

Chapter Seven



INTERVENTIONS FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL CONTEXTS

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INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE NEED FOR INTERVENTIONS IN OSC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brain, behaviour, social context interaction

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

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

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

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

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

Leisure as a context for boredom

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Need for organisational support and policies

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTERVENTIONS IN OSCs: A SYSTEMIC APPROACH

Using existing evidence to plan interventions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interventions at the microsystem and mesosystem level

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Interventions at the exosystem and macrosystem level

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

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

HealthWise South Africa: Life Skills for Young Adults Programme

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

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

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

The protective factors included:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The BPPAP was evaluated using qualitative evaluation methods that included:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONCLUSION

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

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

On the other hand, for those youths who have dropped out or are disengaged at school, other venues for programming and intervention must be found and supported. It is vital that vigorous and effective social marketing of these programmes occurs.

- There is an important bi-directional relationship that must be considered in developing interventions in OSCs to prevent violence. The youth must learn to take responsibility for their actions but at the same time, adults, communities and policies must provide the supports, opportunities, services and programmes to empower youths to take that responsibility.
- Related to the point above is that effective interventions and programmes need to include youth ‘voice and choice’; that is, adults cannot *plan for* youths but rather there must be a reciprocal interaction between youths and adults for successful programming to occur.
- Programme staff must be well-trained, well-paid and learn intentional programming to reach important outcomes such as violence prevention and promotion of youth development goals.
- Research is lacking in the area of violence prevention in OSCs and particularly in the South African context. Thus, capacity needs to be developed to conduct this research and money set aside to conduct rigorous, randomised controlled trials to assess the effectiveness of interventions and to suggest how interventions can be further improved.
- Standards for best practices and blue-ribbon programmes in the area of violence prevention and OSCs in South Africa should be established and compiled in a way that is easily accessible to anyone interested in this topic (for example, a web-based product).
- Attention cannot be only focused on youths. Families, schools and educators, religious institutions and other social structures must be implicated systematically in any attempt to reduce violence in OSCs.
- Finally, as evidence is established that interventions in OSCs are effective, more resources must be allocated across governmental, NGOs, school and community structures to support activities that take place in the OSC.

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