

**THE GEOGRAPHIES OF BULLYING WITHIN A SCHOOL: A QUALITATIVE  
STUDY OF CHILDREN'S EXPERIENCES**

**BY**

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**DECEMBER 2013**

## **SUPERVISOR'S STATEMENT**

This dissertation has been submitted with/without my approval

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**Supervisor: Prof Pholoho Morojele**

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**Date**

## **DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY**

I, Zibeleni Lucia Hlophe, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving husband Ps Thabani Hlophe who has been a source of inspiration, continuous support and encouragement and without whom I would not have achieved much. And my lovely children, especially Amahle, Anele, S'hawu and Nduduzo, for their love and patience. May all your goals and aspirations be fulfilled.

## **ABSTRACT**

This is a qualitative study of children's understanding and experiences of bullying in one co-educational high school in KwaZulu-Natal. The study sought to get an insight into the problem of bullying by investigating the lived experiences of children within the school context. The aim of the study was to unveil the forms of bullying that children experience and the contributory factors thereof; as well as strategies for the alleviation of bullying in the school context.

The study adopted a qualitative case study design and semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection which took the form of focus group and individual interviews. A total of six children, five boys and one girl participated in the study. The findings suggest that there was a high incidence of bullying at the school. Bullying took the form of physical harm, including kicking and hitting, and emotional harm, which included name calling and cyber bullying. Some school spaces, peer pressure, media and dominant discourses of bullying were found to be some of the factors that contributed to bullying behaviour in this school. The findings indicate that boys are mostly the victims of bullying. The resultant unequal gendered power relations seem to play a major role in the perpetuation of the cycle of bullying at the school.

The study found that teachers were also the perpetrators of bullying in some way or another. Additionally, teachers seem to accept bullying as normal children's behavior, and take no remedial actions to stop such abuses. The study offers suggestions that relevant stakeholders could employ to address bullying at schools. These include the supplementing of the teacher education curriculum, provision of training on how to deal with bullying, the launch of a campaign to bring about greater awareness of this phenomenon at schools and in the

communities, encouragement of parental involvement, the eliciting of professional support and the setting up of structures for child peer support.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY**

#### **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

This was a qualitative study of children's understandings and experiences of bullying amongst South African school children. Drawing from their narratives, the study sought to get an insight into the problem of bullying by investigating the lived experiences of both boy and girl children within the school context. The aim of the study was to identify effective strategies that, according to children, may counteract incidences of bullying within South African schools.

This chapter provides the background to the study, the geographic, social context and discusses some of the South African education policies on school bullying. The chapter provides the purpose, rationale and objectives of the study and concludes with an outline of the organizational structure of the dissertation.

#### **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Much research has been conducted locally, as well as internationally, on the topic of bullying. Bullying is a problem that is experienced worldwide. On the local scene, Squelch (2000), of the Rand University, conducted research on bullying, however not much is gender related. The Human Rights Watch (2001) notes the multiple forms of bullying that South African girls face at

schools. It is frightening to note the high rate, and extent, of bullying that learners, especially girls, face in South African Schools.

On the international front, Olweus (1978) conducted a nationwide survey on bullying in Norway. He concluded that the younger and weaker students were more exposed to bullying. Boys were more exposed to bullying than girls while girls were more exposed to indirect and subtle forms of bullying. Boys bullied more than 80% of boys. On the other hand, in Australia, Ken Rigby (1995) noted that the main gender difference was that girls used more indirect methods whilst boys settled for more direct ways of bullying. Girls are likely to report being bullied by boys and girls whilst boys report being exclusively bullied by boys. My study looked at similar trends amongst learners in a Durban High school.

At the time of writing, incidents of bullying in South African schools appeared to be on a rapid increase (Isolezwe, 2013). This is evident in local media reports on school bullying. In my view, however, the problem of bullying is far worse than the media reports portray. (Ukhozi Fm, Talk Show, 7pm by Noncebo McKenzie, 28 February 2013). The journalist highlights that school bullying amongst high school children, particularly in Durban and the surroundings, ends in seriously violent crime. On many occasions, such violent eruptions ended in murder or injuries. According to media investigations into these incidents, many school teachers have been aware of antagonistic relationships between bullies and victims/ targets but have been ill equipped to manage such relationships.

Consequently, many learners drop out of school as a result of being bullied on a daily basis and the school leaders turn a blind eye to their plight. My study, therefore, is motivated by this awareness. However, I am concerned about engaging with the emotional geographies of children who are bullying within their school. To explore this, my study engages with the narratives of such incidences as accounted by the victim/target, as well as the ‘bully’. Drawing from the children’s narratives, perceptions and perspectives on bullying, it is hoped that this research will contribute to existing theoretical insights on how school children perceive bullying.

### **1.3 THE GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Bullying is a learned behavior which is carried from the community to school and vice versa. I provide a brief description of the geographical and social background of the community in which the school is located as this has a bearing on the dynamics of bullying in this study. In the context of this study one of the high schools in Hammarsdale, outside Durban in the Mpumalanga Township, was selected on the grounds that there were a large number of learners with bullying behavior. The school is located in a semi- urban area. Most learners there experienced this problem, some learners had already moved to new schools and some dropped out because of the bullying behavior. The study focused on learner’s understandings and experiences of bullying.

Six Grade 9 and 10 children were chosen as participants from a total school population of 1350 children. There was a balance between the number of male and female children at the school. The school has 22 classes accommodating children from Grade 8 to 12.

#### **1.4 EDUCATIONAL AND POLICY CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The new democratic government that was elected in 1994 came up with new policies. A new democratic constitution was introduced; by which the right to dignity, equality, freedom and security for all citizens was assured. Stemming from this, legislation was passed, amongst many other policy changes, banning corporal punishment in schools. The two pieces of concerning this are to be found in The National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) and the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) (SASA). “Schools are now tasked with the responsibility of finding alternative ways of dealing with delinquency, a shift towards creating safe and health-promoting schools” (Asmal, 2000, p. 2).

The new government had also introduced other legislation with the intention of improving education in South Africa. The white paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) focused on the access of quality education to all its citizens. South African Schools Act (SASA) 84 of 1996) provides schools with greater autonomy; the principal feature being to allow for community ownership of schools through the establishment of school governing bodies. The Department of Education effort, through the launch of “Tirisano: Call to Action” to address safety issues at school and other legislation mentioned earlier, very little has been outlined on ways to address issues of bullying in schools. The Department’s strategic objective is to create a safe and tolerant learning environment therefore this means that they support the plan of action. It is their concern to address the issues of safety and security. The plan of Tirisano, and the above policies, focused mainly on massive inequalities in access and

facilities and it also emphasized the need for improvements in the safety and security elements of schooling in the process of teaching and learning.

## **1.5 THE PURPOSE, RATIONALE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study was to explore children's understandings and experiences of bullying in an urban co-educational High school in KwaZulu-Natal. The aim was to contribute information regarding children's experiences and the factors that contribute to bullying. The study aimed to contribute to the practical understanding of this problem and to identify effective strategies for children to use so as to deal with incidents of bullying at the school.

The study was objecting at locating the different experiences that girls and boys encounter with bullying. The study was objecting to develop strategies for coping with bullying in high school. Another objective was to learn how children negotiate the bullying problem. Since many schools in the area have not acknowledged the problem of bullying, the study was objecting to establish a base from which to provide help and devise empowering strategies for schools in the area. This research aimed to examine the views and experiences of children, both boys and girls.

My approach to this research was based on the socialization process; whereby children are socialized by their peers, parents, siblings, etc., about bullying. My belief is that some children fight because they see their fathers abusing their mothers or vice versa.

The knowledge about the world is acquired through the process of socialization; a child is what he sees every day (Harro, 2000). That is the nature of children; they copy everything that they see as children's behavior is context based.

As an educator at a co-educational high school, I have observed confrontations between children and their peers, on an almost daily basis. These confrontations usually commence with an argument and subsequently results in bullying. The Bill of Rights in the 1996 Constitution lists a number of human rights that are protected and enforced by law. Bullying is a violation of several of these rights (Squelch, 2000). A child's right to human dignity is violated when the child is humiliated and embarrassed during bullying. A child's right to privacy is violated during bullying when his/her possessions are taken away or interfered with it. A child has a right not to be tortured in any way or be treated in a cruel way. According to Squelch (2000), bullying is a complex problem and has been for a long time. Bullying not only affects the victim but also the bully.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are children's understandings of bullying?
2. Which are the spaces and places in schools that enable the manifestation of bullying?
3. What are the geographies of victims and perpetrators of bullying?
4. What, according to children, can schools do to prevent bullying at school?



To address the above key research questions, the study adopted a qualitative research methodology, using semi-structured interviews and a focus group as its methods of data collection. These were conducted with a sample of six Grade 9 and 10 children, five of whom were males. The age of the children ranged between 13 and 16 years.

## **1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation is organized as follows:

**Chapter 2** is a review of relevant literature on bullying. Literature examining bullying in the South African schools, as well as internationally, will be reviewed. This chapter also presents the theoretical framework whereby data collected in this study is interpreted.

**Chapter 3** explains the research design and methodology employed in this study. This study takes the form of a case study, using two types of interviews: individual and focus group discussion.

**Chapter 4** presents the research findings and the data is presented and analyzed. The findings are presented in the form of themes which emerged from the data collected.

**Chapter 5** concludes the study by drawing on the findings and presenting the implications. It was concluded in this study that there is a problem of bullying and that there should be some serious action taken by the school to overcome this problem.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

As pointed out in the previous chapter, this research engages with the narratives of six school children between the ages of fourteen and sixteen years and in which they articulate their experiences of bullying within their school. In line with my primary goals underpinning this study (see chapter 1), it is hoped that my engagement with these children's narratives will serve to raise awareness of bullying in South African schools, provide a platform for children to offer their thinking about how bullying in schools might be eradicated. In this chapter, I engage with local and international studies related to bullying among children. I begin my review of these studies by considering works that provide some understandings of bullying amongst children. I feel that these studies have relevance since, in my view, by identifying factors which enable bullying, and thinking of ways to eradicate these factors, one has a basis from which one may work towards eradicating bullying in schools. I also consider existing research that suggests ways in which bullying may be eradicated at schools.

#### **2.2 UNDERSTANDINGS OF BULLYING**

This section relates to the first of my four key research questions that which seeks to explore understandings of bullying among my research participants. This body of literature will be useful in theorizing my participant's responses with regard to what they perceive the act of bullying to

entail. Taking into consideration that my research sample are children between the ages of 14 and 16 years, I consider studies that explored the understanding of bullying among children of similar ages.

The literature on bullying is ever-expanding. I have limited my selection to draw on the following writings: Squelch (2000); Oswald (2001); Linn, (2001); Dunham, (2006); Fried, (2009) and Renold (2010). Linn (2001) did a study in a southern New Jersey suburban school. The study was done on 12-14 year old children. I chose this study as I thought it would be helpful to my research as the age cohort used is similar to that of my research, although it was done in suburban areas unlike mine, which was conducted in a semi-urban area. The study was done using Grade 5 to Grade 8 children. Thirty five questions were asked and the results showed that most of bullying that took place was the result of gender and race. Fried (2009) did a study in government schools in Cape Town whereby children in Grade 8 aged 14.2 and Grade 11 aged 17.4 was interviewed.

Their studies are most helpful to my study because they were done in Government schools and to the 14 years old almost similar to mine as the school I'm going to conduct this research is a government school, and my participants are almost of the similar age group. Dunham's (2006) study was conducted in the midlands of England and children aged ten and eleven were the participants. The children were of his own class, and then I became interested in this study as I was so curious to hear the results as the children are of the researcher's class. The researcher mentioned that he distanced himself from the photograph taking process. Renold's (2010) study

was done in a UK non-governmental school. This study is also important as I wanted to know how other countries experienced bullying in their schools.

Existing literature (Olweus, 1978; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Collins, 1998) indicates that over the decades, bullying has always been understood to be physical, verbal or psychological acts. These acts include attacks of intimidation, in repeated incidents, over a period of time. Such acts occur when one person exerts strength or uses power, their size, ability or force of their personality over another, with the primary intention of hurting, frightening or causing distress to their victims. Squelch (2000) describes bullying as risk-taking behavior that occurs in different forms. Olswald (2001) contends that bullying has serious consequences since it could occur at any time during the school hours and could occur anywhere in the school buildings. Linn (2001) analyzes bullying in a more traditional way: a normative social experience of childhood endured by many but damaging only to a small proportion of individuals.

Dunham (2006) maintains that bullying is an exposure to violence. Dunham (2006) defines bullying and violence as subcategories of aggressive behavior. Fred (2009) concentrates more on the forms of bullying rather than on the understanding of bullying. Renold (2010) defines bullying as a subset of aggressive behavior characterized by a repetition and an imbalance. A student is bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed repeatedly, and over time, to negative action by one or more other students. There is no clear explanation on bullying and scholars do not adhere to any one explanation. The problem however, with studies that attempt to provide an understanding of bullying, is that they draw on the Western understanding of bullying (Renold & Linn, 2009). My study addresses this limitation by focusing on understandings of South African

children. The studies I chose above are relevant to my study as they deal with children around the age of sixteen, although Olswald (2001) study is based on 6 year old children. The gender criteria dealt with in the studies are helpful as they deal with boys bullying girls as well as small boys being bullied by older boys. The other limitation is that some studies categorize bullying with anti-social behavior, behavior that is difficult to control (Dunham, 2006). Most studies are done in urban areas yet in South African schools most bullying occurs even in rural areas. To further understand bullying we will look at the different forms of bullying.

### **2.3 FORMS OF BULLYING**

This section attempts to answer my second research question, that which focuses on how children experience different forms of bullying. I look at the different forms of bullying more especially in South African schools. Some studies focus only on psychological bullying for example, Renold (2010) emphasized that this form of bullying is conceived as an individual psychological acting out of aggression from bully to the victim. Fred (2009) notes different forms of bullying e.g. physical bullying, emotional bullying, psychological bullying and cyber bullying. Physical bullying occurs when a person uses overt bodily acts to gain power over peers. Physical bullying can include kicking, punching, hitting or other physical attacks. (Olswald, 2001). Emotional bullying includes name calling, teasing or mocking, the use of sarcasm, threaten, put down or belittle, ignore or exclude from a group, lie, torment, gang up on others, humiliate others. Psychological bullying can occur in a close relationship including friends, it can be harmful on children because of the impact it has on self-esteem and patterns relating to others. Psychological bullying means to harm a person through emotional abuse,

sometimes called mental abuse means there is a causing significant distress. Mental bullying interferes with a person's ability to develop healthy and stable patterns of relating to others (Olswald, 2001). Olswald (2001) describes cyber bullying as a form of bullying that leads to emotional disturbance. This form of bullying is done through the use of technology. This occurs because there is a lack of parental supervision. Dunham (2006) observed verbal bullying as the one that entails any slanderous statements or accusations that cause the victim undue emotional distress. The most common form of bullying that most studies focus on is physical bullying. This is the common form of bullying in African schools.

Studies that are done in Western countries, like the one by Renold (2010), do not focus on physical bullying. This study concentrated more on cyber bullying since the learners in Western countries are better at technology than African children, especially those from rural areas. Therefore, cyber bullying is described as a form of bullying that can easily go undetected because of lack of parental/authoritative supervision. Since bullies can pose as someone else, cyber bullying is the most anonymous form of bullying. Cyber bullying includes, but is not limited to, abuse by email, blogging, instant messaging, text messaging or via websites. Many children who are bullied in school are likely to be bullied over the internet, and vice versa (Renold, 2010). To date, there are over 50 UK non- governmental organizations dedicated to anti-bullying policy and advocacy work in schools.

To further understand bullying we will look at spaces and places enabling manifestations of school bullying.

## **2.4 SPACES AND PLACES ENABLING THE MANIFESTATION OF BULLYING**

This section attempts to answer the third research question which looks at how children negotiate the spaces and places that enable the manifestation of school bullying. The literature review in this section addresses the second research question driving this study, which probes what are the places and spaces in schools that enable bullying to manifest? By spaces we mean the actual spots where bullying is taking place. By places we mean the particular portion of space, where bullying occur. The literature that was related to the above question underscores a number of factors that enable the manifestation of bullying in schools (e.g. gender, power and socio-economic conditions).

Parameters of the school and what children learn in and out of the school spaces are re-enacted within the school. For example, Oswald (2001) claims that bullying behavior that is enacted in schools is manifested through the growing up in a home where there is a marital discord and a lack of family affection and cohesion. The child can feel being rejected or abandoned by parents, particularly by fathers, who are having a difficult temperament; and exhibiting hyperactive, aggressive and other externalizing problem (Olswald, 2001). Limitations of Olswald's (2001) study are that it is mostly concerned with children having problems in their families which may contribute to their bullying behavior.

Dunham (2006) contends that male learners are usually the ones that perpetrate bullying at school. This is the reason the issues of gender and power are also involved in this study. Dunham (2006) states that in comparison to girls, boys are more drawn into the bullying episode and

become actively involved in bullying. Relating to power, Marano (1995) also agreed with Dunham, (2006) by for example stating that bullying involves a pattern of repeated aggressive behavior with negative intent directed from one child to another. To their studies they concentrate more on physical bullying. They forgot to look at other forms of bullying that might be the cause for boys to bully the girls e.g. emotional bullying like cyber bullying. Regarding socio-economic background, Squelch (2000) for example states that bullying occurs in all schools, rich or poor, state and independent.

It is therefore evident, from the literature in Western countries, that bullying manifests in societies in which violence is glorified; where masculinities are constructedly, measured (Renold, 2010). This study was done in twenty American children of whom the results showed that fifteen of those children were coming from families where violence is glorified. The limitation of this American study except that it is from a Western country, but it also showed that bullying is being perpetrated from homes. My study will also look to bullying outside the families that means in schools.

South African children are not born to be violent, (bullied) yet they are exposed to high levels of violence in their everyday lives. Sarthiparsad (2003) commented that children are systematically socialized by society to be violent. Burton (2008) states that bullying increases the risk of young children as victimization as well as engaging in anti-social behavior later in their lives. In some schools, drugs are the most important problem that exposes learners to risky behavior. Sarthiparsad (2003) argues that schools have become sites of violence for children and has a negative impact especially on their careers. Sarthiparsad (2003) only looks at bullying on the



school premises whilst ignoring bullying that occurs outside the school. Sarthiparsad (2003) and Burton (2008) both agree that bullying behavior affects children especially in their studies.

Most of the studies, on the places and spaces for bullying, reach consensus that most bullying takes place on school grounds and during break times. There are other forms of bullying that take place outside school premises (Renold, 2010). The following section discusses the causes of bullying among children.

## **2.5 THE CAUSES OF BULLYING**

There are various reasons why learners resort to bullying. However, the most common ones will be discussed below:

### **2.5.1 Personality**

The hyperactive bully, typically, has problems with academics and social skills. This student will often bully someone then place the blame on someone else. Ellen (2003) commented that a bullied bully is usually someone who has been bullied in the past or is bullied by an older sibling. A bunch of bullies is a group of friends who gang up on others. This study was done in 2001 in the school of social science in Southern Africa. The empirical of the study is that social skills and academics among children are the common cause of bullying (Ellen 2003).

Olswald (2011) argues that bullies may sometimes have their own problems; they may feel upset, angry or feel that they don't fit in - perhaps they have problems at home; they are scared of getting picked on so they do it first; they get bullied themselves, perhaps by someone in their own family or other adults; and many don't like themselves and so take it out on someone else. Bullying has an effect on those who are bullied; the effects could be physical harm, stress, and complaints of physical ailments such as stomach aches and headaches, which are brought on by the stress. The bullied can become shy and withdrawn; fear and anxiety could make them constantly absent themselves from school (Olswald, 2011).

Both Ellen (2003) and Olswald (2011) agree that bullying behavior may come from within the individual. They contend that the upbringing of a child might be a problem in the child's engagement with others. Their studies were conducted on children from semi-urban areas aged between fifteen and seventeen so their research is helpful to this study.

### **2.5.2 Peers**

Most of the time when bullying occurs around other students, the bullied are likely not to say anything or do anything because they are either scared to do something or they just don't really care (Morrison, 2002). However, Dunham (2006) suggests that a significant portion of 'normal' school children may not evaluate school-based violence as negative or as being unacceptable as much as adults generally do; they may even derive enjoyment from it and, therefore, may not see a reason to prevent it especially if it brings them joy on some level (Morrison, 2002). A gang of bullies is a group of students who are not really friends but are drawn together due to their desire

for power. The afore mentioned studies mention very little about peer pressure or how bullies try to prove themselves as grown up when they engage in fighting to show their peers that they are men.

Ellen (2003) noted that the extent of bullying depends upon the attention that the bullies get from the audience. Peers may generally form the audience for bullying and may want to support it. Some children become bullies for many reasons such as they want to impress their peers, they were once bullied themselves and now feel like they can bullying others, and some even do it as retaliation for being punished in school (Ellen, 2003). Ellen's (2003) study does not dwell much on family relations being a cause of bullying. This study will also look at family issues and its relationship with bullying behavior.

A common view is that bullying is caused by external deviation (Olswald, 2009). This study was further referred to Olsweus, (1993) as a pioneer of bullying at schools whereby, it was argued that students who are fat, red-haired, wear glasses or speak with an unusual dialect etc. are particularly likely to become victims of bullying. Olsweus (2009) concludes that environmental factors such as teacher's attitudes, routines and behavior play a major role in the extent to which the problems will manifest themselves in a larger unit such as a classroom or a school (Olsweus, 2009).

## **2.6 THE IMPACT OF BULLYING**

Growing up in a bullying context can have serious consequences for children. Linn (2009) states that form of bullying appears to be as psychologically and emotional distressing. A number of studies, such as that of Renold (2010), indicate that children growing up in the midst violence are at risk for development harm. This also raises the emotional trauma. There are six emotional and behavioral consequences of children's ongoing exposure to bullying, described by Linn (2009). The consequences are: lack of ability to trust and love; loss of self-esteem; dehumanization and desensitization; adoption of the 'culture of bullying'; children becoming violent; and self-destructive behavior (Linn, 2009).

Dunham (2006) points out that the victims of bullying often suffer from mental health conditions, with high levels of depression and suicidal ideation. Victims of bullying often bring home their frustrations from school and lash out at their parents; who are more than likely unaware of their children's victimization at school. As a result, family relationships are likely to deteriorate (Dunham, 2006).

Whitted and Dupper (2005) investigated the relationship between mental health conditions and bullying. They sought to find out if there was any relationship between bullying and mental health condition. The findings show that a high level of depression is related to emotional bullying. Their study, in common with mine, found that many children who experienced bullying at school became mentally and emotionally disturbed. Therefore, since my study looks at

children's understandings of bullying, the relationship between bullying and emotional disturbance is related to.

Bullying could have many detrimental effects on children. Bullying can make children feel lonely, unhappy and frightened (Batche & Knoff, 1994). Bullying creates a hostile environment for learning to take place and is extremely harmful to the academic progress of a substantial minority of children (Rigby, 1993). Chronic bullies seem to maintain their behaviours into adulthood, negatively influencing their ability to develop and maintain positive relationships (Banks, 1994). Being bullied leads to depression and other related problems that can carry into adulthood (Olweus, 1993). To further the investigation, we will look at the different ways to prevent bullying.

## **2.7 POSSIBLE WAYS TO PREVENT BULLYING**

There are many different measures to prevent bullying such as verbal rebuke, warnings and detention during breaks and lunch times. Pupils could also be required to work in isolation from their peers and parents could be informed with the reasons. Parents can be called in a post school detention as means of working together with teachers.

Braeuner (2011) suggests that teaching children discipline helps to prevent bullying. No parent or teacher can prevent bullying behavior; therefore, certain measures could be instituted or certain instructions could be issued. According to Braeuner (2011), the teacher can place a bullying child in a safe place up until a certain time (detention). Suspension from school could

also be an effective measure. School community services could also be sought. If learners damage/steal school property, then they should be held accountable for this measure would make them responsible of any of the vandalism or theft (Braeuner, 2011).

Oswald (2001) provides several strategies which address ways to help reduce bullying. These include parental awareness and anti-bullying laws that could be enforced. It should be made clear that bullying is never acceptable. Bullying can occur at all levels within the hierarchy of a school. Another strategy is to hold a school conference day or forum devoted to bully / victim problems. There should also be increased and vigilant adult supervision in the yard, halls and washrooms (Oswald, 2001).

Linn (2001) emphasizes the importance of caring, respect and safety among school children. According to Linn (2001), schools should have a school 'problem box' where kids could report problems, concerns and offer suggestions.

Renold (2010) suggests that bullies should be helped with anger management and the development of empathy. Additionally, that peer relations should be encouraged by offering a variety of extra-curricular activities which appeal to a range of interests. As the means of preventing bullying Renold (2010) suggest the possible ways e.g. teach your child to defend him/herself verbally. Fighting back physically may land the bullied in school trouble or even legal trouble. Keep in mind the range of possible causes: e.g. medical, psychiatric, psychological, developmental family problems etc. if problem continue in your school, press harassment

charges against the family of the person who is bullying you. Adjust teacher preparation programs to include appropriate bullying interventions to use in their classroom (Renold, 2010).

All stake holders have a role to play in the prevention of bullying. Below, I discuss measures that could be taken by children, parents and the school to prevent bullying.

### **2.7.1 What could children and a school do to prevent bullying?**

Most researchers refer to Farrington's (1995) study on the issues of bullying and the measures that children and schools could undertake to prevent bullying. Farrington (1995) laments that young people need to be encouraged to establish forums within schools where they could learn to give voice to, and take responsibility for, the issues that affect them (Farrington, 1995). The Department of Education should formulate and institutionalize programs whereby learners are empowered to speak, not only for themselves but for others around them, including fellow learners who are for any reason silenced (Farrington, 1995).

Related to this is the opportunity for schools to offer learners skills that foster entrepreneurship. Linn (2001) concurs that this could be offered through various curriculum alternatives or through partnerships with service providers. The problem with their research is that it is based on Model C schools; there are measures that they mention which cannot be easily implemented in our schools in rural areas.

Squelch (2001) grants that educators must teach their learners the skills of non-violent behavior; but even more important, they must let them know that they are valued. Schools should be a safe environment. Squelch (2001) propounds that a safe school is characterized by safe buildings. If one suspects that their child is a victim of school bullying then one could tell their child's teacher about their concerns and ask the teacher to keep an eye out on the interactions between their child and his/her classmates. One could also ask the teacher to watch out for problems and notify the school principal and counselor about their concerns (Squelch, 2001).

There are common myths about school bullying; things like School size seem to be a problem of bullying to children. Large class sizes at schools increases the level of bullying among learners (Olweus, 1993). It is nevertheless a fact, that the absolute number of bullied and bullying students is greater on average in big schools and in big classes.

It is a common view to the researchers like Olswald (2001) that bullying is caused by external factors such as misbehavior caused by family background. It is argued that students who are fat, red-haired, wear glasses or speak with an unusual dialect are particularly likely to become victims of bullying (Olweus, 1993). Olweus (1993) concludes that environmental factors such as teacher's attitudes, routines and behaviour play a major role in the extent to which the problems will manifest themselves in a larger unit such as a classroom or a school.

Olswald (2001) findings concur with Squelch's (2001) study, as indicated in their definition of bullying; that bullying causes physical harm to those who are involved in it. They both includes these indicators of school safety things like good disciplines, a culture that is conducive to



teaching and learning, professional teacher conduct, good governance and management practices, and an absence or low level of crime and violence (Olswald, 2001).

### **2.7.2 What can parents and teachers do to prevent and stop bullying?**

According to Prinsloo (2005), parents should stay connected with their children. The more you know about their friends and the details about their interactions with classmates and peers, the more likely you are to spot any changes in your child's social interactions. It is suggested that one should talk to their child every day about specifics at school and extracurricular activities; such as whom the child had lunched with or what the best or worst part of their day was. This is also an important way to establish good communication with one's child so that he/she knows that you are someone that they can go to when they have a problem (Prinsloo, 2005).

Fred (2009) recommends that parents explain to their children what bullying is. Young children understand that hitting or pushing another child is wrong. One could also explain that other forms of bullying such as excluding or ignoring someone can also be hurtful. Fred (2009) and Prinsloo (2005) agree that children should know and understand the different forms of bullying. Linn (2009) suggests a programme for the reduction of bullying as happens in South Australian schools. This is where bullies and victims sit in a circle and discuss their feelings in order to heal both victim and perpetrator. This programme targets all learners and relies on educators, other staff members and parents for effective implementation. The implementation of this programme led to a substantial reduction in bullying; by up to 50%. The problem with this programme is that

it needs thorough supervision and in African schools, its implementation will sometimes be problematic as few teachers may be willing to go out of their way to help.

The study conducted by Lombard (2006) , in Cape Town and Durban Schools, show that over a third (36,3%) of students were involved in bullying behavior; 8,2% are bullies; 19,3% were victims and 8,7% were bully-victims (those that bully and are bullied by others). The findings of the study confirm that bullying is a serious problem in South Africa with the involvement of 36,3% of all students. As there is little data available from developing countries on this issue, studies sought to determine whether these findings hold within a South African population, and whether bullying behavior may also act as indicator of other risk-taking behaviors (Lombard, 2006). I refer to this study since it was done, similarly to mine, in a Durban school.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

The literature reviewed covers the notions, nature and forms and factors and spaces that promote bullying in schools, and provides some strategies to address it. It should be clear, from this review, that bullying is the use and abuse of power over others. When the issue of bullying is left unattended, it can cause serious damage to both boys and girls. Studies conducted both locally and internationally focused on bullying and its causes, however, few studies allow children to articulate their experiences with this form of everyday violence. Therefore, this study undertakes to allow children an opportunity to voice their experiences. The next chapter discusses the research methodology and design of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This study examined the understanding of bullying amongst children from a co-educational South African high school. This chapter describes the methodology used to collect and analyze data from the study, that is, the research design, methodology, data collection and analysis methods are described. The chapter also provides an understanding of how I explored the four key questions of this study: what are children's understandings of bullying? Which are the spaces and places in schools that enable manifestations of bullying? What are the geographies of victims and perpetrators of school bullying? What, according to children, can be done to prevent school bullying? Finally, this chapter will present the design of the study. I will discuss the study context and participants, data generation methods, tools of analysis and the validity and limitations of the study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This research was conducted using qualitative methodology. Qualitative research often refers to designs which are “flexible” (Robson, 2002). The term “flexibility” implies that the design “unfolds” and “develops” as the research progresses (Robson, 2002). A flexible design will allow the researcher to amend or modify the study so as to correspond with the participants’

understanding of bullying. As this research deals with people, a flexible design will allow the researcher to adapt in case of any changes that may occur during the research.

Lauer (2006) contends that in qualitative research, the data are narrative descriptions. Thus, the richness of data in qualitative research permits a fuller understanding of the phenomenon under the study. Hendry (2010) considers narrative inquiry as the original and oldest form of conducting research. Narrative inquiry, in its broadest sense, means the examination of the stories that people tell and according to Marrais and Lapan, (2004) ‘narrative is a vital human activity that structures experience and gives it meaning’ (Marrais & Lapan, 2004, p.104).

Bell, (2003) contends that narrative inquiry presents experiential data as rich, complex and holistic and involves not only the examination of consciously told stories but also the deeper, underlying stories that people tell; stories that they are usually unaware of themselves (Bell, 2003). Stories should not be viewed merely as individual constructions but more importantly as cultural and ideological constructions (Bell, 2003).

Best and Kahn (2003) argue that qualitative research offers a chance for conducting exploratory and descriptive research which uses the context or setting in a research for a deeper understanding of the person being studied. Qualitative research relies on meanings, concepts, context and descriptions. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) and Nieuwenhuis (2007) define qualitative research as a study of things in their natural settings and phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. Best and Kahn (2003) describe qualitative research as studying real-world situations in a natural setting without being manipulative and controlling. Qualitative research

describes and analyzes individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. Hence, qualitative researchers collect data by interacting with selected persons in their settings and by obtaining relevant documents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Qualitative researchers look at the individuals in their natural settings and try to understand the meanings that people give to their deeds. This means that qualitative researchers collect data in the field where participants live and experience the problem under study. They do not bring participants into a laboratory nor do they send out data collection instruments for individuals to complete. I chose qualitative research in order to obtain learners' understandings of bullying as it happens in and out of their school settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) show that qualitative research also uses various methods of data collection and the use of these multiple methods reflects an attempt to get an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in question. The researcher then reviews all the data, makes sense of it and organizes it into categories or themes that cut across all the data sources (Cresswell, 2009). In this study, I used various methods of collecting data in order to have in-depth understanding about bullying in the school.

### **3.3 THE SCHOOL CONTEXT AND PARTICIPANTS**

Hammarisdale is located on the periphery of Durban, in South Africa. It is divided into six sections; this location was a scene for battles that took place during the times of violence in the 1980's. During this time, many people died and numerous houses were burnt down. At this time, attending school was very difficult as most schools were shut down because of the violence. Almost all the schools in Hammarisdale are dominated by Christianity. The Christian religion,

which is patriarchal, is reflected in the ethos of these 'Christian' schools. The cultural beliefs and traditional practices of Africans, which are patriarchal, are also reflected in the schools.

### **3.4 THE STUDY SAMPLE AND SAMPLING PROCEDURES**

In order to obtain rich data, a purposive sampling technique was used to select the school and the participants. Purposive sampling means that the context and participants are selected because of certain defining characteristics that make them the holders of data needed for the study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Suter, 2006). Purposive sampling defines the criteria that participants need to fulfill in order to partake in a study (Cresswell, 2009) purposive selection by Cresswell (2009) meaning that I selected participants' purposively. It is not a random sampling whereby I choose anyone but I chose those who were involved in the issue of bullying. In this study, the particular school was chosen because of its reputation for bullying. As I am a teacher at this school, I am aware of the incidents of bullying that are taking place. The participants in this study were adolescents aged between 13 and 16 and were from Grade 9 and 10. Six learners were selected purposively using the following criteria as suggested by Creswell (2009) and gender was arranged. Those who were available and who were willing to give the information were chosen. The ones who have experienced bullying, both bullies and the victims were also chosen. Participation was voluntarily because I was working with only those learners who were willing to participate.

### **3.5 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES**

The data collection techniques used was interviews, mapping and document analysis. Semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted with learners. The interview is a social, interpersonal encounter and not merely a data collection tool. Therefore, a researcher has to conduct the interview carefully and sensitively (Cohen & Manion, 2007). The interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. The purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in someone's mind (Best & Kahn, 2003). In an interview, the effectiveness of the research is based on the interaction and communication that takes place.

#### **3.5.1 Individual semi-structured interview**

Semi- structured interviews were used to generate information from children. The advantages of the semi-structured interview is that it enables probing and clarification of issues. Semi-structured interviews have the ability to gather descriptive data from a few participants who have the knowledge of the phenomenon under study. The aim was to obtain rich, descriptive data so as to understand the participants' construction of their experiences and social realities (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). The interviews were conducted in a language that the children could understand and code switching was used where necessary. This was done in order to allow children to express their views without language constraints. Seidman (1998) points out that an hour is about the appropriate time that should be allocated when one conducts individual interviews. Flick (2006) states that the success of interviews depends on the interviewer

competence in asking questions. In this study, I paid careful attention to non-verbal cues that could suggest that learners were uncomfortable with aspects of the discussion.

Six learners were interviewed individually. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed thereafter. Hand written notes were taken on non-verbal responses. The transcribed interviews were translated into English. Bell (2005) states that the researcher should not assume that all participants would be willing to have their responses recorded. I assured the participants that the audio- tapes would be treated with the strictest confidentiality and be used only by me for the purpose of the research.

### **3.5.2 Focus group interview**

One focus group interview was conducted. The focus group was used to generate information on a collective view. The focus group interview is based on the assumption that group interaction was effective in widening the range of responses and activating forgotten details of experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Cohen, et al., 2007). In the focus group interview, a social environment was created to enable group members to be stimulated by one another's perceptions and ideas. This can increase the quality and richness of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). I was employing this technique to encourage open discussion about bullying and also to compliment the individual interviews. Focus group interviews enable participants to answer questions freely.



### **3.5.3 Mapping**

This was another useful method of collecting data. Children were asked to draw the maps of their school and the places where they felt vulnerable. Muthukrishna (2006) contends that mapping is an effective way of getting information from the participants. By drawing these maps, I obtained a clearer picture of the bullied and the bullies, including the unsafe places in their environment.

### **3.5.4 School records**

School and classroom policies were viewed to explore the ways in which the school deals with bullying. Documents are a major source of data in qualitative research and can help the researcher to uncover meaning, develop understanding and discover insights relevant to the research problem (Best & Kahn, 2003). Duffy (2005) shows that documentary analysis can also be used to supplement information obtained by other methods. According to Flick (2006, p.246), “documents are standardized artifacts, in so far as they typically occur in popular formats: as notes, case reports, contracts, drafts, death certificates, remarks and diaries.” In this study, I accessed the critical incidents of bullying that children reported to staff, the records of the minutes of parents and school meetings and classroom policy documents.

## **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

Qualitative data analysis aims at examining the meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative data (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). It tries to establish how participants make meaning of a specific phenomenon by analyzing their understandings, knowledge, values, feelings and experiences. The data was analyzed and coded, noting the similarities, differences and relationships, and these were categorized into patterns or categories of meaning. Babbie and Mouton (2001) make a distinction between coding the manifest content- the visible, surface content, and the content, that is its underlying meaning.

Content analysis (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Cohen, et al., 2000; Creswell, 2009), was used in analyzing, as this approach was found to be appropriate to the design of my study. The study was informed by my research questions, my conceptual framework and the literature I studied.

### **3.7 TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Cohen, et al (2007) contends that validity is the key to effective research. The following have been identified as the dimensions which increase trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007). Credibility is enhanced by member checking of data, persistent observation and prolonged engagement in the field. Transferability refers to the researcher's ability to make explicit, the nature of the participants and setting so as to enable comparison by other researchers. Dependability refers to the degree to which the researcher can achieve rich and detailed descriptions that show how certain actions and opinions are rooted in, and develop out of, contextual interactions. In this research audio-tapes were used to capture all the data during

interviews. Recorded data was transcribed verbatim almost immediately after each interview. The transcription was read several times in order to locate appropriate words, phrases and sentences. Narrative analysis uses a variety of procedures for the interpretation of texts and could involve a structural analysis entails an examination of the structure or organization of a story, its development, and where and how it begins and ends (Maree, 2007).

### **3.8 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Validity in qualitative research seems more elusive when compared to the quantitative measurements of validity used in quantitative approaches. Many researchers (for example, Cohen & Manion, 2007; Henning, 2005) explain the idea of clarity and understanding which supports validity in a qualitative research design. According to Maxwell (1992), cited in Cohen and Manion (2007), there are five kinds of validity in qualitative research that links to the idea of clarity and understanding.

Reliability in qualitative research may be described as the coherency between the researcher's observations and data collection to what naturally occurs in a social situation. Henning (2005) argues that reliability and generalizability are subsumed in validity. She further adds that paying attention to the procedural aspects of the research process, the fruitful manner in which data is analyzed and documented and the cohesiveness of the study accounts for the reliability of the study as well.

Another aspect of validity and reliability relates to the instrument used. In this case, the interview schedule was clearly constructed to account for bias in terms of my expectations as the researcher, my opinions about bullying and my objectives in terms of the research questions. The interview was piloted and then revisited after observations made by my supervisor.

### **3.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Sensitive issues concerning ethics were taken into consideration. Cohen and Manion (2007) state that informed consent involved comprehension, competence, voluntarism and access to full information. If the participant is a minor consent should be sought from parents.

Maree and van de Westhuizen (2007) explain that an important ethical aspect is the issue of confidentiality regarding participants' identities and the data that emerges in the study. Confidentiality, anonymity, caring and fairness are the key principles to protect the rights of research participants (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through the course of the research. No real names were used in completing questionnaires or when writing up research. Also, questionnaires and interview transcripts were kept confidential. No one had an access to any of the above documents used. Participants were told in advance that the private data identifying participants would not be reported publicly.

Before the commencement of this study, permission was obtained from the principal of the school, the parents, the children themselves as well as from the Department of Education. A letter of application for gaining access into the school was written. The researcher personally approached the school. Participants were informed that to partake in this research would be out of their free will. They were informed of their rights, and that they had the freedom to leave the research site if they felt uncomfortable in any way, in response to the questionnaires' or in interviews. Participants were assured that they would not be exposed to any danger or harm, either physically or psychologically. All participants were to get feedback about the findings of the research and conclusions arrived at.

### **3.10 CONCLUSION**

This chapter dealt with the research design and methodology of the study, in particular the various design choices that were made. It may be argued that a limitation of this study is that it researched one school context, and hence, the findings cannot be generalizable. Scheduling time slots for interviews might have been a limitation but, nevertheless, suitable times were arranged. The next chapter presents a discussion on the research findings.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study was to examine the understanding of bullying amongst school children from a co-educational South African high school. The different experiences that girls and boys encounter were also analyzed, drawing from data that were generated through informal, semi-structured interviews of the school children who experienced bullying. The mapping exercises, as well as the victim/perpetrator exercise, were some of the other methods used to collect the data in this study. Five boys, 13 to 16 years of age and one 14 year old girl were the participants in this study. The study was conducted in one of the high schools outside of Durban, in the Mpumalanga township of Hammarsdale.

The aim was to address the following research questions: what are children's understandings of bullying? Which are the spaces and places in schools that enable manifestations of bullying? What are the geographies of the victims and perpetrators of school bullying? What, according to children, can be done to prevent school bullying? This chapter is organized in accordance with the following themes: the power dynamics of bullying, the complex forms of bullying, the places and spaces of bullying and the impact and possible ways to prevent bullying.

## 4.2 POWER DYNAMICS OF BULLYING

The study found that children face incredible challenges at school, on the playground and in the community, that are related to school bullying. In this section, I address the power dynamics of bullying related to children's experiences and the manner in which they perpetually negotiate the social and emotional world of the school community, which this study found to characterize many incidents of bullying. The study found that an abuse of power was the central feature that characterized the many bullying incidents at the school. The tendency was for children, who were perceived to be in the position of power based on their own social identities (i.e. gender, economic status, age, etc.), to inflict bullying on those who were perceived to be in a position of weakness. Bullies were found to wield power against other children for no other reason other than for their own advantage and selfishness.

In particular, children's experiences of bullying were closely linked to what they, as children understood and perceived as bullying. The study found that power abuse or misuse and domination were major features in children's understandings of bullying. The following data is an example of how children describe bullying as an abuse of power:

*Bullying is whereby those bigger boys use to fight the smaller boys (Sthembiso)*

*Bullying is when you take somebody's possessions by force (Sbonelo)*

*Bullying is when you force someone to do something that he or she does not like (Luyanda)*

Some children at the school seemed to have legitimate power vested in them; these include school prefects and the scholar patrol members. Some children took advantage of their status as prefects in the school to inflict bullying on other learners. This was mainly seen as an acceptable use of power when understood within the context of the roles and responsibilities of the prefects in the school. In other cases, the study found that some children would involve themselves in bullying that took the form of fights so as to protest against the abuse of power, especially when children thought the prefects were being vindictive or if they overplayed their roles (did more than what the children thought were acceptable means for prefects to institute discipline, etc.). Indeed, the prefects were found to exert their authority over the children by hitting them when they did not listen or follow the instruction regarding certain codes of behavior.

*Some prefects want us to respect them as if they are our parents; they want us to bow on them, and if we don't, they hit you (Simphiwe).*

Another dynamic of use or abuse of power in bullying was seen in this study when older boys were found bullying the younger boys. In some other cases, boys were using their power to bully girls. As illustrated below, the participants agreed that stealing, as a form of bullying, usually occurs between older children stealing from younger children.

*Grade 8 children are always in trouble because they have to pay for their schooling, if they don't, they do it by force e.g. steal from them (Samkelo)*

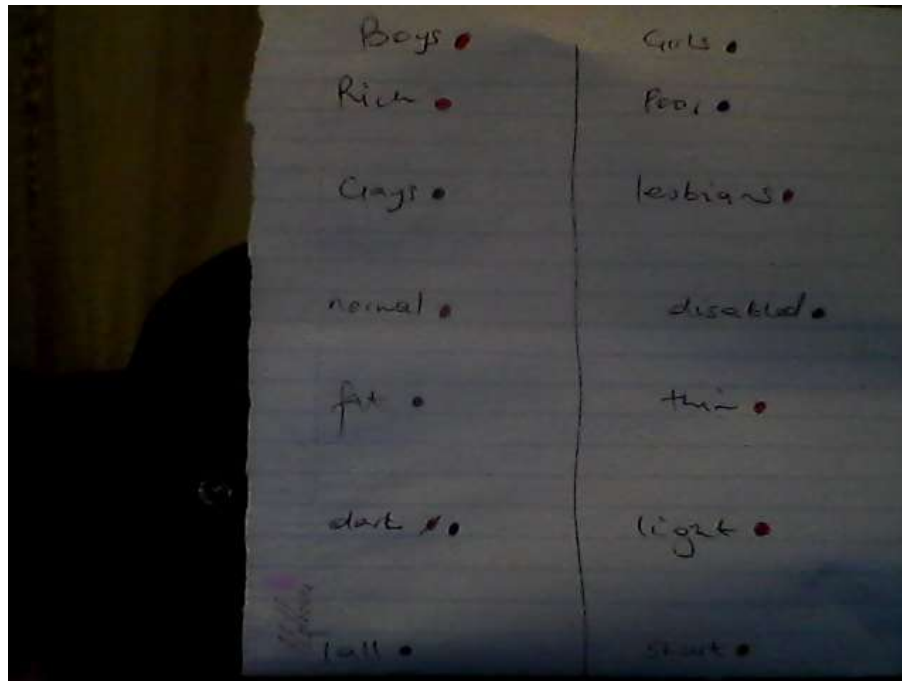


*On a trip early this year, two boys were picking other's bags looking for money and other stuff (Luyanda)*

*A boy in our classroom last year was caught stealing a girl's cell-phone (Sbonelo)*

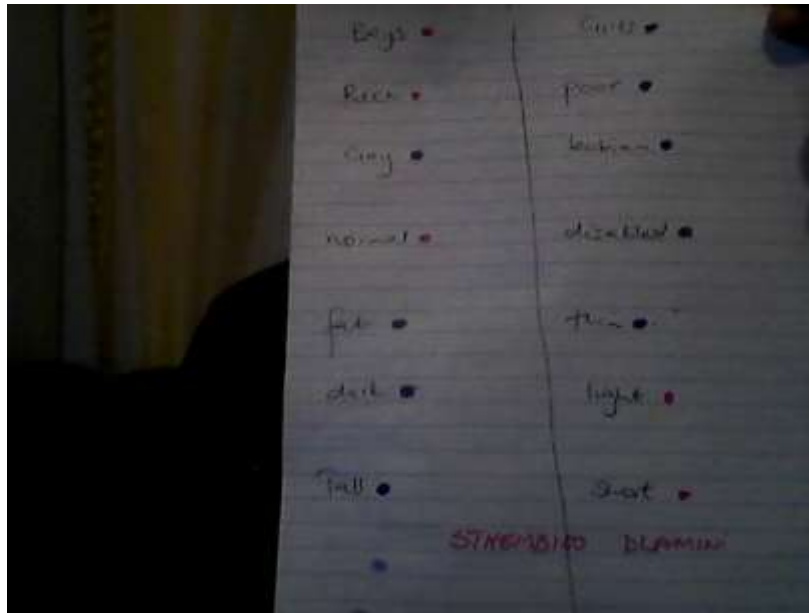
The data showed that when children steal others possessions, usually, there is a form of power that is being used. There are those who are easy targets, for example, those that possess minority social status within social groupings, or as constructed by the local cultures (Morojele, 2010). Although the code of conduct was in place at the school to protect the children from any forms of social abuse, including bullying, this was often disobeyed and disregarded by the children who engaged in petty criminal offences such as stealing which, as illustrated above, young children in this study regarded as bullying.

As part of the participatory methods of this study, children were asked to engage in an exercise where they dramatically depict the victim/perpetrator profile. The victim/perpetrator profile, as indicated by Figure 1 below, indicates that all six participants agreed that boys were the main perpetrators of bullying. All six participants agreed that the so called 'normal' children used to bully those children who were regarded as the social minorities, such as young, those coming from low socio-economic backgrounds and the physically challenged so called "disabled". The following are examples of the victim/ perpetrator exercise.



**Figure 1**

The right hand side of the picture above show the social identities of children who were depicted as the perpetrators of bullying, while the left side shows the identities of children who are regarded as the victims of bullying in this school context. From this, it is clear that the dominant social categories such as class (assumptions of poor/ rich), gender, children's physical appearances, and so forth, play a determining role of who the perpetrators and the victims of bullying in this school are. Indeed, the same pattern of the victim/ perpetrator profile can also be observed in Figure 2 below, which again indicates the currency and dominance of this phenomenon in how children constructed the victims and perpetrators of bullying in this context.



**Figure 2**

The data above illustrates that children's understandings of bullying drew on how dynamics of power based on social identities' construction in this context were used and acted out in conformity to the dominant culture within the school context. From this, we can learn that changing the dominant constructions of social and children's identities could be a useful strategy to address bullying within the school. The other dynamics that informs children's understanding of bullying relates to the kinds of families that these children are coming from. From the above exercise, they mentioned that children who are coming from rich families think that they are clever and bully those who are coming from poor families. There is also a lot of commonness in how learners describe bullying, they all think that those who have power always use their power against those who are powerless; this reflects the imbalance of power that we have in our schools and in society at large.

Another important matter that is related to the issue of power and children's understanding of bullying is the children's use and possession of what is regarded as dangerous weapons, such as scissors, sticks and knives which some children used to fight with at school. Children's exposure to images of bullying and violence today, via the electronic media, is very high at this time in history and this was found to contribute to relationships of bullying in the school (Roberts, 2006). The children sometimes imitate their TV screen heroes through bullying games at school, and sometimes this took the form of violent bullying games such as wrestling, which were seen by bullying perpetrators as some form of entertainment, while the targeted children were subjected to the inhumane treatment of bullying.

As illustrated below, sometimes the children's games go too far and they cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy and this often leads to fights:

*Some children play wrestling at school especially at grade 8 and 9 and when like one child hits another real hard and they get into a fight over that one thing*  
(Samkelo)

*One day in class, a boy claimed that he is 'Van Dam' and he called another boy 'Dolf', he then challenged a fight because Van Dam is known as a star movie and nobody can defeat him* (Luyanda)

*In grade 10 there are a group of boys who called themselves super heroes, they used to wear those watches like Ben 10 and they claim that they can perform miracles as Ben 10 does (Simpfiwe)*

This indicates that bullying is really the abuse of power because the perpetrators deliberately and systematically abuse the victims (Thacker & Ferris, 1991). Children who bully others have some sort of mental disorder and sometimes have been probably been abused themselves as a child which has warped their minds. The person who is their victim might be better than them at doing the same job, or have a characteristic which reminds the bully of them in the same situation. At the end if nothing is done about that kind of bullying behavior, children may feel so abused and depressed that they may suffer any form of disorder or commit suicide or they might snap and take a gun and 'shoot the world' before turning the gun on themselves (Thacker & Ferris, 1991). This was the evident in the results of my study whereby those children who thought that they were clever bully those whom they think are not clever and vice versa.

There are social and economic factors which also lead to school bullying. From this study, it can be seen that poverty plays a major role in bullying. There was an incident that I recorded in my journal, which took place in my school. One day, a girl was beating two other girls with a 'sjambok.' When the matter was attended to, the girl told the principal that those other two girls always teased her about her coming from a poor family. Her socks and shoes were torn and that was observable. This girl, who was upset, had then decided to go home and take her grandfather's 'sjambok' to beat them. Three participants stated that children who are come from rich families are very bossy and they tend to be bully those who are poor.

*I have put a red dot to the rich children because they are very bossy, they use to bully those children who are coming from poor families (Luyanda)*

*Rich children are the bullying children; they think they are better than us (Sthembiso)*

*Bullying children are the rich children, they also think that they are clever than others (Samkelo)*

The data above shows that poverty may sometimes lead to bullying although this is the opposite scenario in the case recorded above. This means that it is not only the rich children who bully the poor children. This is evident in the study of Backer (1982) which contends that the social world accumulates history, which position people in a social and economic status, which is socially used to regulate or determine people's behavior. As indicated above, children's social status within a group can make a child to be bossy or predispose such a child to be a victim of bullying. This is hereditary or acquired as history repeats itself. This means that if children come from rich families as the society has different forms of capital, they might be aggressive and bully those who are coming from poor families or vice versa.

#### **4.3 COMPLEX FORMS OF BULLYING**

The questionnaire asked respondents to identify the various forms of bullying and the spaces and places where different forms of bullying are taking place. The study showed that there are spaces

and places that are regarded as danger zones in their school. These are spaces which the bullies use to hide themselves in order to bully others. All participants reported almost similar forms of bullying; things like being called hurtful names, physical fighting, making jokes about someone, take somebody's possessions by force and by gossiping, this was observed especially to girls. The other interesting form of bullying that was mentioned by one of the participants is that boys in the toilets have their own spots for urinating and if one finds someone else urinating in their spot then they kick that individual.

The following are some of the examples that were offered by the learners during the interviews.

*The form of bullying that is annoying in class is when the teacher asked the question then you try to answer and the other children just laugh at you (Sbonelo)*

*Discrimination, whereby you find those who are light in colour laughing to those who are dark and call them 'kwerekwere' (Luyanda)*

*Touching the opposite sex without his or her permission is another form of bullying. Usually it is done by boys to girls (Sthembiso)*

As in most of the research studies reviewed when doing this study, for example the study by Done, (2002) "How do teachers and learners in one Durban school understand and cope with bullying", the other reviewed study was by Squelch (2000) of the Rand Afrikaans University. This study also showed that calling hurtful names was a form of bullying that was commonly

found, especially amongst the girls. For example, all participants agreed that physical bullying is a serious form of bullying that is found amongst boys. Cyber bullying is the common form of bullying that is taking place amongst girls. When Sthembiso mentioned touching the opposite sex as another form of bullying, none of the participants showed knowledge of touching the same sex as another form of bullying.

Teasing is another form of bullying that becomes their focus. The children tease each other about the type of bodies they have. Those who are fat always get teased by those who are thin and vice versa.

*I won't forget my first day here at school whereby children were laughing at me;  
telling me that I should run, rounding the school because I am too fat (Sthembiso)*

The shape of the body plays an important role in society's perceptions. The politics of body and bullying goes link with the oppression theory (Freire, 1998), which explains that the struggle for humanization, breaking the cycles of injustice, exploitation and oppression lies in the perpetuation of oppressor versus oppressed. This is whereby the society has a certain perception around the normal and perfect body. There is a stigma of not having a beautiful body in the society for example the girl must not be too fat, and she must have a figure etc.

Teasing about the size of the persons head, nose and ears is also mentioned. The same also applied to other parts of the body, particularly the size of the heads, noses and teeth; as evidenced by Luyanda's statement:



*Some people tease each other because they have big heads, small nose, big ears and then they start fighting (Luyanda)*

At school the children tease to humiliate each other and to make each other feel uncomfortable, especially if there are other children watching. By embarrassing each other publicly it makes it more difficult for the child who is being teased to forgive and forget; this may give rise to anger and may result in some forms of bullying. The children place great emphasis on appearance, physical beauty and attractiveness. Those children who do not satisfy such norms are targets for ridicule, and this is construed by the children in this study as bullying. It could be that the children tease each other to explore the limits of the power that they may possess over others at school. The kind of teasing that children engage in is not playful teasing as it appears to have malicious intent. Perhaps, it is the malicious intent that gives rise to the understanding by young children that teasing is a form of bullying.

Calling each other names is another form of bullying. Names such as “fatty boom boom” and “Mama Jack”, that are inoffensive in themselves, are used as derogatory terms by children. These words are about a physically-oversized character and they are used to insult children because of their big size. This is witnessed in Sbonelo’s statement:

*I once heard some children teasing others because they are fat and they called them ‘fatty boom boom’ and those children said they will catch them on their way home and I don’t know what happened after that as they were so angry (Sbonelo)*

Name calling is a form of rejection that is often painful and remembered by children for long periods of time (Klewin, 2003). It could result in shame and embarrassment. Not being able to cope with such emotions, the children threaten violence and get angry, which could possibly be expressed in violent ways. The idea for teasing, in this instance, is appropriated from film culture and it is a demonstration of how visual media influences and is used by children as a powerful form of hurting each other.

Being betrayed by friends is another form of bullying. To the children, being betrayed is exemplified by breaking a promise, being disloyal to a friend and sharing information with others that should have been kept confidential and blaming friends for their own actions thinking that the consequences are because of their friends influence. The children also feel betrayed by their friends over their involvement in romantic relationships as some children always seeks their friends advice rather than parents advice.

*Sometimes there is bullying in school because children start relationships that they can't handle and then they go to someone else and then when that person finds out it becomes a fight (Sthembiso)*

When children start romantic relationships at school and they experience problems in that relationship, they normally turn to a friend for help. The friend then tells other children what happened and the news eventually gets back to the dating couple and this causes conflict which usually leads to fighting.

Being competitive is another form of bullying. Children who wish to indicate how much better off they are than others, compare their homes and their school uniforms in relation to wealth.

*Some children thinks that as their homes are bigger than others in the location that means they are also better than others here at school (Samkelo)*

Some children come to school in a fancy car, have sophisticated cell-phones and live in a large house which makes them feel that they are of a better social class than children who do not get dropped off in fancy cars or live in large houses or such. This sets the scene for comparison and arguments eventually ending in acts of fighting:

*Some of the fights madam in class comes because of the competition of the cell phones that children use to carry at school (Simphiwe)*

*Last year two boys were fighting because his girlfriend was dating a taxi driver as he was failing to buy her fancy cell phone and other fancy stuff, and that other boy was laughing at him because of that situation, and the fight began (Samkelo)*

*Boys also compete with their girlfriends, thinking that mine is pretty than yours (Luyanda)*

Young boys and girls engage in romantic relationships. It does not seem to matter what boys look like but the attractiveness of a girl seems to matter. Being told that your girlfriend is ugly

can lead to a fight. A girlfriend's beauty is related to the boyfriend's ego. The more macho the boy, the prettier the girl he is supposed to have.

According to the children, jealousy is another form of bullying. This refers to children's feelings of envy, especially towards individuals perceived to have some advantages or privileges denied to them:

*Some of the fights that are taking place, it's because of jealousy (Samkelo)*

*The availability of portable possessions, particularly the latest electronic gadgets such as cell-phones, triggers and feeds jealousy and that automatically leads to fighting (Sbonelo)*

Jealousy can lead to acts of fighting. For example; Sbonelo relates the availability of cell-phones to children with the acts of fighting. Jealousy is connected to material possessions, physical appearance and popularity. In incidents described by the children, jealousy results in acts of physical fighting such as hitting and punching. Friendships are vulnerable to the outbreak of bullying because of the things that some children possess that others may not be able to have, or own so jealousy occurs.

Bullying is delivered in a number of different forms and is not limited to one gender. Boys tend to do more bullying than girls, especially in the form of physical bullying. However, girls are just as guilty. Bullying can be sometimes a result of gender. Then, there are other forms of

harassment that leads to bullying. Luyanda describe an incident in which a boy was seen brushing against another boy at school. The incident was reported to the teacher who happened to be passing them at the time. The teacher responded to their report by singing about the incident

.

*Wow! they almost kissed each other those boys, the way they were brushing each other and the other boys seen them too (Luyanda)*

Children are very critical of one another and there is a social stigma attached to homosexuality. People have been socialized to conceal their sexual orientation and children will not disclose their sexuality to their closest friends for fear of being victimized and rejected by their peers. Studies confirm that learning communities are hostile towards gay and lesbian youth. The Human Rights Watch (2001) and the American Association of University Women (2001) have consistently reported that gay and lesbian youth are victimized more often than heterosexual youth.

#### **4.4 PLACES AND SPACES OF BULLYING**

It is interesting when children mention the spaces and places where bullying takes place in their school. From this study, it has been found out that there were very few places and spaces that were regarded as safe within the school context. Children mentioned that there were classes that they are afraid to pass and, unfortunately, those classes were on the way to their toilets. Those

were Grade 10 classes and most of the children were repeating the grade and were also older than others passing by:

*Yho madam, you know those classes they just look at you as you are coming then make a joke of you and after that the whole class laugh at you as you pass there (Sthembiso)*

*Even in the toilets, madam, you will find other bullying boys who use to tell you that you must not urinate in this spot because it is mine, and then if you continue, they kick you (Samkelo)*

All the above spaces were shaded in red in the mapping exercise that children were asked to engage in (see figure 3 and figure 4). This exercise allowed the children to pictorially show what they regarded as the danger zones in their schooling environment.

The following are examples of the mapping exercise that was done by the participants:

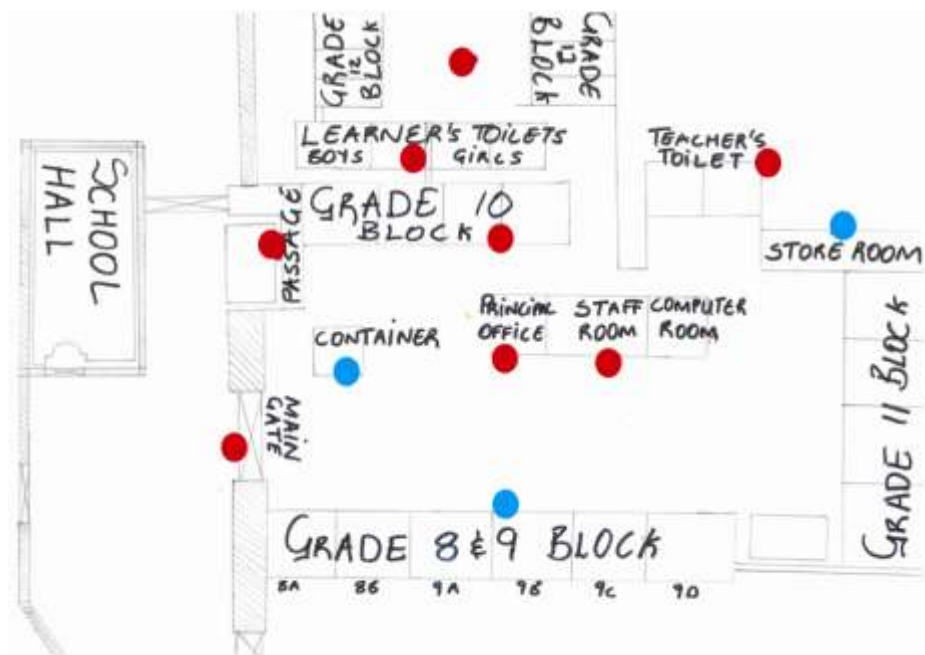


Figure3

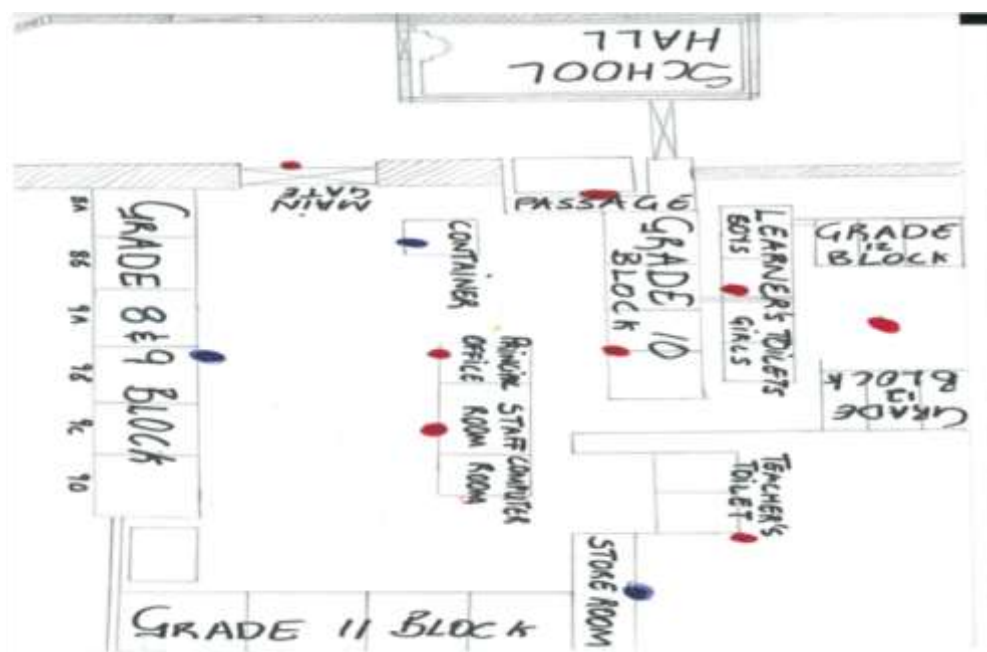


Figure 4

These two maps above show the unsafe places the participants identified. The red dotted places are the places that children regarded as unsafe places. They said that those places were unsafe because they felt vulnerable and threatened when they were at those places as fights could start at any time:

*When you pass the arcade next to Grade 10 classes, there are older boys who use to stand there and they can call you and ask you to do something for them and if you refuse they kick you or sometimes call you names (Simpfiwe*

The participants depicted common unsafe places like boys' toilets, the arcade next to the Grade 10 classes, the Grade 12 classes and the school hall. These places are the places that are far from the teachers staffrooms. The bullies could do whatever they liked in these places without being noticed.

Participants also showed an understanding that some teachers are, sometimes, the perpetrators of bullying. Three participants mentioned that some educators do not see bullying as a problem because sometimes they even give them tips about how to fight those who think that they are clever. They mentioned further that if one had a query with someone and reported that to the teacher, the teacher would ask, 'Are you afraid of him?' simply meaning, 'Why don't you fight that individual. This, then, resulted in the participants mapping the teacher's staffroom as a danger zone, with red.



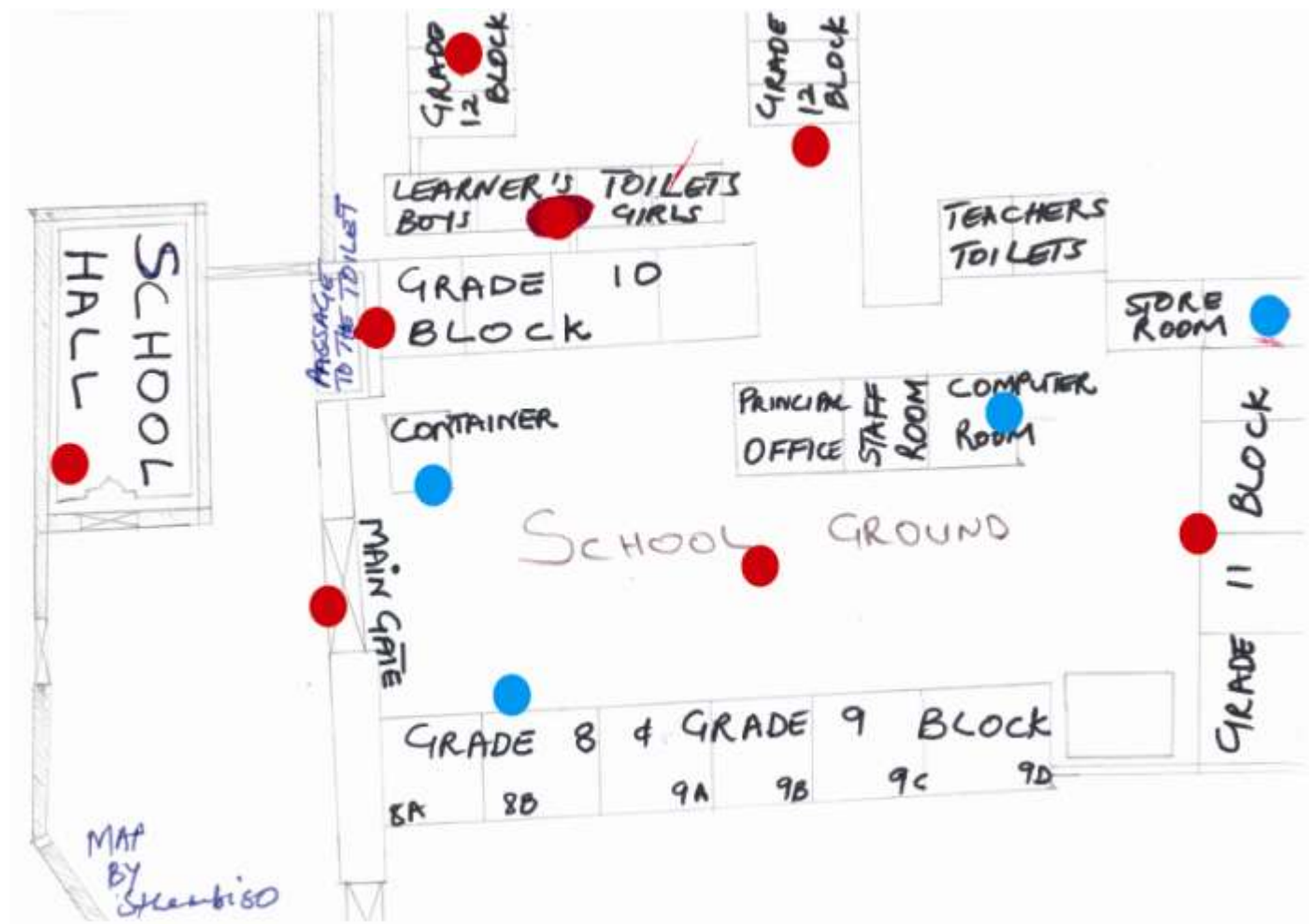
*One day I was reporting the child who was bullying me then the teachers asked me that don't I have the hands to do what he did to me? (Luyanda)*

All participants agreed that the container, which was used as a kitchen at the school, is the only safe place that they can identify. They stated that the women, who cooked in the kitchen, used to hide those that were in trouble in there:

*Aunties in the kitchen are very wise, if you are in trouble you just run to them and they just hide you under the buckets of food (Simpfiwe)*

*The principal's office is not safe because sometimes when he is not in your favour you report the matter to him, and then he can blame you. Only the aunties in the kitchen who can save you when you are in trouble (Siyanda)*

The map below shows the container being labeled green because it is regarded as a safe place.



**Figure 5**

Sarthiparsad (2003) states that bullying has a negative impact on learners and those schools have become sites of bullying for children. The other place that all six participants identified as unsafe was the passage between the Grade 12 classes and the Grade 10 classes. The huge passage is where most of the fights take place. That passage is next to the toilets most of the learners are using the same passage when going to toilets, it is where most of the fights took place. (See the map above) What makes this place unsafe is that most of the learners use the different types of drugs in the toilets.

#### 4.4 IMPACT AND POSSIBLE WAYS TO PREVENT BULLYING

All participants agreed that bullying has a negative impact. They all mentioned that the feeling is really uncomfortable. From their responses, it can be seen that peer pressure plays many roles in the bullying episode; such as joining in, cheering, passively watching or occasionally intervening. The study revealed that all participants tried to find help from teachers after they experienced bullying. The following are the examples of the responses given by the learners:

*Bullying is a bad thing because it even lead to absenteeism, when you are bullied then you are afraid to come to school the next day as you do not know what might happen*  
(Sbonelo)

*Bullying is bad because you might not like that particular behavior to happen to you*  
(Luyanda)

*You gain nothing out of bullying so it better to stop it* (Simphiwe)

The participants, when asked the ways that they think could be used to prevent bullying, they suggested the following:

*Severe punishment should be given to those learners who bully* (Sbonelo)

*The school should establish a disciplinary committee so that they will deal with those learners with bad behavior (Samkelo)*

*Teachers should be more serious about bullying because otherwise it will lead to death, children should also report any form of bullying that is taking place around the school (Luyanda)*

This showed that children are bullying but they are tired of the behavior that they display. They wish to avoid the behavior but they are afraid of their peers who will call them cowards. Three of the participants said that they did not really like this kind of behavior but they did not know how to stop it.

According to children, bullying over “nonsense” is not a good thing, and according to this study, they said they are tired of bullying. Children sometimes cannot seem to make sense of why they fight with each other and refer to this as “nonsense,” as displayed by Luyanda’s statement:

*I think there’s a lot of bullying taking place in this school, but all that is bullying over nonsense (Luyanda)*

Bullying at school sometimes seems to occur for no rational reason. Trivial issues that may have happened at home, such as not being taken somewhere on the weekend by a parent, can cause children to express their frustration at school:

*If my mother always shouts at me, then I come to school and someone teases me then I start hitting a person for no reason (Samkelo)*

*When a teacher left her books in the classroom and sends someone to collect them, one can hide a book and then a fight can start over a simple thing like that (Sbonelo)*

The data showed that small issues, therefore, could lead to big problems. It could be that children fight because they carry feelings of anger, resentment and their own insecurity. Sometimes children take their anger and frustration out on others over things that may have happened at home. Bullying behavior is also learnt elsewhere. They start off playing at home with other children sometimes older than themselves and they take that to school. They learn how to hit and as a result hit the children at school.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

From the children's understandings of bullying, it seems that it still is a problem in our schools. Teachers should be more serious when cases of bullying are reported to them since children feel that there is no support system; sometimes not even from the principal. Children's 'alone time', in their spaces and places, is where much bullying takes place. The issues raised by the data, presented in this chapter, will be discussed and analyzed in the next, with the implications for policy and practice being drawn.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The aim of the research study was to examine children's understandings of bullying and how they negotiate spaces and places where bullying takes place. This research utilized creative participatory research methods such as semi-structured individual interviews and focus group interviews to investigate the understanding that boys and girls have about bullying and the forms of it that are commonly found amongst boys and girls. The study also aimed to identify effective strategies for children to prevent bullying. Its purpose was to explore what the participants say about their experiences of bullying as well as how these experiences could be utilized in exploring the possible solutions to the problem of bullying at school.

The researcher's personal experiences indicate that bullying in school is widespread. Some forms of bullying are unnoticeable. Incidents of bullying among these children make them unhappy and academically unproductive. It also interferes with the learning of other children and undermines the school's culture of learning. The consequences of bullying incidents are felt not only at school but also outside of the school premises such as in the homes and the communities in which they live.

In the previous chapter, findings from a small-scale research study in a Durban school were presented. The data was obtained from the semi and unstructured interviews that was administered to grade 9 and 10 children. Through the presentation of the data, various issues were highlighted and brought to the fore.

The study was guided by the following key research questions:

1. What are children's understandings of bullying?
2. Which are the spaces and places in schools that enable manifestations of bullying?
3. What are the geographies of the victims and perpetrators of school bullying?
4. What, according to children, can be done to prevent school bullying?

These questions were addressed through a qualitative study methodology and the researcher utilized the interpretive paradigm. To collect data, the researcher used semi-structured individual interviews, a focus group interview and other creative participatory methods which included a victim perpetrator exercise and a mapping exercise. The sample of the study consisted of 6 participants', five boys and a girl. Data was then analyzed into themes.

This chapter provides a summary of the main findings of the study. Firstly, it addresses key findings related to the children's understanding of bullying; secondly, the key findings related to the forms of bullying are discussed; thirdly, the chapter addresses key findings regarding the spaces and places where bullying took place, followed by the possible ways to prevent bullying in the school. The chapter also addresses the implications of the study for policy and practice as well as for further research in this area.

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS**

The study found that there was a high rate of bullying that was taking place within the school. The participants in this study showed that they have an understanding of what the word ‘bullying’ meant – which the children constructed as being more rooted in the power dynamics within social relationships at the school. Children’s understanding of victims and perpetrators of bullying reflect the social power inequalities at the school and in the broader society. These understandings are heavily influenced by the social constructions of children’s identities. The resulting power status is related to some of the social identities identified at the school. For instance, children that were male, older, from rich families or who were heterosexual were often depicted as the perpetrators of bullying. Conversely, those who bore the minority social status such as poor children, girls and younger children were found to be victims of bullying.

This study also identified the common forms of bullying that occurred at the school and participants mentioned acts which they associated with the various forms of bullying. As indicated above, the study found that acts of bullying were mostly perpetrated by boys towards girls. This gendered dimension of bullying included physical bullying like kicking, hitting, pushing, etc., as well as non-physical forms such as name calling, cyber bullying and being excluded from friendship groups. In most cases, boys experienced, and were more prone to, physical forms of bullying whilst girls experienced mainly non-physical forms of bullying. The study also found that acts of bullying were also carried out by both girls and boys towards children who were new-comers to the school. This form of bullying seemed to transcend the



conventional gender lines, thereby creating a new social category – *new comers*, which was used as a basis to bully some children.

The spaces and places where bullying usually took place were identified by children and these were seen as common hotspots for the occurrence of bullying on the school playground, in the toilets, classrooms, etc. This shows the lack of supervision of learners during breaks at the school as most of the bullying incidents that involved children only occurred during the absence of the teachers. Some incidents were reported and some were not because children were scared that if they reported such incidents then it would happen to them again once the teachers left, as there was no systematic way in which the school addressed the issue of bullying.

The study found that there are other factors which promote bullying at the school. These factors include the media, economic status of the learners, as well as the socialization of children into the various social categories or identities in their school environment. Children pointed out spaces where they felt unsafe at school and their confidence and self-esteem were being destroyed by bullying.

In order to prevent bullying, the study found that there needs to be a conducive environment created in the school in order to support children in their exercise of agency. In addition, school-based policy that provides practical strategies to identify and address bullying, clearly, needs to be developed. Such strategies should involve all stake holders including parents and children's guardians. The creation of awareness among children and parents about bullying can also help in the prevention of bullying. Creation of awareness strategies should also try to sensitize children

to the critical agentic roles they could play in mitigating and challenging bullying incidents in their contexts, in order to complement and render effective the school-based formal strategies. From the study, it can be seen that schools do not have policies to eliminate or reduce bullying. With no formal policies in place on how to address bullying, the study found that bullying incidents, when reported, were dealt with in an ad hoc manner.

Bullying was found to be the experience of most of the children, either individually or in groups. The study revealed that bullying has a negative impact on children's learning. Bullying is part of the school climate and is not a response to the characteristics of the victim or the social area from which they come (Linn & Maxwell, 1996). Not all bullying incidents were reported to the teachers or parents and it is evident that some children tend to report the incidents of bullying to their peers rather than to teachers, and in this way, bullying is perpetuated. The children do this without being aware of the extent of the problem. Relatively few learners reported seeking help from their teachers. This could only suggest that they did not feel comfortable talking about their experiences of bullying to their teachers.

Some of the children were afraid of reporting bullying incidents to the teachers since they felt that the teachers would think of them as always complaining, having constant problems or attention seekers. To avoid the embarrassment of being called a 'tale carrier', some victims of bullying remain silent. These feelings of helplessness may eventually affect school attendance, health and patterns of sleep, which eventually affect the children's academic performance at school. As evident from the analysis, many of the children affected by bullying have difficulty going to school.

Children need to differentiate between bullying and playfulness. They also need to know the difference between ‘tattling’ (causing trouble) and reporting (seeking help), and the explanation of the difference should be the duty of an adult. Learning needs to take place in a free and safe environment. Bullying has a social, academic and psychological impact on the lives of children. According to the South African Schools Act (1996), a school code of conduct is aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment and this is dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process. The South African Schools Act (1996) also stipulates that a learner may be suspended from school if he/she misbehaves yet the study discovered that bullying continues at the school.

The study came up with certain strategies, from the participants, which could be developed to address bullying. The following are examples of certain strategies:

- Teachers are the ones who must take the lead in stopping bullying.
- The main aim is not to get rid of bullies but to stop bullying so that the culture of teaching and learning can take place.
- A policy aimed specifically at addressing bullying would have to be put in place.
- Public awareness of, and knowledge about, the problem and its impact on children, both victims and perpetrators, needs to be created.
- All stake holders in education should take the problem of bullying seriously.

- Motivational speakers need to be invited to address the issues of bullying with children at the school because some children think there is nothing that can be done about this problem. They believe it to be the accepted way of living.
- Supervision of children during breaks was proposed by the children.
- Learners must be taught to report bullying to both parents and teachers.
- Social workers must be invited to school to address children on the different kinds of bullying and its impact on their lives.
- Prefects must also be taught how to handle bullying at school.
- Experts, like people from Love Life and the South African Police Services, should also be invited to the school to talk to both the perpetrators and the victims of bullying about the dangers of this phenomenon.

### **5.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

This study focused on children's understandings and experiences of bullying. Only children's views about bullying were stated in this study. Educators and parents opinions about bullying were not researched. I think further research needs to be conducted, where educators and parents would be included in the research on this site. This study was conducted in a public school situated in a township. A similar study could be conducted in both urban area and rural areas; it would help to bring about comparisons of children's experiences of bullying in various institutions and in various areas. The study was conducted in a co-educational high school. Further studies could be conducted in single sex schools and primary schools to further the understandings of bullying in schools.

The study used a qualitative approach which encompassed small-scale research and it only included Grade 9 and 10 children. This means that the study cannot be generalized to all high schools. For future research, a large scale study is recommended to confirm the challenges of bullying that is widely experienced in most schools. This should bring on board the Department of Basic Education to attend to the challenge.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

Taking into account the findings of this study, it is evident that bullying is a problem in the school. An interesting finding was the difference in the types of bullying between boys and girls. It was also evident that both boys and girls are involved in bullying as both victims and perpetrators. Girls used more hidden and socially conforming forms of bullying whereas boys bullying was direct and physical. Parents and educators, as well as all the other relevant stake holders, need to come to a consensus and do something about the issue of bullying. The Department of Education faces the challenge of developing a bullying policy for schools.

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## APPENDIX A



Department:  
Education  
**PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.:2/4/8

Prof. N Muthukrishna & Dr P Morojele  
P O Box X03  
ASHWOOD  
3605

Dear Prof. Muthukrishna and Dr Morojele

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **THE GEOGRAPHIES OF CHILDREN'S SCHOOLING IN KWAZULU-NATAL: NARRATIVES OF CHILDREN, PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND TEACHERS**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 May 2013 to 31 March 2014.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education:

Umlazi District  
Sisonke District  
Zululand District

Othukela District  
Pinetown District  
Illembe District

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 19 November 2013**

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

POSTAL: Private Bag X 9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200, KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa

## **APPENDIX B**

Consent Letter: School Governing Body

Permission to conduct research in your school

Dear Sir/Madam

I am a Masters in Education student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) conducting a research project titled, “Children’s understandings and experiences of bullying in and out of school”

I am interested in ways in which bullying can be prevented in their school. I kindly request permission to conduct my study at your school. Learners in grade 8-10 will be the participants in my study. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews.

Please note that:

1. There will be no benefits for participation in this research project.
2. The learners will be expected to respond to each question in the manner that will reflect their own personal opinions.
3. Their identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.
4. There is no right or wrong answer.
5. All their response will be treated with strict confidentiality

6. Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).
7. Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
8. The participants will not under any circumstances be forced disclose what they do not want to reveal.
9. Audio recording in interview will be done if permission of the participants is obtained.
10. Data will be stored in the university locked cupboard for a maximum period of five years thereafter it will be destroyed by burning.

X

---

Chair person

## APPENDIX C

Consent Letter: School Principal

Permission to conduct research in your school

Dear Sir,

I am a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) conducting a research project titled; “Children’s understandings and experiences of bullying in and out of school”. I am interested in ways in which children ‘experience and think about bullying as it happen in their school. I kindly request permission to conduct my study at your school. Children in grade 8-10 will be the participants in my study. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews.

Please note that:

1. There will be no benefits for participation in this research project.
2. The learners will be expected to respond to each question in the manner that will reflect their own personal opinions.
3. Their identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.
4. There is no right or wrong answer.
5. All their response will be treated with strict confidentiality
6. Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).



7. Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
8. The participants will not under any circumstances be forced disclose what they do not want to reveal.
9. Audio recording in interview will be done if permission of the participants is obtained.
10. Data will be stored in the university locked cupboard for a maximum period of five it will years thereafter it will be destroyed by burning.

**X**

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School Principal

## **APPENDIX D**

Letter of consent: parent

Permission for your child to participate in my research.

Dear Parent,

I am a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) conducting a research project titled; “Children’s understandings and experiences of bullying in and out of school”. I am interested in ways in which children’ experience and think about bullying as it happen in their school. I kindly request permission to conduct my study at your school. Children in grade 8-10 will be the participants in my study. They will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews.

Please note that:

1. There will be no benefits that your child will receive by participation in this research project.
2. Your child will be expected to respond to each question in the manner that will reflect his/her own personal opinions.
3. Your child’s identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.
4. There is no right or wrong answer, as this is NOT a test or examination
5. All of your child’s responses will be treated with strict confidentiality
6. Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).

7. Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
8. Your child will not under any circumstances be forced disclose what they do not want to reveal.
9. Audio recording in interview will be done if permission of the participants is obtained.
10. Data will be stored in the university locked cupboard for a maximum period of five it will years thereafter it will be destroyed by burning.

X

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Parent

## APPENDIX E

Isijobelelo Cb: Isivumelwano esenziwa nomzali.

Mzali othandekayo

Ngingumfundi owenza iziqu zeMasters kweZemfundo eNyuvesi yaKwaZulu-Natal. Ngenza ucwaningo ngo “lwazi lwabafundi mayelana nokulwa ezikoleni nangaphandle kwesikole.

Ngilangazelele ukwazi kabanzi ngolwazi abanalo ngokulwa okukhona ezikoleni, nokuthi abafundi bacabanga ukuthi kungavinjwa kanjani lobu budlobongela okuqhubeka ezikoleni zabo.

Naku okumele ukwazi:

5. Awukho umvuzo noma imali ezotholwa umtwana ngokuzibandakanya kolokhu.
6. Umbuzo ngamunye kumele awuphendule ngendlela abona ngayo.
7. Ngeke lidalulwe muntu igama lomtwana wakho.
8. Ayikho impendulo eyiqiniso noma engamanga ngoba akusona isivivinyo lesi.
9. Zonke izimpendulo zomtwana wakho ziyogcinwa ziyimfihlo.
10. Amagama abantu nesikole sabo ngeke asetshenziswe kulolucwaningo.
11. Umtwana wakho unelungelo lokuhoxa noma inini kulolucwaningo uma efisa.
12. Umtwana ngeke aphoqwe ukuba asho angafuni ukukusho.
13. Ukuqoshwa kwezwi kuyokwenziwa kuphela ngemvume.

14. Ulwazi oluqoqiwe luyogcinwa luphephile eNyuvesi luze lushiswe .

X

---

Mzali

## **APPENDIX F**

Informed consent: Learner

Permission to conduct research

Dear Learner,

I am a Masters in Education Student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Edgewood Campus) conducting a research project titled; “Children’s understandings and experiences of bullying in and out of school”. I am interested in ways in which your experience and what do you think about bullying as it happen in your school. I kindly request permission to conduct my study with you . You will be required to participate in individual and focus group interviews. The interviews will take place in your school premises.

Please note the following:

1. There will be no benefits for participation in this research project.
2. You will be expected to respond to each question in the manner that will reflect your own personal opinions.
3. Your identity will not be divulged under any circumstance.
4. There is no right or wrong answer, as this is not a test or examination.
5. All your response will be treated with strict confidentiality
6. Pseudonyms will be used (real names of the participants and the institution will not be used throughout the research process).

7. Participation is voluntary; therefore participants will be free to withdraw at any time without negative or undesirable consequences to them.
8. You will not under any circumstances be forced disclose what they do not want to reveal.
9. Audio recording in interview will be done if your permission is obtained.
10. Data will be stored in the university locked cupboard for a maximum period of five it will years thereafter it will be destroyed by burning.

X

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Learner

## APPENDIX G



26 April 2013

Professor A Muthukrishna 845  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0250/013

Project title: The geographies of children's schooling in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries:  
Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers

Dear Professor Muthukrishna

### Expedited approval

I wish to inform you that your application has been granted Full Approval through an expedited review process.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Dr P Morojele  
cc Academic leader researcher Dr MN Davids  
cc School administrator Ms B Bhengu

Humanities & Social Sc Research Ethics Committee  
Professor S Collings (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

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Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za /

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Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS





## APPENDIX H

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

The research presented in this dissertation is part of a larger project in the School of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal titled, *'The geographies of children's schooling experiences in six Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Narratives of children, parents/caregivers and teachers'* (School of Education, 2013). Ethical clearance for the project has been obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (HSS/0250/013).

See the attached ethical clearance – appendix G

Professor Nithi Muthukrishna

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## APPENDIX I

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24 January 2014

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This is to record that I have carried out language editing on the dissertation:

**The geographies of bullying within a school: A qualitative study of children's experiences**

by

**Zibeleni Lucia Hlophe (Dumah)**



D.G.Naidoo  
(Language Editor)

