existence.

4.4.3 Negative Peer Influence

Kotze (2003) asserts that initial involvement in gang activity and crime are often the result of negative peer pressure (Kotze, 2003:26-27). When interviewing the participants, almost all of them claimed that there was negative peer pressure in their communities. Nine (9) male participants and eight (8) female participants confirmed that negative peer pressure presents itself in their communities with some of the resulting consequences:

> *"Because you know, there are people that are drinking, people that are having drugs…it's like they are selling their bodies to get some drinks or get some clothes or get some money. Or there are people that are private prostitutes because when I look around, people that are the same age with me, they are selling their bodies to those foreigners, Nigerians, Congolese, all those things because they want that nice life, that popping life on Facebook or Instagram you see. For me, it's not hard to say no because I think I'm getting old or peer pressure is not for me." (Participant C)*

> *"We actually live in a community where everything is competition. Like if you don't have a new hair weave, then you're not worthy enough or something. The new fashion, the new trends, they feel like they have to have the new trends. And one of them in the street have it, the other one will feel pressure to have it." (Participant G)*

> *"It's very bad, a lot of peer pressure. Growing up, I used to look up to people who wear nice clothes, but I didn't know where they were getting the money to buy those nice clothes. So when I was 10, I saw how they were getting the money, and I was scared that one day if one has two years to get this to do those things, then I said to myself, nah. I'd rather not have nice clothes. But I was fortunate enough that time because my parents would buy me*

nice clothes. But you know as a child, you look up to that person and say they have nice kicks, but you don't know the whole story." (Participant M)

"You know, growing up, my grandmother used to say, when I was eight, every time my friend had a new thing, I'd say, 'Can I get that?' and she'd be like, 'Why?!' and I'd say, 'Because she has it!' and she'd be like, 'Listen, you are not the others, and you must understand if you don't have it, that means you can't afford it. You only have what you need.' She'd always tell me that. 'You only have whatever you want when I'm able to afford it. And I don't need to have something because someone has it." (Participant G)

In the responses above, many of the participants described that a lack of certain socio-economic status often drives youth to give into pressure to keep up with social media, new fashion trends and money to buy nice clothes. Townships have high levels of poverty and unemployment and where youth often cannot reach a level of socio-economic status, they often achieve these means through anti-social activities performed by peers and gangs. As seen through *Participant M*'s response, youth sometimes do not realise that joining a gang or selling their bodies are the reasons their peers can live a seemingly lavish lifestyle. Often times, the financial means to buy material goods such as nice clothes and shoes come from joining a gang or participating in on anti-social activities:

"You must have strength in yourself to say no, you see? They end up some doing bad things and they go and sleep with all the people's so that they can find money. A lot is based on money." (Participant B)

"It's easy and at the same time, it's peer pressure. Because they're always on the streets so it's easy for them to be involved." (Participant H)

"They are the one's sitting there and drinking all day. Sitting outside and doing nothing. It is drinking and also they're not serious about their lives. Because they're not even drafting CV's or looking for schools. They're just lazing here around." (Participant F)

In the responses above, it was observed how many participants were negatively affected by peer pressure in their childhood and adolescence, yet many were able to be aware and distance themselves from it after they had participated at the Chrysalis Academy. Other participants like *Participant G* had positive support from a family member which gave her the knowledge to understand peer pressure.

The experience these participants had exemplifies the importance peer influence has on the youth. During a time in their lives where youth are navigating their relation to peers, a study by van der Westhuisen & Gawulayo (2020) discovered that peer pressure and the need for approval are fundamental factors leading to youth's decision to join a gang (van der Westhuisen & Gawulayo, (2020). In communities rife with poverty and gangsterism, the participants' experiences are similar to those found in the study by Barrar (2010) on township youth and their perception of poverty. Barrar (2010) found that youth placed an emphasis on "acquiring commodities of the middle class" to dissociate themselves from poverty and the lingering identity of apartheid South Africa (Barrar, 2010:57). Honwana (2012) also found that South African youth engage in society by using popular culture exercise agency to create subcultures in order to confront the status quo set by mainstream society (Honwana, 2012:6-7). Peer pressure is a threat to youth because it acts as a tool of exclusion. Participants discussed these situations wherein themselves or their peers gave into peer pressure because exclusion would potentially threaten their status, belonging and identity. As Barrar (2010) also found, most of the youth actually rejected this lifestyle as a negative value set (Barrar, 2010). Most participants in this study were thankfully able to acknowledge the negative peer pressure and worked to avoid its influence.

4.4.4 Lack of Support

All of the participants claimed that social support was important in their lives and the lack of support amongst participants took various forms. Most of the participants said that they received some form of social support whether from a close friend, a mentor, a nuclear family member or a member of their extended family. A majority of the youth claimed that they had some type of role model or someone they could look up to. The researcher found that the participants who had a form of social support in their lives also expressed that they did not give into negative peer pressure, due to the support they had. As for the absence of support in their lives, the researcher

found that the majority of the youth mentioned lack youth programmes, job information and other resources throughout their community as missed opportunities for support. However, the lack of various types of support is still considerable and is a potential risk factor for the youth:

> *"Social support is a support that is big one because he or she has nothing at first, but the support helps a lot to get something that he or she wants, ja. Lack of support it gives us anger. They don't want anything from you, they don't want to see you even. So it give us an anger as young people that the youth so that even when we meet someone who is willing to help you, you don't want anything, you just want to do it by yourself. So, not to get the support, it also gives you depression also. So it's a big issue, it's a big thing to have a lack of support." (Participant R)*

When asked if there were any places where youth can receive support in their community, most claimed that there were not and six (6) described these circumstances. The youth also expressed that often they felt that they were not receiving enough information related to health, jobs and general life information:

> *"No ma'am, there are no places where they can receive support so there's none. Some of the young guys, like, they need more information, they need more knowledge about drugs and stuff and substance abuse will be better. Because we need resources, we need stuff and things to equip us more and to give us more knowledge."(Participant L)*

> *But the dropout, I think because they don't want to do anything, they drop out from the school. I've also noticed that they have a lack of information. Meaning that they don't know actually what to do after they dropout." (Participant G)*

> "*I feel like in a way, where I am staying, in a way, there's no information that we get. So if maybe there will be like once or twice in a month we will get a speaker going around actually telling us opportunities that the youth can actually get or things that the youth can involve themselves into, it will actually help out." (Participant G)*

"No, there are no programmes there. I'm always at home, sitting at home with my parents." (Participant F)

"Unfortunately to be honest, there are no places like this. There are no youth programmes for us." (Participant A)

"If I can find those supporting groups where we talk to each other, we have activities, we are singing, we have like choir groups or we're playing games, we're doing gardening. Just to keep us busy or to keep us away from the streets, I think that would be better." (Participant C)

It is evident through these responses that youth are lacking support and are craving spaces where they can receive diverse types of support. Katwyk & Seko (2018) add to this notion and found that group activities showed "the young people's capacities and desires to create a safe space that allowed for socialising, skill development and creation" (Katwyk & Seko, 2018:616). These findings are supported when Participant C claims that youth want activities such a gardening, choir groups or group games to keep them away from the streets. Many participants also portray that they lack information in their communities and that often it leads to dropouts and missed opportunities and how the knowledge could help equip them with tools to deal with their ecological circumstances.

4.5 Youth Experiences with Peer Social Support at the Chrysalis Academy

The participants' responses and analysis in this section are linked to the second research objective which focuses on the experiences youth had with peers at the Chrysalis Academy. The two themes expressed how youth had an overwhelmingly positive experience with peers at the Academy.

4.5.1 Building Bonds through Shared Experience

The researcher noted that most of the participants mentioned that they bonded with their peers over shared experiences. After hearing that peers had gone through similar trials and traumas, participants often felt that it brought them closer together and helped them to know they were not

alone in their experiences. It also helped them to see past previous judgements they might have had before they joined the Chrysalis Academy. This theme was captured by nine (9) participants:

"When you have a problem or a bad experience in life, when you hear some people or you listen to some people's problems or bad experience, you become calm. And you become polite because sometimes when you have a problem you think you are the only one that is going through a lot of things. So, those therapeutic classes helped me a lot because there we did get the chances to talk about our lives, about everything. Just to be open and I felt more brave." (Participant C)

"I could say that it was very helpful sharing the stories with one another because it felt vulnerable in a sense, in that moment. And when everyone shared their stories, it made me feel I'm not the only one that's going through something. It helps you and lightens the load in the sense that you're not the only one who is struggling." (Participant Q)

"There's a lot of programmes that bonded us and made us feel like we were family and supported. Because most of the guys can also relate to what you've been through in life and so it was a great experience to know that there's other people also that been through similar things you went through. It was a very safe space as well." (Participant O)

"Hearing other people's stories made me feel, I'd say, made me feel very good. Because at first, I thought I was the only one who was going through the most. But when I heard other people's stories, it made me feel better because I knew there are people that's going through the worst, you see. And if I was to be them, I wouldn't have made it that far, you see." (Participant K)

"What I have learnt or acknowledge is that you may think that you're the only person with huge problems or issues. When I was at the Chrysalis Academy, I was able to share everything, things I haven't even shared with my folks." (Participant F)

"It actually made me feel better and at the same time, it made me realise that there are

people who have more problems than me, you know. Like, some people are going through a lot in life and then I actually thought I'd been through a lot until I heard some of the others share their stories." (Participant G)

Two (2) participants specifically mentioned how the therapeutic group classes at the Chrysalis Academy was the setting in which they were able to share their stories safely with others:

"Therapeutic group was one of the outstanding ones I'd say. Because there, everyone understood each other and like consoling people also. It was connecting. Because everything will just be peaceful and you'll see a side of another person that you didn't see while getting in here. Or maybe there will be joyful times and maybe there will be sad times. Because people were crying like because there's emotions. It was a process because people were going through a lot."(Participant M)

"It was the TRE class when it's all about emotions and sharing and you have to deal with yourself and to feel that you're not alone that if you have a problem, you can talk. They're really supportive of what's going on because they've gone through the same thing." (Participant P)

Four (4) participants recognised that when they shared their stories with peers at the Chrysalis Academy, they experienced a sense of freedom or relief:

"I was a bit scared at first. But when I did share, I was free and I was really self-confident." (Participant H)

"Yoh, when I was there at the Chrysalis Academy, you sit in groups and then we will talk about our lives there. Like everything that has happened in your life. You feel free to talk things. You feel a sense of relief. No one was judging anyone there. Everyone felt free to talk about everything." (Participant F)

"I was scared to share my story at the first time. I was so emotional. But the instructor

and students were there for me. After I shared, I felt relieved. " (Participant B)

"Like, that's where (TRE class) I heard the stories of other guys and my story. And then I feel free after I tell them. They were accepting of me." (Participant S)

This concept of shared experience at the Chrysalis Academy was a very powerful narrative throughout the interviews. In their narratives, the participants were learning how to build empathy for themselves and for others. Erfan (2017) found similar experiences in a study around collective trauma with youth where young participants said they experienced, "bonding with others" when sharing stories around their lives and traumas (Erfan, 2017). In Erfan (2017), participants claimed that this bonding happened when they disposed of their old biases and recognised each other in more "human terms" (Erfan, 2017:40). The study by Katwyk and Seko (2018) explored youth resiliency through collective art working in which they found congruent results. The participants shared stories with their peers around the difficulties they faced in their lives and asserted that this helped them to build connections with each other (Katwyk & Seko, 2018). Through this study and others, it is indicative that hearing each other's common realities acted as a powerful tool for empathetic peer group bonding. *Participant M* claimed that things were peaceful and that they were able to see another side of their peers they would not have seen before. This type of group bonding through safe peer interactions acts as a risk factor buffer for youth and sets an example of health bonds versus antisocial group bonding that is often done through participating in gangs. This form of conflict transformation has the power to repair social relationships and multicultural healing for South Africans individually and as a whole.

It is interesting to note that all of these interventions were conducted in a group therapy setting and in a safe space that allowed the participants to let their guard down. Often, the low-income communities in which these youths come from, lack safe physical and emotional environments which ultimately are a key to personal transformation (Pinnock, 2016). In Katwyk & Seko (2018), the participants established that creating safe and inclusive spaces are essential for youth to feel connected to one another and to give them a sense of belonging (Katwyk & Seko, 2018:614). At the Chrysalis Academy, participants are fully boarded for three months in Tokai in a protected facility that provides physical security and a welcoming atmosphere which allows participants to

relax and leave behind their survival mode. The other studies were conducted in safe spaces as well which shows that youths thrive in safe and nurturing environments. Pinnock (2016) also points out that instructors or leaders of youth therapies and programmes need to be adults that they trust and who listen versus those who just instruct (Pinnock, 2016). Peer junior instructors and group therapy practitioners are used at Chrysalis Academy as a way of creating these supportive resources for youth. The participants' experiences with them are discussed in section 4.7.2.

4.5.2 Overcoming Challenges Together

As was previously highlighted in section 4.5.1, the Chrysalis Academy provided a safe space for youth to share their mutual experiences which helped them to create bonds across cultural lines. It is thus not surprising that seven (7) participants experienced similar bonds by surpassing challenges together:

> *"I think the majority of the time, what really bonded people was the challenges that each person went through. The challenges that a person went through, we bonded better as we were doing the challenges together because we supported each other in a deeper understanding of one another and their capabilities in that regard. The burden of the challenges wasn't as heavy as we thought at the beginning because we thought we were on our own doing it." (Participant Q)*

> "*I think in the morning at 4am, we usually sing songs, we go for a jog, so that's good. It was really hard, but it was a good way to interact with the others. We got through it together." (Participant L)*

> *"I would say team bonding and the leadership part helped us to come together." (Participant Q)*

> *"It was outdoor phase because it included hiking and to develop teamwork and discover your strengths and how you can overcome as a team." (Participant B)*

> *"It was a very hard thing for me because I ended up fighting with my roommate there. But the outdoor phase helped a lot to make peace because we were all equal and team working*

helped us." (Participant C)

Two (2) participants mentioned how overcoming challenges at the Chrysalis Academy together helped foster cultural transformation as was mentioned previously regarding bonding through shared experience:

> *"Also in Chrysalis Academy, there was no such thing as me am black or Coloured. We were one. We were all sister from another mister, we all had each other's backs. We did everything as one and faced challenges together." (Participant F)*

> *"Dealing with people from races and cultures didn't really bother me because we did everything together. It didn't bother me as such." (Participant K)*

These research findings indicate that persevering through collective challenges at the Chrysalis Academy brought youth closer together. It is encouraging to note that the teamwork not only created stronger group cohesion, but also helped with individual transformation. As stated by *Participant B*, teamwork helped them to discover personal strengths and *Participant C* noted how working as a team made them feel equal which neutralised the perceived differences between peers. Teamwork in a youth-peer setting fosters positive reinforcement of success, increases confidence and helped individuals with problem solving while providing emotional support (Waller, Wheaton & Asbury, 2016).

This teamwork also builds comradery and the challenges themselves become a critical 'rite of passage' at the Chrysalis Academy (Kotze, 2003). Young males often join gangs to create a sense of belonging and to validate their masculine identity because formal, 'ritualised transitions to adulthood" are absent (Pinnock, 2016:150). In traditional societies, adolescent transition rituals are socially and morally accepted initiations in which a boy becomes a man, and his identity is validated in his society (Kotze, 2003; Pinnock, 2016). Kotze (2003) found these 'rites of passage' at the Chrysalis Academy fulfilled their lack of belonging and helped them to become more self-assured, disciplined, strong-willed and respectful towards themselves and also others (Kotze, 2003:323). The participants' experiences above reinforce Pinnock's (2016) and Kotze's (2003)

findings and also greatly align with the thematic approaches to this study. The social support from peers during difficult tasks can act as a social structure they can rely on during difficult challenges and also provide positive coping mechanisms learnt from peers during strenuous times (DeGarmo & Martinez, 2006). These interventions are also a mechanism of the Positive Youth Development Approach as the activities allowed the youth to problem solve together and created a positive and encouraging atmosphere for these youth to reach their full potential.

4.6 Youth Perceptions of Peer Social Support at the Chrysalis Academy

The findings and analysis within this theme are linked to the third research objective which is to explore how youth perceived peer social support provided by the Chrysalis Academy. Three themes were found in the research that showed how youth perceived peer support to be a positive mechanism. The youth perceived peers at Chrysalis Academy as a type of family, a support in helping them decide right from wrong and helped them gain more cultural understanding.

4.6.1 Belonging to a Peer Family

Despite students' racial and cultural differences, six (6) participants shared that they perceived their peers at the Chrysalis Academy as family:

> *"It was tough on the first week of January when I was there, so it was tough. I didn't know these guys, so it was tough. But then as time goes by…I was enjoying it until I finished the course and also like, we always got time to know each other. It feels like a family." (Participant R)*

> *"All of the peers that I graduated with there, I'd consider my brothers because we still check each other. A lot of them stay in my neighbourhood." (Participant M)*

Three (3) participants mentioned how their peers felt like family based on the support they received from them:

> *"So, there's nothing like, 'I'm better than the other one and the other one's better than*

me.' So there's a lot of programmes that bonded us and made us feel like we were family and supported." (Participant O)

"Peers at Chrysalis Academy were very supporting and very motivating guys. We were so connected and we saw life in a different way. And also, everyone was family. We treated each other like family, we called each other brothers. Everything we do together there, we supported each other in bad times." (Participant M)

"It's a constant support basically that the Chrysalis Academy gave you. They were always there for you, like family. You weren't really surrounded by any negative view or bias. It was very positive in that way." (Participant Q).

Two (2) participants mentioned how they felt peers were their family because they understood each other like family or even more than their own families do:

"We didn't judge each other like here in my community. There, we understood each other and talked to each other like family. And we came from different environments." (Participant K)

"I preferred talking to my friends at Chrysalis. I feel like they understand me more than my family."(Participant E)

As previously discussed, negative peer influence can create situations that are quite harmful to township youth. It is therefore encouraging to hear that the participants' perception of peer support at the Chrysalis Academy is so life-changing that they reference it to being a family bond. As *Participants K* and *E* point out, being understood is important for youth and the lack of judgement is a positive alternative to many peer relationships in their home communities. As per the participants' responses, positive peer support can be a bond that creates a lasting support system for youth. Many participants claimed in interviews that they usually had only one friend they could really rely on and therefore, the creation of a family-type peer bond has the potential to not only relieve stressors, but to harbour more resiliency and positive influence.

4.6.2 Peer Junior Instructors as Support

As previously presented, peer support is a crucial stress buffer and support system for youth. At the Chrysalis Academy, the programme utilises trained peer junior instructors as a unique component of the holistic youth programme. They are former Chrysalis Academy students who are trained to play the role of coaches, peer mentors and to accompany participants on all their daily activities (Meyer, 2017). Nine (9) participants explained their perceptions of the junior peer instructors and how they added value to their experience at the Academy.

The responses below show how four (4) participants perceived the junior peer instructors as a guidance to help them with positive morals and to help determine right from wrong:

> *"I would say that even though the students at Chrysalis did absorb the morals from the senior instructors, I think it settled in much deeper when the junior instructors had their say in it as well." (Participant Q)*

> *"They were very supportive and they always help if you need something. For me, it was feeling like before we leave Chrysalis Academy and so, so they were talking to us to say, 'We know what is right and what is wrong." (Participant J)*

> *"They were like sisters. But they always want us to be doing the right thing. They were like a role model. I learned a lot from them. They told us what we must do, what we must not do. We must do the right things. Because we're going back into the world, we must do good things in our community. People must know how to talk with other people and the difference between right and wrong." (Participant B)*

> *"All of those things that I didn't know about a person and also the way to connect with yourself. The way you should dress, the way you should conduct yourself, how you should behave. Also letting us take our decisions. If we take good decisions, they'd be like, 'Well done there.' If we take a bad decision, then you must learn from it." (Participant M)*

Three (3) participants highlighted how peer junior instructors acted as a sound board for them to talk to and in doing so, participants felt more understood:

> *"Because you know, when you actually, you need to talk to someone that will actually understand you. It's easier to talk to someone you know maybe you are the same age and you understand each other. They will totally understand you." (Participant G)*

> *"Ja. There was one who was always talking to me, teaching me things. How to be in life. I felt like he understood me." (Participant S)*

> *"It changed my life in many ways. Because when I was going to Chrysalis, I was having anger issues. But now, I'm fine because of the people working at Chrysalis. They are supportive because I was using a peer junior instructor to share my stuff with her. So ja, when I got home, everything was okay." (Participant A)*

The remaining two (2) participants mentioned how the peer junior instructors were examples for them because they had previously been in the same position as the participants. *Participant Q* also mentioned that their words dug deeper because they were closer in age to the participants:

> *"It's a very nice thing because for me, I just told myself, if they can do it, why can't I do it? And I can also see myself where they were at. I was really impressed with youth being instructors and being able to steer the boat. It's really great for me when I look at them and seeing the great work they're doing and they were also in the same tracksuit as students and how they've been able to instruct the students." (Participant O)*

> *"You can relate a bit better to them compared to senior instructors because they are in the same age group as you and their words dig deeper compared to the senior instructors." (Participant Q)*

In the responses above, participants share the value that the junior peer instructors added to their experiences during and after the Chrysalis Academy. Many of them perceived them as a support

system, a guidance for determining right from wrong, acting as a positive example at the Academy and peers who truly understood them. The junior peer instructors at the Chrysalis Academy are a unique component of the holistic programme and there have been no known replications of this specific model in South Africa. Few studies have also been conducted on peer-led interventions in South Africa, leaving a space for opportunity. In Frantz's study (2015), a five-week peer education programme was implemented in ten schools across the Western Cape involving ten peer educators (Frantz, 2015). The study found that the impact of peer educators had a positive effect on participants in that it contributed to effective prevention strategies for youth at promise (Frantz, 2015). As *Participant B* claimed in this study, the junior peer instructors helped them to learn to do the right thing so that they could make good decisions when they got back into their community. This coping strategy can be preventative when they move home to an environment that is unlike the supportive one at the Chrysalis Academy. In Visser (2005), students from the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria collaborated with the Gauteng Department of Education held peer-led workshops for secondary school students in Tshwane. (Visser, 2005) found that 27% of youth did not have an adult and 23% lacked a friend to talk to when they went through personal setbacks (Visser, 2005:148). *Participants G, S* and *A* all mentioned how they were able to talk to the junior peer instructors to gain perspective on life and listened to their problems.

The use of junior peer instructors within a larger and carefully structured holistic youth programme can be a facet of peer support. However, both Visser (2005) and Frantz (2015) predicate that the interventions that are peer-led without formal training or formally trained supervision can fall short of long-term effectiveness. Visser (2005) found that some peer leaders needed extensive training and were not "equipped with dealing with psychosocial problems and had to get assistance from adults or other facilities" (Visser, 2005:152). Frantz (2015) claimed that more research needed to be done and that for them to be successful, peer-educators need to be supported and properly equipped by trained professionals throughout the intervention (Frantz, 2015). These points should be taken into account for any youth development programmes created in South Africa.

4.6.3 Cultural Understanding

Despite the mixture of different racial and cultural backgrounds of participants, twelve (12) of them perceived certain structures of the programme to have been the impetus for cultural

understanding and personal transformation. These structures or aspects of the programme included the forced proximity of mixed peers at the Academy, the use of communication as a mediation tool and the outdoor phase.

Three (3) participants alluded that their cultural understanding resulted more from interactions forced by the structure of the Academy:

> *"My negative um, is that we come from different backgrounds and different homes and different cultures also. So they just say anything they want to say, do anything they want to do because they don't understand your culture. We came to understand each other more about our beliefs and cultures. Before I went away from Chrysalis, I became connected with other people in our course because I had to learn their cultures, I had to learn their backgrounds, I had to learn their religions." (Participant L)*

> *"At first, it was not easy, but at Chrysalis, they made us engage with each other so then we had to get along." (Participant B)*

> *"It was very difficult! Because we didn't understand each other. We actually had noticed to get along because you'd find that we'd share a room, there would be 5 blacks and 5 coloureds so we'd have no choice but to get along. And then if maybe we had a disagreement, then after the fight, we'd actually sit down and explain actually what it is that shook me off. Or I've actually tried to find out what I did wrong that offended the other. And then in that way, then we'll have maybe, we'll do it once and we'll sit and explain to each other what should be done. How we should react to each other so we could keep peace. I was locked up in the same space with people from the other race. But in a way, being forced to understand each other. And also, in a way man, Chrysalis Academy made us appreciate each other. Even if it's the same race with a different view. I appreciate them because after 3 months, you actually know them and you know their lives. You don't know them completely but you know what they've been through. And that actually would make you respect the other person." (Participant G)*

When asked what helped break down barriers with peers at the Chrysalis Academy, three (3) participants explained how they perceived communication and shared interests as tools for mediation:

> *"At first, we didn't' get along. Because she was a coloured and I was a black person. At first, I thought the junior instructor liked coloured's more than us. Whenever there was a fight, I thought that she took that side more than the black side. But then I never understood because in a fight, it would be a black and a coloured. I took it because I'd say that she is taking sides because I'm a white and she's a black, you see? At the end, she sat me down and she made me see everything, that's when we started to become close." (Participant K)*

> *"That's when we started to connect. This guy also likes photography, so we'd link. This guy likes art, this guy can rap. And then that's when people teamed up and became friends. There were mixed race there, Coloureds, Zulus, Tswanas and people from all over the Western Cape so you'd know that there's a lot of different values and stuff. So one would as it appears connect in such a way. It was a great experience because peers would connect and be friends with someone from Worcester or Beauford West and it was the first time meeting with them at that session or art session or whatever session that was happening in those groups." (Participant M)*

> *"Trying to communicate to each other, to know each other well. Not judging them." (Participant E)*

Erfan (2017) asserts that "repairing the collective is just as important as repairing the individual self" (Erfan, 2017:40). These findings indicate that the structure of the Chrysalis Academy fosters cultural mediation and peer understanding which both lead to collective healing. Many participants claimed that at first it was very difficult, but through constant exposure and communication with peers, they learned to get along. The responses support Erfan's (2017) assertions because while the participants are doing their own personal work at the Academy, they perceived the forced interactions as a way to respect and connect with their peers.

Another mechanism that youth perceived as effective in cultural mediation between peers was the outdoor phase at the Academy. As previously mentioned, many participants initially found the mixing of races and cultures to be a challenge between peers. Many participants mentioned aspects of the outdoor phase in the previous categories, however, six (6) participants noted the outdoor phase and the reasons why it was so effective in harnessing better peer relationships at the Chrysalis Academy:

> *"Outdoor phase was really like helpful regarding to connect with other people because in my group, there's like some guys I've never talked to in course and I began to talk to them and learn more about their different cultures and backgrounds. To open up, I'm never used to it. But since outdoor, I become more relaxed and more open to other people." (Participant L)*

> *"So I just was there to try to learn by myself and also in outdoor, there's a time when you're in a group and you share how things that you experience in life as you grow. In outdoor, we'd communicate a lot because we walk like 8-9 hours, so we have the chance to talk and chat and to learn about other cultures, so that's the one thing that help us not to fight as different culture you see. Outdoor is, I think it's the thing that help the students at Chrysalis to get along and throughout the course. It was tough at first because we don't understand each other and then the language also is one of the things because we don't understand. Always fighting until we get along in the outdoor phase, that's where things got sorted. Then we come back to the Chrysalis Academy, at least things were easy for us and we work together as a room. So we are understanding each other and we taught each other." (Participant R)*

> *"There was a point that we came together. It is the outdoor because they had to mix us up. Like, different cultures. Not just one culture, they had to mix. And that's how we got on better at the academy." (Participant N)*

> *"It was a very hard thing for me because I ended up fighting with my roommate there. But the outdoor phase helped a lot to make peace because we were all equal and team working*

helped us." (Participant C)

"There was some fights, yes. You'd see, I'll say Africans sit alone and coloureds will sit alone and we'll always discuss about that and talk about why we are always separating from each other, so ja. It was the outdoor that brought us together." (Participant H)

"Another culture, it was tough and also at Chrysalis Academy, they don't support fighting to deal. They support if you have a problem, don't fight physically. Deal with the problem by talking then you see which one you should follow or whatever, and it'll be alright." (Participant R)

In order for youth to maximise potential and lead fulfilling lives, Besthorn (2005) asserts that it is a 'biological imperative to connect with nature" (Besthorn, 2005:124). Low-income communities throughout the Western Cape sit far from safe, outdoor spaces and therefore the youth lack access to the benefits nature has to offer. As an emerging approaching within Positive Youth Development, wilderness programmes and therapies are gaining momentum with beneficial results. In this study, Participants L, R and H all mentioned that being able to talk to each other during the outdoor phase allowed them to learn about each other's differences and communicate regardless of race, culture or language, which fostered understanding and peace.

Dolgin (2014) designed a retreat for youth similar to the outdoor phase at the Chrysalis Academy which provided a safe space and facilitated an environment for youth talk about their tribulations and also the trails they experienced in their lives (Dolgin, 2014). The participants of this study also mentioned that the outdoor programme helped them to create awareness of others' situations and supported more empathetic communication (Dolgin, 2014). These findings from Dolgin (2014) are also key because they not only coincide with the responses above, but also further reinforce the youths' experiences in section 4.6.1. around shared experiences.

Other important effects of wilderness therapy were found by Bowen, Neill & Crisp (2016) in a meta-analysis of 197 outdoor programmes that showed increases in positive behavioural, emotional and psychological changes that were retained in the long run (Bowen, Neill & Crisp,

2016). Russell (2001) discovered that wilderness programmes often innately incorporate 'references to ceremony and ritual, and includes a rites of passage experience' that fortify cooperative behaviours (Russell, 2001:74). All of these studies support the stress-buffer hypothesis, Positive Youth Development approach and resiliency theories. A safe, facilitated outdoor programme allows for dialogue, understanding, conflict resolution, learning positive coping behaviours from others and providing a rite of passage experience that is so crucial to youth's transition to adulthood and validation from peers. In her major thesis, Chrysalis Academy CEO perfectly states that wilderness programmes can build resilience within the PYD approach and they can "make us aware not only of our relationship with nature, but also of our relationship with one another" (Meyer, 2017:33). Therefore, the benefits of wilderness programmes are manyfold, and it is apparent that with youth at the Chrysalis Academy, the outdoor phase brings enormous value to the lives of youth.

4.7 Peer Support as a Resiliency Factor

The participants' responses and information provided in this section are linked to objective four of the research which explored how peer support can help to foster resiliency for youth.

4.7.1 Youth Definitions of Resiliency

When asked if the Chrysalis Academy helped them to become resilient, nineteen (19) of the participants responded yes. The researcher found that although many participants believed that peer support was a factor in their resilience, there were other factors that added to their resilience. This was also seen in Meyer's (2017) major thesis of the Chrysalis Academy where the youths' responses coincided with Pinnock's personal transformation process (Pinnock, 2016:266) that has multiple facets such as, "having mentors for empathy, support and guidance; wilderness experience; being less in a harmful environment; safe spaces; opportunities to tell stories and time for reflection" (Meyer, 2017:143). It can therefore be concluded through the responses that peer support acts as one facet and factor for resilience as defined by participants, but that in the long term there are other components that should create a holistic transformational atmosphere for youth.

When asked what they define as resiliency or being resilient, participants responded with some profound perspectives:

> *"I'd say I'm resilient. The word resilience was pushed, don't give up. But resilient in everything you do because not everything is going to be easy. So, I had to be brave enough to finish. You take things seriously and the instructors are teaching good morals, the way they see life and the principals that they gave us. If you make a good decision, they applaud you there and it helped me to be resilient." (Participant M)*

> *"I would say I'm resilient and with Chrysalis, I decided to challenge myself and to move out and away from my parents. Chrysalis gave me that boost of confidence to tell my parents, 'Look here, I want to see if I can lie on my own.' They've been sheltering me for so long. I feel like it was time for me to go out and live in the world." (Participant Q)*

> *"You can say that Chrysalis helped me to become more resilient now because I've been going through a lot of the programmes with them, like the TRE, I was a personal trainer there, a sports coach instructor there. I have my own cycling club through the Academy there, ja, it's been great. They are definitely a part of my resilience." (Participant O)*

A constructionist approach to resiliency identifies it as an outcomes from "negotiation between individuals and environments for the resources to define themselves as healthy, amidst conditions collectively viewed as adverse" (Ungar, 2004:342). Through these responses above, participants see themselves as resilient because they learned to follow through, gained confidence, learned to list, learned to take accountability for their actions, learned coping mechanisms and obtained good morals. They might not be the same resiliency factors found in other studies, but a constructionist resiliency approach emphasizes the importance of contextual resiliency in order to understand resiliency from individuals themselves in their multidimensional lives.

4.7.2 Support Creates Confidence

Seven (7) participants mentioned how peer support and the Chrysalis Academy helped to create more confidence. In this section, many participants defined resiliency as having confidence which

means that if peer support can help create confidence in others, so can they help to build each other's resiliency. In Theron & Theron (2010), they found throughout South African resilience studies that peers were found to be resiliency promoting because they presented opportunities for peers to develop positive identities and values (Theron & Theron, 2010:4). Mampane (2014) conducted a study in South Africa with 291 Grade 9 students from two different black township secondary schools and found similar evidence that the resilient learners defined themselves as confident, independent and committed to accomplishing their goals (Mampane, 2014). Through these narratives, the youth express similar sentiments to these findings as their outcomes of gaining confidence were positive:

> *"Chrysalis taught me a lot of things. To deal with anger and also trust myself and also have confidence, to hustle and not to give up in life. If you fail, you do it again. Everyone there at the Academy helped me to understand these things." (Participant R)*

> *"I can say I am resilient because whenever I do something, I believe I'm going to complete it and I'm going to make success out of it. I've been piloting this youth ambassador hub programme also and today it's successful. And my peers at the Academy helped to give me the confidence to follow my dreams." (Participant O)*

> *"I've become resilient because I told myself that I must work hard, I must not give up, you see? I feel like Chrysalis made me more resilient because I go there and I get the confidence. When I come back, I have the confidence and I believe in myself. The peers at Chrysalis helped me to know how to be independent. Also how to help others when they need help. The other stories from the peers inspired us."(Participant B)*

These three (3) participants' responses above show that through their gained confidence, they were able to persevere and succeed. The three (3) responses below further illustrate how peer support helped create confidence which helped youth to get rid of self-doubt, work harder, cope better and talk through problems:

> *"A lot of times, I doubt myself and having the peer support and reassurance boosted my*

confidence." (Participant Q).

"The time I went to Chrysalis Academy, so how can I say, I talked everything out. So I was able to talk and to be more confident in myself." (Participant J)

"Even if I had problems, I'd keep it to myself. But now, if I have problems, I will go out and talk. And now I have improved my confidence because I was having lack of confidence so now I have." (Participant E)

"Chrysalis Academy helped me to become a hard worker and to cope well and to be responsible and being self-confident and dedicated and willing to learn." (Participant H)

In the above explanations, participants were able to 'drop identification with the egoic self' as described in Meyer (2017) and shared how through the support of others, they were able to transform their lives and be resilient in their own definition of the word. Many of them spoke of former patterns that they were able to break such as not working hard, giving up, and a lack of coping. Pinnock (2016) describes the benefits of these results as a 'resilience cascade' in which success in one area of their lives can booster self-efficacy which can cascade to youth being more confident in dealing with new challenges (Pinnock, 2016:264).

4.7.3 Making Better Decisions

As previously discussed, this study cast light on how the peer junior instructors guided youth through deciphering right from wrong to make better decisions. In the narratives below, four (4) participants talked about how the Chrysalis Academy and other peer support helped them to make healthier decisions when they went back to their communities after the programme:

"I would say Chrysalis did help me a lot cause if I could look around me or look around at my peers, things are not good at all. Chrysalis helped me because now, I'll be able to do things at my own. I don't feel pressure 'cause I can see what is happening outside the peer pressure world. Everyone at the Academy helped and my friends also helped because they are always there for me and they are very supportive to me, so ja." (Participant C)

"In my community, all we have to, you need to know yourself at first and what you need in life also what has helped me is that I told myself each and every day what I want, what I must do to avoid some unnecessary things. Chrysalis changed my life. I'm not a smoker now. I know how to deal with anger. I know how to deal with a person that is hurt, how should I talk with people and how I should represent myself." (Participant R)

"So ja, after I went back home, I began to interact with my peers in a good, meaningful way." (Participant L)

"Yes because at Chrysalis, we have to have different programmes. In those programmes, some of them are talking about the future that we are living, you see. So, I just learned that people can't make decisions for you, you have to make decisions for yourself." (Participant M)

Participant C stated that she was able to say no to negative peer pressure and *Participant L* shared how he can now interact with their peers in a positive and meaningful way. *Participant M* shows how the Academy was able to harness his sense of agency in making decisions for himself. These findings are essential in understanding how peer support and other aspects of the Chrysalis Academy can assist youth in their transitions back into their communities.

4.7.4 Risk Adaptability

When asked about their transitions back into their communities, six (6) participants shared that they were able to adapt to negative circumstances. These findings are linked to Ungar's definition of resiliency as mentioned in Chapter 1 of this study. The participants describe their negotiations with their environments as they returned home and the ways in which they lived healthy lives among conditions that can be viewed as adverse:

"So I always avoid them now if I see there's people who are trying to bring negativity to my life because I've adapted back to this community for a while, so I know when I see a bad thing coming my way, I know how to camouflage, I know how to escape if I have to." (Participant K)

"It was very hard coming back. Because there now, remember there was no phones, no noise, no traffic happening. It was peaceful. It was paradise, but now we have to come to this place where we have to survive. So, it was a bit of a challenge, but I was able to step bit by bit. I was like, I managed to come and live and I managed to adapt. So now, I was put in a position where I had to adapt to life. But I see differently now."
(Participant T)

"Ja, I learned to calm myself and take a moment to relax and just sit thinking what I learned. I liked the emotional intelligence class and learned how to deal with emotions during stressful times and act." (Participant P)

"It was a relief to go back to your parents, see your friends, talk to people. Do things which you couldn't do. Then people are still the same at home and you are a different person. Make me feel, I see a different side now. But people at home still the same and nothing has changed. You can't get it, what's going on. You're different, can't other people see life like that?" (Participant O)

These narratives are indicative of the transformative power of peer and social support at the Chrysalis Academy. As many participants found the navigation of their life back home difficult, they also mentioned their ability to adapt, deal with emotions, and how they saw life and themselves differently. Theron (2015) and many other resiliency studies highlight the importance of more qualitative, "youth-generated accounts of what supports youth" living in various contexts (Theron, 2015:636). Therefore, these insights above add new material and understanding to what youth feel were important to their resiliency and adaptability when returning home to difficult circumstances. They also corroborate the researcher's assumptions which guided her research.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the participants, their demographic profile and analysed the findings of the study as related to the objectives of the research. The research was coupled with literature and previous studies in the fields of peer support, resiliency and positive youth development. The next

chapter concludes the study. It recounts the research's aim, objectives and arrives at some recommendations for further youth interventions and/or research.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Introduction

This chapter discusses the main conclusions that were drawn from the findings of the study. The overall aim of the study was to explore how youth experienced and perceived peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape at the Chrysalis Academy. The study was conducted from a phenomenological perspective and thus the researcher was able to get insights from the youth themselves and understand how they experienced the programme. The objectives of the study were:

1. To identify risk factors present in everyday lives of youth.
2. To explore how youth experienced a peer social support programme offered by the Chrysalis Academy.
3. To explore how youth perceived peer social support provided by the Chrysalis Academy.
4. To investigate how peer support fostered resilience in the context of the Chrysalis Academy.
5. To arrive at particular recommendations for the Chrysalis Academy to strengthen the programme as well as policy interventions for how to engage with youth and build resiliency by drawing lessons from this programme.

5.1 Key Findings and Conclusion

This section provides the main conclusions from the research findings that are linked with the research objectives.

5.1.1 Research Objective One

The first objective was to identify risk factors present in everyday lives of youth. The research showed that there is a myriad of risk factors throughout the different ecologies of youth which effect their lives. The main risk factors that emerged from the responses were violence and crime, gangsterism, negative peer pressure and lack of support. All of the participants noted that at least one of these risk factors were present in their lives. These made them feel unsafe, on constant alert and stressed of being in danger. Most participants had some form of support in their life before

attending the Chrysalis Academy, yet they mentioned that many youth in their communities experience a lack of youth programmes or hubs and information around these programmes and job opportunities.

The findings under this objective indicate that participants lacked safe spaces and sought more access to youth programmes and information around different youth programmes and job opportunities. It is therefore useful from these findings to understand the ways in which the youth interact with these risk factors and to understand ways in which services can be provided to counteract or 'buffer' some of these effects. Many of these risk factors are deeply engrained societal ills that will not be solved through youth development programmes alone. However, to understand the reasons why youth engage in certain activities in the context of the Western Cape is useful in determining micro and macro interventions.

5.1.2 Research Objective Two

The second research objective was to explore youth experiences with peer support at the Chrysalis Academy. The first major finding was that the participants experienced the phenomena of building bonds through shared experience. Participants claimed that by hearing the stories and problems of their peers, it created empathy for the other by removing judgement and helped them to connect with each other with the realization that they are not alone in their trials. Four participants also expressed how talking about their experiences and sharing created a sense of freedom, relief and feeling accepted by their peers. The second significant finding indicated that participants experienced bonding when they overcame challenges together at the Chrysalis Academy. Participants said how this experience helped to create a deeper understanding of peers from other cultures and brought them closer together through teamwork.

The majority of participants had positive experiences with their peers at the Chrysalis Academy created deeper bonds with each other through certain activities such as group therapy and the outdoor phase. The evidence confirms the necessity of creating safe spaces for youth to share their stories with each other in order to create stronger peer relationships. The responses show that when youth work together to overcome a pro-social challenge, it breaks down cultural barriers, facilities

cultural mediation and acts as a ‘rite of passage’ to fulfill their individual capabilities validate a positive identity.

5.1.3 Research Objective Three

The third objective of the study was to explore youth perceptions of peer social support at the Chrysalis Academy. The research found that many youth felt the support from peers created a sense of family amongst them. This finding is transformative because if peers were able to create these strong bonds, this support can help mitigate the lack of support back home youth experience in their communities. The second finding was that many youth perceived the junior peer instructors as a positive support system. The narratives showed that junior peer instructors helped youth to learn right from wrong and were able to be supportive by listening and understanding youth. It also emerged that despite a mixture of racial and cultural backgrounds, the majority of participants perceived structures of the programme as creating cultural understanding and personal transformation. Many stated that through empathetic communication and listening, youth were able to see another peer as their equal and previous barriers broke down between them. The most overwhelming evidence of this was found during the outdoor phase at the Chrysalis Academy.

Throughout these responses, it was shown that youth perceived peer social support to be a positive and transformative aspect of the youth development programme. Many of them lacked a support system in the form of supportive parents, peers or community and the findings show that peer support can be cultivated to be as family bond. It is also important to hear about youth perceptions of junior peer instructors to understand how this aspect of the Chrysalis Academy can be an additional support to youth with peers who are similar in age and can act as pro-social role models. Youth testimonies in this study and another study on wilderness programmes found that having a safe space in nature or a safe therapeutic setting was incredibly effective in reconstructing youth’s perceptions of one another (Meyer, 2017 & Erfan, 2017). It allowed them to talk at length which led to a deeper understanding of the other. In can therefore be concluded that the transformative power of the outdoor phase in creating cultural understanding should be further explored and implemented in youth development programmes.

5.1.4 Research Objective Four

The last objective of the study sought to investigate how peer support fostered resilience in the context of the Chrysalis Academy. The constructionist approach to risk and resiliency highlights the relevance of personal youth narratives in defining their own resilience. Therefore, the study found that youth had various personal definitions of resiliency, however, the majority of responses made the connection between having confidence and being resilient.

When asked about their resiliency, the majority of participants felt that peer support created more confidence which in turn helped them to persevere, succeed and also help other peers gain confidence. Participants also expressed how the support of junior peer instructors and peers helped them to be more resilient because they were able to make better decisions among adverse situations and were able to adapt to negative circumstances at home. Even with various definition of resiliency among youth, through the findings it can be noted that peer support is a significant factor in creating resiliency for youth at the Chrysalis Academy.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings in this study, this section will provide recommendations for youth programmes, government interventions and further research.

5.2.1 For Youth Programmes

- To provide multiple, holistic types of interventions versus the status quo of 'quick-fix' youth programmes. This includes interventions that incorporate every aspect of youth: emotional, mental, physical and spiritual (Meyer, 2017). By providing multiple types of interventions that involve all of these aspects of youth, they will be more rounded in their skills of adapting to adverse circumstances.
- Create a safe space for youth that is physically removed from the community to foster an environment conducive to physical and emotional safety.
- To explore narratives of youth in order to inform interventions that they can co-create and ones which they desire for themselves.

- To create ‘rites of passage’ or ritualistic structures that are morally and socially acceptable so that youth don’t seek out these crucial transitions through anti-social peer group activities.
- To adopt a PYD mind-set by focusing on the potential of youth versus trying to solve their direct problems or labelling them as ‘at-risk.’
- The majority of youth in this study expressed that they would like youth clubs in their community. While youth clubs alone are unlikely to tackle risk factors, they can give youth a space in their communities to share information, tell their stories, learn from one another and to create a space for belonging.

5.2.2 For the South African Government

- To create a template for youth programme development with a “secular theory of personal transformation” (Pinnock, 2016:265). This would help to solidify a South African approach to youth development and would better guide future programme development while advising more effective collaboration within government departments.
- The government of South Africa should invest with multiple stakeholders to build replicas of the Chrysalis Academy in strategic locations throughout South Africa. Since risk factors may not be solved in a short-term projection, more academies should be created to aid more youth in realizing their potential and resiliency. This can have a knock-on effect for positive individual transformation and community development as evidenced in this study and other evaluations of the Chrysalis Academy.
- There is a dire need for youth employment within South Africa. When youth graduate from the Chrysalis Academy, they participate in a year-long internship to prepare them for full-time employment. The majority of participants in this study are still unemployed which exemplifies the wasted potential for youth to participate in the South African economy. With the youth unemployment at a record high, programmes like the Chrysalis Academy can assist youth with many skills, but they ultimately need more opportunities created by the private sector and the government. Therefore, it is important for the South African government to create policies to stimulate the economy instead of using strategies such as encouraging youth entrepreneurship which can be a scapegoat for implementing truly

effective policies. A drive for youth entrepreneurship also negates the obstacles they face in accessing formal markets and places the responsibility on the individual instead of creating transformative social policy.

5.2.3 Future Research Considerations

- From literature, it has been highlighted that there is a need for rigorous Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) of the existing youth programmes within a South African context. This would help to strengthen existing programmes and to evaluate methods that are either effective or aspects that need changing.
- More extensive research that focusses on some of the issues highlighted in the youths' responses is also needed to understand how they conceptualise resiliency and development programmes within South Africa. Since there are more approaches and research around resiliency circulating in the field, it is imperative that policy-makers and youth development programme designers include their perspectives instead of relying on Eurocentric views and practices of resiliency interventions.
- Wilderness programmes and therapies are young in practice, theory and research. With the positive responses from this study and others, wilderness programmes and therapies should be further explored in the context of South African youth. Such research would be able to inform future programmes and policies that aim to foster positive youth development.

5.3 Summary

This chapter discussed the major findings that emerged from the study on youth experiences and perceptions of peer social support at the Chrysalis Academy. The findings were discussed as they pertained to each research objective and the chapter was concluded with policy, programme and further research recommendations.

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APPENDIX 1: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

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Informed Consent Form Informed Consent for Research Respondent

As a research respondent, I agree to participate in this study and I understand the following:

Research Aim: The overall aim of the study is to explore how youth experience and perceive peer social support at a holistic youth development programme in the Western Cape: The Chrysalis Academy.

Procedure: I understand that my participation will involve a phone interview which will require approximately 30-45 minutes of my time.

Risk and benefit: I understand that there is no financial benefit for participating in this study and that there are no associated risks. I understand that my participation will help inform research on youth's experiences and perceptions of peer social support at the Chrysalis Academy.

Participant's Rights: My participation in this study is voluntary and I may withdraw my participation at any time, without fear of any consequences.

Confidentiality/anonymity: I understand that the interview will be recorded and that the recording will only be listened to by the researcher and my comments will remain confidential. Should I withdraw from the study, my interview will be deleted and no data from the interview will be used. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous in this study. The results from this study will be used in the researcher's master's project which will be viewed by her supervisor and external examiner and my identity will not be revealed in any publication resulting from this study.

Contact information: If I have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, I can contact Elle Winsted at elwinsted@gmail.com; 060 690 2850 or her Supervisor Associate Professor Ndangwa Noyoo at ndangwa.noyoo@uct.ac.za; 021 650 3482.

I understand my rights as a research participant and I voluntarily give my consent to participate in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I have received a copy of this consent form. I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature_____ Date: _____

Researcher's signature_____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 2: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDE

Exploring How Youth Experience and Perceive Peer Social Support at a Holistic Youth Development Programme in the Western Cape

I just want to say thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. I was an intern last year at the CA and worked in the TRE groups and I loved talking with the youth and hearing their experiences. The aim for this study is to listen and find out how youth experience and perceive peer social support at home and at the Chrysalis Academy in Cape Town.

Before I start asking my questions, I want to clarify a few things.

1. As a researcher, I am completely objective and there is not right or wrong answer. This is a safe space to express yourself and the more detail the better!
2. Everything you say today will be completely confidential and you will remain anonymous.
3. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable or that you wish not to answer.
4. The goal of this study is to inform better policy for youth programmes and to give the youth of Cape Town a voice in their own development.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

Section A: Demographic Data

Name:	
Sex:	
Age:	

Gender:	
Education:	
Race:	
First Language:	
Employment:	

Section B: Household Data

1. Where do you live?
2. Who do you live with in your household?
3. What are your responsibilities in your household?
4. How many people work in your household?
5. How do you experience support in your life?
6. How do you find this support or lack of support affects you and your life?

Section C: Community Data

1. What do you like about your community?
2. What do you dislike about your community?
3. Do you feel safe in your community? How does that sense of security or lack of security affect your life?
4. How do you feel your community is supportive of you? How does this make you feel?
5. Are there role models in your life?
6. Do you think other kids have role models in your community?
7. How do you deal with stressful events?
8. Are there places in your community where people can receive support?
9. What do you think can happen in your community to make you feel more supported?

Section D: Peer Relationship Data

1. Do you feel the youth are supported in your community?
2. Do you have positive peer support in your community? Please describe.
3. How does peer support make you feel?
4. How do you find peers influence you in your community?

5. Have you ever given into peer pressure? How did that make you feel?
6. Do you find it hard not to give into peer pressure in your community?
7. Why do you think peers give into peer pressure?
8. Does that support help them say no to peer pressure or giving into things like drugs?

Section E: Questions Related to Research Objectives

Questions Related to Objective One:

1. Why did you choose to go to the Chrysalis Academy?
2. Please describe your overall experience during the three months at the Chrysalis Academy. What was your favourite part about the programme? What challenges or negative experiences did you have?
3. Can you give me an example of someone or something that made you feel supported? Please explain.
4. Was there any part of the programme that made you feel unsupported?
5. Did you partake in the counselling? How did the counselling make you feel?
6. (Question 6-8 were later added when these themes were occurring in the beginning of interviews) When you had to share your experiences with other peers, how did that make you feel?
7. You had peers at CA who came from different cultures. Please explain your experience in dealing with peers from different races and cultures.
8. What helped to break down some of those barriers between those groups?
9. What aspects of the programme do you feel helped create better and more positive peer relationships?
10. When you went back home, did you interact with peers differently after the CA?

Questions Related to Objective Two:

1. What was your relationship like with the peer junior instructors? How did they make you feel?
2. What was your relationship like with the peer instructors versus senior instructors?
3. Did you find that the peer junior instructors were a positive support system for you throughout the programme?

4. Do you feel that peer junior instructors should be included in youth development programmes? Why?

Questions Related to Objective Three:

1. Resiliency is often seen as the ability to deal with stressful life events and yet to still make positive and good decisions in your life. Being able to adapt. Do you believe yourself to be resilient? If so, what or who do you believe helps give you resiliency in your life?
2. Do you think the CA helped you to become more resilient?
3. Do you feel that the positive peer social support at the Academy helped you to become resilient.
4. Did your experience with peers at the Chrysalis Academy change the way you see support going back home to your community?
5. How do you think South African youth can become more resilient?

Questions Related to Objective Four:

1. Have you ever partaken in another youth development programme? If so, please explain your experience.
2. If you have participated in another programme, how did you find it to compare to the holistic youth development programme at the Chrysalis Academy?
3. What are aspects of the Chrysalis Academy that you feel need to be improved? Please give an example or explain why you believe this.
4. What were the ways in which the Chrysalis Academy helped you in your life?
5. What recommendations would you make to the academy to help create more positive peer social supportive relationships while at the Academy?
6. Do you feel that the youth in your community receive enough information on youth programmes?
7. What is your viewpoint on the government and how they deal with youth currently in South Africa? Do you believe they listen or support youth?
8. What do you believe the government or community can do to improve youth development?

9. How do you believe that youth can become more resilient and engaged in South African society?
10. How was your journey returning home and adjusting back to life? Did the CA help with your adjustment?
11. Do you believe there should be more programmes like the Chrysalis Academy?
12. Can you tell me how Chrysalis changed your life?
13. What are your long term goals? What do you see for yourself in the future!

Thank you so much! It was a pleasure to hear your insight. Thank you for sharing your experiences and insight. I hope that you utilize the CA and their post-graduate services. With this study, I am hoping it can inform more policy to improve youth development programmes and voice the opinions of the youth.