

**WHAT YOUNG CHILDREN SAY ABOUT VIOLENCE AT
THEIR SCHOOL.**

BY

SHARON BENGTON

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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SUPERVISOR:

DR NYNA AMIN

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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DECLARATION...

I, Sharon Bengtson, declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree in any university.



RESEARCHER



SUPERVISOR

WHAT YOUNG CHILDREN SAY ABOUT VIOLENCE AT THEIR SCHOOL.

Abstract

This is a case study about young children's discourses about violence. The young children in this study attend a school that is situated in the suburb of Newlands East, previously restricted to so-called 'Coloured' persons. The area is known for its propensity for violence, and in schools teachers have to deal with many acts of violence on a daily basis. The study is premised on two ideas: one, that from young children's discourse on violence it might be possible to access their experiences, feelings, and fears about violence in schools; and two, young children are important sources of information in trying to understand our social order.

The methodology entailed one focus group discussion with a group of Grade Five students. Three boys and seven girls were selected. Selection was based on their ability to express themselves clearly and their willingness to participate voluntarily. All participants were 'Coloured'. The facilitator of the focus group discussion was a Grade Seven student; this was to ensure that the children's responses would not be influenced by the presence of an adult.

The findings are organized under two subheadings: what young children say about violence and what they say causes violence. The participants indicated that the following constitute violence: teasing, swearing, name-calling, bullying, betrayals, competitiveness, fighting, jealousy, stealing, hitting, racism, homosexuality, physical abuse and sexual abuse. They have identified the following as causes of violence: teachers, friends, physical characteristics, the home, prefects, rivalry and sexuality.

Emergent findings suggest that young children's discourses are markedly different to adult discourses and provide key insights when trying to understand violence in schools from a child's vantage point.

DEDICATION

***TO MY SON,
CAMERON KYLE CONSTANCE***

APPRECIATION

TO MY MOTHER, CHARMAINE BENGTON

For your constant encouragement and for looking after Cameron throughout my studies.

TO MY BROTHERS, EUGENE, SHELDON AND MY SISTER, SHELLEY-ANNE BENGTON

For technical assistance with the computer.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination”

- Nelson Mandela

1.1. Background to the study

According to Roberts (2004), over the last decade there has definitely been an increase in school violence. Violence is not a social problem in a vacuum. It is also the root of a large number of social problems such as poverty and unemployment. Living in South Africa it appears that society is very violent. A perusal through the daily newspapers in the country attests to the nature of crime in the country. This is also borne out by statistics¹ for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

Contact crime - 18,148

Common assault - 70,514

Assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm - 203,777

Common robbery - 59,232

Public violence - 1,500

Neglect and ill-treatment of children - 4,034

“Carjacking” - 14,915

¹ *Statistics South Africa (2009).*

Violence happening in the wider social situations is also reflected in our South Africa. Violence that is often reported by the media is often about school children, what they do and how they are victims. This study is about young children's discourses about violence and is set in a primary school. It speaks about children's perspectives and provides another kind of understanding about violence at school. What the children perceive as constituting violence may give one an idea about some of the origins and manifestations of violence in society. It provides a peek into the social order of children. In schools it is not often that children have a voice about important social problems. These may be discussed in the classroom as part of a lesson but in this study it is a voice of significance and it is a voice that may shape our understanding of violence in schools.

As an educator interacting with these learners on a daily basis the researcher's aim is to research what the children think about violence in relation to education at their school. Under normal circumstances it is generally understood that children come to school to learn and the responsibility of teachers is to teach, however, with the present interactive curriculum in schools, it is now a process in which both teachers and learners can learn from and teach each other. Keeping this in mind, the outcome of this research study encompasses what educators can learn from children in general and what the researcher can learn in particular.

Firstly, it is necessary to know what children are saying about violence in a primary school, that is, children's discourse. Secondly, it is necessary to understand their experiences of violence. The researcher will ascertain by using 10 learners in focus group discussions. It is also hoped that by the end of this dissertation the researcher will be enlightened enough to understand what children are saying about violence in relation to adults' views of violence.

Violence at school is not only dangerous but has numerous consequences. It affects academic performance of learners, leads to psychosocial problems and

affects personal and social development amongst the youth. This could possibly be linked to social problems such as an increase in crime in the community, high drop-out rates at schools, unemployment, and a dependence on social welfare.

1.2. Rationale for the study

An interest in listening to the voices of children stems from the researcher's experiences of teaching at school in KwaZulu-Natal where she has to deal with acts of violence on a daily basis. The school at which she teaches at is a co-educational school situated in Newlands East, Durban. There are approximately 1300 learners and 32 teachers. The learner population consists of children from Newlands East, Kwa-Mashu and Inanda. As an educator she was shocked to discover how learners speak to each other in the classroom and in the school playground. She then realized that violence among learners could signal a social problem that needed to be attended to immediately, and more importantly, to understand what forms of violence children were experiencing and how they talked about violence.

Some of the problems she has to deal with as a an educator include bullying, physical abuse and verbal abuse which is directed at other learners. As an adult professional she often has to mediate. She also hears from other teachers about violent incidents that have taken place at school. Although she associates with teachers, children and other adults, she has only been exposed to the adults' discourse relating to violence, that is, what adults say, think and their experiences of violent behaviour. From children she gets reports of being bullied, hurt or degraded. She has, prior to this study, not thought about hearing a discussion by young children about violence. This is not to say that educators do not talk or discuss violence with children. What makes this study different is that this discussion was carried out without the presence of an adult. It was discussed in a space inhabited by children only.

Most literature talks about violence in schools from an educational perspective (Cox & Davidson, 2004; Doig, 2005; Govender, 2008). This study researches what children are saying about violence in their school, and documents and analyses what they are saying.

As an educator one cannot ignore the problem. In order to do this one needs to understand violence amongst primary school children and to try to curb the problem. Thus, the researcher was prompted to undertake a study on what young children are saying about violence in school.

The broad aim of this study, as indicated earlier, is to explore what children say about violence in a primary school. The researcher wants to learn what children are saying about violence to each other in their school. From young children's discourses on violence it might be possible to access their experiences, feelings and fears about it. Educators are seen as authoritative figures and children often tell them what they think educators want to hear. Previous research by Mwachombela (2004), Singh (2006) and Doig (2005) have focused on teachers' perceptions of violence and how they experience violence in their schools. The analysis here refers to children's discourse regarding violence at school and what they say about it, as children are important sources of information and understanding about social order.

1.3. Context of the study

In this section, the researcher provides some basic information and description of the study's context. Schools are, in a sense, startlingly similar and different (Amin, 2008) and the brief contextual landscape is, therefore, necessary. There are approximately 1350 learners at Rosewood Primary School. This comprises of 681 male and 662 female learners. The school starts from Grade R and goes up to

Grade 7. There are 31 classes in the school. There are 85 learners in the two reception classes, 580 learners in the Foundation Phase, 530 learners in the Intermediate Phase and 170 learners in the Senior Phase. There are 884 Coloured learners, 453 African learners, 5 Indian learners and 1 White learner. The majority of learners at the school are from the Newlands East area. The other feeder areas are Newlands West, Kwa-Mashu, Inanda and Ntuzuma. The home languages of the learner population vary. There are 916 English home language speakers, 416 Isizulu speakers, 5 IsiXhosa and 1 IsiNdebele speaker.

There are 35 educators of whom 31 are permanent, 4 are temporary educators and 1 educator is employed by the School Governing Body. The average pupil-teacher ratio is 44:1.

Some special needs learners have been identified at the school. There are 2 Attention Deficit Disorder learners, 5 learners with behavioural disorders, 2 mild to moderately disabled learners, 2 partially-sighted learners and 7 learners with specific learning disabilities.

Rosewood is located in the residential suburb of Newlands East, Durban with access to community resources such as the Newlands East Municipal Library and Community Centre (approximately 2km away), the Glen Earl Community Clinic, the Gardenia Sports Grounds, the Newlands Swimming Pool (approximately 3km away) and the Beechwood Nature Trail.

The school opened on the 11 April 1983 with 400 learners and 9 educators but increased its numbers that same year to 680 learners and 21 educators. The school ranged from Substandard A (Grade 1) to Standard 2 (Grade 4). Because there were no houses around the school at that time, special buses had to be arranged to transport the learners to and from school.

By 21st May 1984, there were 929 learners. By 1987 there were approximately 1200 learners and 42 educators. In 2008, the school celebrated its 25th anniversary.

Newlands East is located between KwaMashu, Newlands West and the N2 Highway. It is just under 5 square kilometers and was a former Coloured² township.

There are 5 schools in the area. These include 3 primary schools and 2 high schools. "... a significant proportion of the population has not graduated from high school and even for those who have, there is an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and apathy with respect to finding employment. Unemployment is well over the 40% mark in the community" (Onwards & Upwards Foundation, 2009).

Newlands was a sugar cane field for Hulleys. There were Indians living in Newlands because they were cane growers. They used to live in tin shanties (a house made up of corrugated iron with flat sides). The people living in Newlands during the 1960s were very poor. The location of Rosewood Primary School and Beechwood grounds were graveyards.

When Newlands East was developed there were no schools and so the children went to school in town at Saint Anthony's and Saint Augustine's. Newlands East Number One was the first school to be developed when schools were being built for Coloureds in the area.

Nowadays the residents of Newlands East are Coloured and African and there are approximately 30 000 residents. It is from these homes that Rosewood draws its learner population.

² An apartheid era classification of people. The other groups were labelled Bantu (African), Asian (Indian) and White (European).

1.4. Significance of the study

Children across the world are bombarded by violence. It is on the news, in video games and in the street. One reads about violence daily in newspapers and television. One hears about it from family members, friends and neighbours who have experienced violence. Schools in South Africa are supposed to be safe places where effective teaching and learning can take place in an environment that is safe for learners and educators and non-educators. Recently South Africans have come to see more episodes of acts of violence against educators by learners, and incidents of violence between learners on school premises.

Many studies done on violence are from adult's perspectives. They reveal the way in which educators are unintentionally implicated in violence in schools. This study provides insight about the kinds of issues that children understand as violence and which in many instances are trivialized by adults. It reveals what is important to children and trivial to adults. Children show how small events have the potential to lead to violent acts. The origins of trivial issues in school may have a connection to major violent incidents in society. It reveals too how children are important sources of understanding schooling in relation to society.

1.5. The research question

The research question used in this study asks:

- What are young children saying about violence in their school?

1.6. Sub-research questions

- What do children say are the contents of school violence?
- What do children say are the contributory factors to school violence?

1.7. Format of dissertation

Chapter one focuses on a brief summary of the research study. It focuses on the rationale of the study and policies that exist in schools around violence. The context and significance of the study is outlined and the research question is stated.

Chapter two of this study deals with what violence is and what constitutes school violence. It also focuses on victims and perpetrators, interventions, gaps and silences in other studies and the key concepts that emerge.

Chapter three covers the research design and methodology of this study. The criteria for the selection of the research participants as well as the role of the facilitator in the study are explained. Because the study involves children, certain considerations and ethical issues related to research with children is explained as well as the limitations related to this study.

Chapter four deals with the results found during the data analysis process. Themes are identified. Theme 1 deals with what children regard as violence and Theme 2 analyses what children say are the causes of violence.

In **Chapter five** the findings of the study are discussed and recommendations are made for further research.

1.8. Conclusion

In this chapter the journey undertaken during the study is outlined. The personal motivation and rationale for undertaking the study is described. The context of the study is explained as well as a brief history of the school and the area in which the school is located. The significance of the study and the research question is also stated. This chapter concludes with an explanation of the format of the dissertation while in the next chapter, a discussion of the readings that informed this study is provided.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

“All violence, all that is dreary and repels, is not power, but the absence of power” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the kinds of studies that have been conducted in South Africa and internationally around issues of violence. Particular emphasis is given to the aspects of violence that are studied or reported, who is studied in relation to violence, the victims, and perpetrators of violence and interventions. The gaps and silences related to other studies are discussed and the key concepts that emerge from this study are documented. Violence is a phenomenon that has already been researched in many countries, however, the findings of this study are different. The study reviews literature to form the basis of understanding the problem being researched. Marshall & Rossman (1995, p.8) state that in qualitative research literature review serves the following functions: it demonstrates the researcher's paradigm, it demonstrates the researcher's knowledge about related research, and it demonstrates whether the researcher has identified some gaps in previous research.

2.2. What is violence?

Bulhan (1985), defines violence as:

“attacks on a person's physical and psychological integrity and destructive acts that do not involve a direct relationship

between victims and the institution, person or persons responsible for the harm”

The Amherst Wilder Foundation (Author, 1997, p.4), released *The Little Book of Peace* which provides an extensive explanation of violence.

*“violence is words and actions that hurt people;
violence is when a person uses pain, fear, or hurt to make
you do something;
violence is using words to scare, bully, embarrass, call
names, or put someone down;
violence is hurting a person’s body or the things a person
cares about; and
violence is when someone touches you or asks you to touch
them in a way that doesn’t seem right to you.”*

According to these definitions, any act that results in harm is essentially an act of violence.

2.3. Violence in schools

There is no clear definition of what comprises school violence. According to Furlong and Morrison (2000, p.71), “....school violence is a multifaceted construct that involves both criminal acts and aggression in a school climate.” Such violence may consist of anything from antisocial behaviour, to bullying, to criminal behaviour, including theft, assault, and even murder which may occur in classrooms, the school yard or on school buses (Rabrenovic *et al*, 2004, p.116). According to Klewin *et al*, (2003, p.863):

“the academic debate on violence in schools is, to a large extent, concentrated on three clearly distinguishable categories of behaviour by learners. These categories are physical compulsion and physical injury, verbal aggression and mental cruelty and bullying.”

South Africa’s written submission to the World Education for All Forum, an assessment of the state of education in the country, identified the possession of weapons by students, sexual abuse, use of alcohol and drugs on school premises and burglaries as being problems (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p.32).

It has also been reported that neither the national nor departments of education systematically monitor incidents of violence in schools (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p.6). Similarly, there are no data systems to facilitate the evaluation of crime statistics on the basis of where the crime was committed, and while quantitative data on school violence is not available, the existing evidence strongly suggests that violence is prevalent in many South African schools and that it undermines the ability of these schools to achieve their developmental and educational objectives (Human Rights Watch, 2001, p.33).

All of the above evidence suggests that the school is an environment in which children are often exposed to gang violence, robbery and assault which makes schools places where drugs, thugs and weapons can move freely through the gates as pupils (Human Right Watch, 2001, p.34).

2.4. Study conducted in South Africa and around the world

South Africa is engulfed in a wave of crime. South African society is considered one of the most violent in the world. The aspects of violence that reported in the media include murder, suicide, rape, assault, child abuse and family violence.

The murder rate in South Africa is one of the highest in the world (issafrica, n.d.).

Schools in South Africa are seen as unsafe and where discipline is a problem. Lately, a spate of violent attacks have taken place in classrooms and playgrounds and these have been reported in the media, one example being a child filmed while threatening another with a knife (Ramphal, 2009). The report indicated that school principals and teachers fear that if violence is not stopped they will soon be picking up bodies of pupils on playgrounds. Experienced educators have reported a systematic moral degeneration among the youth and say that violent attacks in schools have become the norm (Ramphal, 2009).

2.5. Aspects of violence that have been studied and reported

A number of studies give insight into the levels of violence that are prevalent in South African schools. Violence in schools is a national problem in South Africa and is not just restricted to KwaZulu-Natal. The Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention launched a national study into violence in South African schools on 23 April 2008. Participants from both public and private schools were used in the study. Twelve thousand seven hundred and ninety-four learners, two hundred and sixty-four principals and five hundred and twenty-one educators participated in this study. According to the study, approximately two million of the twelve million registered school children in South Africa had been victims of violent crime at school, including incidents of theft, assault, robbery and sexual assault.

Violence is one of the main causes of trauma in children's lives in South Africa (Lewis, 1999, p.83). It can be caused by other people, or violence can occur naturally, such as after a motor vehicle accident. The statistics for violence in our country are so high that children cannot ignore the danger (Ramphal, 2009). At a debriefing session at a school in Gauteng it was reported that some children had

been directly involved in domestic abuse or robberies. All the children had been involved in violence in some way. In a Grade Seven class the children spoke about witnessing hijackings, burglary, a father being killed, a car accident, an uncle being shot in taxi violence and the death of a grandparent. All the children in this study had been exposed to some form of violence. It is difficult in South Africa to find a child who is not afraid of violence. It has been reported that children often wish “for crime to stop” or “for peace” (Lewis, 1999, p.90).

The International Centre for the Prevention of Crime³ (Lewis, 1999, p.125) has listed risk factors for children becoming violent. These include poverty, blocked opportunities, lack of services or low cost services in public housing areas, poor school facilities, unemployment, lack of a sense of identity and belonging, and substance abuse. Life histories of prison inmates have also shown that criminals almost always had violence used against them when they were children.

2.6. Who is studied in relation to violence?

A study done by Virasamy (2004) focused on female violence amongst learners in Durban schools. This study was done from the educators’ perspectives using survey research. This study highlighted the existence of female violence in South African schools. Another study done by Mwahombela (2004) focused on teachers’ experiences and perceptions of violence in a secondary school. Again this study focused on educators’ experiences and perspectives of violence and the negative impact it had on them physically, psychologically and financially. Once again the spotlight was on the educator. The results of Mwahombela’s study showed that only a few educators were able to describe the concept of violence and that no learner was able to describe the concept of violence.

³ *A centre affiliated to the United Nations.*

In his study, the aspects of violence reported by educators and learners included corporal punishment, physical

violence in the form of bullying and fighting, sexual violence as gender-based violence, verbal violence and violence exhibited as stealing belongings. Recommendations based on the findings of this research have been made to encourage policy-makers, educators, parents, learners and the entire community to address problems of violence and to curb violence in schools.

Singh (2006) did a case study on “Violence in schools: a recipe for disaster”. Again this study focused on teachers perceptions, breach of their rights and the measures that they usually take to curb violence in their school. This study focused specifically on teachers as victims of violence. Singh (2006) analysed the prominence and pervasiveness of violence against teachers. The aspects of violence studied included: violence in South African schools, the global perspective of the causes of violence, a focus on teachers as victims and the theoretical perspectives of violent behaviour.

Violent incidents and fear of violence have a far-reaching effect on the educational process. High rates of crime and violence in schools produce high absenteeism rates, more learner drop-outs and lower learner achievement levels (Govender, 2008, p. 3). Violent acts can be detrimental for learners. Fear of victimization has been found to inhibit learners’ educational and psychological development (Cox *et al* 2004, p.134). Learners who are harassed and targeted by others over a few years may “... build up anger and hatred that finally explodes into physical violence” (Marshall, 2000, p.133). Violence stemming from school also persists into adulthood. According to Stein (2001, p.1), violence at school is also “The training grounds for sexual and domestic violence.”

From literature reviews the researcher has noted that educators are being used to study violence in schools. Children's behaviour, attitudes and acts are always being studied by adults as they are understood by adults. As an educator who works with children the researcher wants to know how children define violence. This is not clear from the studies. What is the learners' perspective?

2.7. Recommendations that have been made

It has been recommended that children should be taught conflict management at school because most of the time violence involves learner against learner. Children should also be taught threat identification and management. It is also recommended that the Department of Education increase the presence of police around schools and to recruit learners as safety marshals (Galbraith, 2007).

2.8. Victims and perpetrators of violence

The term victim includes all those who experience injury, loss or hardship due to any cause. Victims are people or groups that can be harmed physically, mentally or emotionally (Karmen, 1990, p.3).

At a small group-level, the victims of violence may be members of a family who are abused by another member of the family. Another example of small group violence happens in criminal gangs, where gang membership depends on perpetrating violent acts (Swartz *et al*, 2004, p.305).

At a community level, the perpetrators of violence may be the residents of a community who victimize people of a particular group.

At a societal level, the use of force by the apartheid government to systematically remove people from the land on which their families had lived for generations, is another form of violence (Swartz *et al*, 2004, p.305).

2.9. Interventions

Interventions may occur differently at all levels. Figure 1 shows an approach to violence prevention. This may be done where the different levels of society such as the individual, families and communities may be assisted in overcoming traumatic experiences of violence by empowering and linking (Swartz *et al*, 2004, p.307).

2.9.1. Individual-level interventions

Violence	Healing
Individual	Linking and empowering
Small Group	
Community	
Society	
Fig. 1.	

Initiatives to prevent violence at the level of the individual include programme aimed at teaching children and young adults to resolve conflicts by empowering them; that is, the use of non-violence, and by assisting children to identify protective places and adults in their community. This is referred to as linking and empowering (Swartz *et al*, 2004, p. 308).

2.9.2. Small group-level interventions

An example of a small group intervention strategy to prevent violence is to counsel families and to help them to communicate effectively (empowering and linking) in order for domestic violence to be reduced.

2.9.3. Community-level interventions

This involves bringing people who live together in a particular area and establishing a neighborhood watch and also organizing local awareness and public information campaigns.

2.9.4. Societal-level interventions

Strategies that involve deepening the democratic process in the country and encouraging the citizens to value diversity can build peace. Societal interventions can also include making changes to the criminal justice system by providing special courts for violence against children. Strategies that operate at multiple levels are also successful. These may include intensive awareness and information campaigns and also accompanying it with special training for police officers and social workers so that they may identify possible problems and respond effectively to reduce crime and violence. Complimentary programmes that offer anger management and assistance for those with substance abuse problems are also beneficial.

2.10. Gaps and silences

Singh (2006) did a study on violence in schools which focused on educators' perceptions and the breach of their rights and the measures that they took to curb violence. His study specifically focused on educators' as victims of violence. Mwachombela (2004) too made no mention of children.

Mwachombela's study (2004) in correlation with Singh, dealt with educators experiences and perspectives of violence and the negative impact it had on them. In addition to that, Virasamy (2004), focused on female violence amongst learners. This study was done from the educators' perspectives. Once again the spotlight of previous research had been on the teacher in relation to violence.

This research, however, focuses on children, in particular primary school children, and how they define violence and experience violence.

From all the literature that is available there is no talk about competition as a form of violence or jealousy as a form of violence. Fighting over trivialities is not in the literature. Literature shows that when people want something, they might steal it. The children in this study are saying that the minute you steal, the minute you are jealous, the minute you tease someone, that constitutes violence. Even if there is no harm, stealing, teasing, swearing, jealousy and betrayal is violence. There is no literature that shows that graffiti is a form of violence. Graffiti is regarded as a form of art but in this study the children are saying graffiti is also a form of violence. There is no literature that says that teasing each other about the colour of one's hair and skin is violence. The children in this study are saying that one's physical characteristics can be a reason for violence. They are saying that reporting inaccurately to the teacher and mimicking violent acts are causes of violence. The children in this study see smoking as a form of violence. The literature speaks about smoking as substance abuse and not violence.

2.11. Key concepts emerging

Since this study is centered around children's experiences of violence it is essential that one conceptualizes these experiences within the boundaries of a conceptual framework. A thorough understanding of the following concepts related to this study is essential.

2.11.1. Bullying

Olweus (1993) defines bullying as, "Repeated negative, ill-intentioned behaviour by one or more students directed against a student who has difficulty defending himself or herself."

To understand the concept of bullying, it is incumbent on the reader to have a thorough understanding of the concept of emotional violence for these are linked.

2.11.2. Emotional violence

Emotional violence is the use of mental tactics such as aggression, anger, humiliation, sabotage, manipulation, corruption, intimidation, fear, dominance, power, control in order to inflict emotional damage on another person (Lisette & Kraus, 2000, p.12). Emotional abusers attempt to make another person feel dependent, afraid, guilty, confused, embarrassed, unworthy or helpless. To accomplish this, they often verbally harass someone, intimidate, criticize and blame them. Emotional abuse may be obvious or subtle and involves neglect, ridicule, lying, name-calling, withholding affection and exerting pressure.

2.11.3. Physical violence

Children's feelings are linked to their state of mind, therefore one has to have a thorough understanding of physical violence. Physical violence is the use of bodily actions and weapons to threaten, punish, dominate, restrain, control, or injure another person (Lisette & Krauss, 2000, p.12).

2.11.4. Psychological violence

Psychological violence is violence that compromises the normal psychosocial development of a person.

2.11.5. Epistemic Violence

Children's psychological wellbeing is affected because they think about the violence they experience.

2.12. Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of related literature to this study, and also emphasizes the gaps and silences found in other studies. The key concepts related to this study are also discussed. The next chapter discusses the methodology adopted for this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

“Non-violence is the answer to the crucial political and moral questions of our time, the need for man to overcome oppression and violence without resorting to oppression and violence” – Martin Luther King Jr

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will describe, explain and justify the research methodology adopted, the sample selection and data collection procedures used for this study. Furthermore, the approach used for data analysis will be explained, the ethical considerations and the limitations and delimitations of the study will be outlined. The context of the study is also outlined as well as the key research question that will direct the course of the research.

3.2. Context of the study

According to Creswell, (1998, p.254), “...qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological tradition of inquiry that explores a human or social problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting.” In this study the research context is a primary school which is the natural setting of the participants in which their reality is addressed. This also addresses the ontological assumption about the nature of reality, which asks the question “when is something real?” and the actors’ reality is constructed in the minds of the learners involved in the situation (Creswell, 1998, p.254). The

participants' reality, which is their experiences of violence is particular to them and the researcher is informed through data collection from them at school.

3.3. The approach

In order to have a better understanding of how children experience violence, the researcher chose an approach that sought to go in-depth into understanding the children's experiences of violence. In keeping within the genre of the qualitative paradigm, the researcher made use of focus group interviews for data production. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them.

Qualitative research allows for better understanding of the concept of violence and how children experience it and then allows for interpreting it (based on the meanings the children gave.) By adopting the qualitative research method, it gave the participants a "voice" in the research and examines their experiences of violence. According to de Vos, Strydom, Fouche' and Delpont (2002, p.300), qualitative methodology is based on the assumption that valid understanding can be gained through accumulated knowledge gained at first hand. Generalization is avoided as the focus is on the individual's experiences. People's actions in everyday life are interconnected and the researcher has to consider and take into account the interconnectedness of these actions. According to Cohen *et al* (2007, p.491), grounded theory "takes account of apparent inconsistencies, contradictions, discontinuation and relatedness in actions." In this case, the context of this study is a primary school where the data was collected from senior primary children because children in this age group can understand and have good verbal capabilities in which to relate their experiences.

3.4. Interpretivist paradigm

The research is interpretive in the sense that it captured the children's lived experiences of violence. Interpretive research is a communal process, informed by participating practitioners and scrutinized and/or endorsed by others (Garrick, 1999). Phenomena and events are understood through mental processes of interpretations which are influenced by, and interpreted within, social contexts in order to look for ways in which people make meaning and what meaning they make (Trauth, 2001).

An interpretive researcher's description of another person's meaning system is a secondary account (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Thus the interpretive paradigm supports this research study as it enabled the researcher to research children's experiences of violence at their school. It allowed one to explore their social reality using a qualitative method. The children's experiences form the basis of this research.

3.5. Case study methodology

According to Creswell (1998, p.61), "a case study is an exploration of a "bounded system", which is a case over time through detailed in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context". In a "bounded system", there were constraints on the time limit that the researcher had to collect the data needed to complete the dissertation. The discussion also had to be done during teaching time as all the learners were from different class groups and arrangements had to be made for them to meet at a specific time and for the discussion to be completed within a specific time in order for them to be back in class for their next lesson. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.253), state that

a school is an example of a bounded system as, “it provides a unique example of real people in real situations.” This uniqueness allows for understanding of what the children are actually saying to each other about violence at their school and their experiences of violence without the use of incomprehensible terminology and theories. The focus group discussion took place in the school’s computer room as there was no other venue available for the discussion. This made it easier for the children to speak freely as they were able to relate to each other as they experienced the same problems related to violence at school. Henning (2004, p.36), states that methodology must have a “goodness of fit”. As this research study was within a social and human setting, qualitative case study methodology was employed.

One of the advantages of using case study methodology is that the data is obtained directly from the source. Stake (1995), argues that the sole criterion for selecting case study methodology should be the opportunity to learn. The views and words of the participants in this study were utilized by the researcher to understand violence as experienced by the learners. The participants are therefore seen as the “experts” as their information was necessary for the research, and according to Denzin and Yvonna (2000, p.645), “interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we can understand our fellow human beings”.

In their natural setting, the participants in this study were comfortable. The learners’ experiences of violence could therefore be studied and meaning could be attributed taking into account that a “holistic picture” is needed in a qualitative case study (Creswell, 1998, p.254).

3.6. The sample

The data, generated from a focus group interview, involved ten volunteer participants composing of 3 male and 7 female learners.

Figure 2 also represents the coding used to reference the data in Appendix 1.

<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>
Rashaad (Ra) Malique (Ma) Jermaine (Je)	Alonzo (A) Chanyce (Ch) Adrian (Ad) Jordan (Jo) Alrika (Al) Leeshay (Le) Renee (Re)
<u>Fig 2. Focus group participants</u>	

As a researcher and an educator on the staff the researcher had access to past educators who taught the participants in this study. On interacting with these educators she was able to gain information on learners who showed a slight tendency to be involved in violent incidents at school. This lead process is termed purposive sampling. A purposive sampling technique was used to select learner participants. According to Cohen *et al* (2007, p.114), "... researchers handpick cases to be included in the sample ... on the basis of ... particular characteristics being sought." One Grade Seven learner and nine Grade Five learners were recommended by educators to participate in the study. Three boys and seven girls were selected. All the participants co-incidentally were Coloured learners. The facilitator was a Grade Seven learner who was selected based on her ability to express herself clearly, was keen to participate voluntarily and who had good leadership skills. In order to get rich data, focus group discussions were conducted with these learners.

The study was piloted during the two school lunch breaks using learners from the researcher's class who were not participants in the study. The Grade Seven learner, who was the facilitator in the study, was present during the piloting

sessions to pose questions to the learners. In order to get rich data, focus group discussions were conducted with these learners.

3.7. Data collection and analysis procedures

In order to implement the study, one focus group discussion of approximately 35 minutes was used to collect data.

The collection of data involved a video-taped focus group discussion to find out what learners were saying about violence in their school. The video-taping of the focus group discussion was done by a Grade Six learner who also had to be trained to use the video-tape. In keeping with the qualitative methodology used to produce data for this study, certain procedures to perform the data analysis were followed. The format included transcribing the data from the focus group discussion, reading the transcripts a few times, making comments and memos on the transcripts, developing a list of categories, experiencing moments of indecision in demarcating the data in categories, and re-categorizing the data into themes to form meaning. Initially there were 32 themes identified which were later reduced to 14 as it was felt that some of the initial themes could be classified under the same heading. The spoken words by the participants was not changed during the transcription process as the study did not involve a discourse analysis. The children's words are used for the themes in this study and not adult words, so for example, teasing is violence; swearing and joking is violence. The full transcript of the focus group discussion is in the Appendix (Appendix 1).

According to Henning, (2004,p.607), "the researcher is the main instrument of research and makes meaning from her engagement in the project." The aim of analysis is to look for trends and patterns that reappear in a single focus group (de Vos *et al*, 2002, p.318). The basis of this analysis was the video-tape and

transcripts. During the analysis the researcher had to consider the words and the specificity of the comments of the participants.

After completing the transcriptions, the researcher read and re-read them in order to extract content analysis, as well as to familiarize herself thoroughly with the text. The next step in analyzing the data was to give each participant a code according to the first two letters of his / her names. Each code was given a number according to how often each participant spoke.

Thereafter, the coded data was organized by grouping the participants' responses together in accordance with the themes developed. The analysis involved explaining their responses in terms of the experiences of the participants. In Chapter Four the evidence to back-up claims made by the participants is cited.

3.8. Focus groups as an interviewing method

TerreBlanche and Durrheim (1999) consider the term "focus group" as research conducted in groups. Focus groups are fundamentally a way of listening to people and learning from them, and of creating lines of communication. According to de Vos *et al* (2002, p.305), focus groups usually include six to ten participants. In this study nine Grade Five learners and one Grade Seven learner were the participants. Groups of this number allow each person to participate while still eliciting a range of responses. In focus group interviews the participants find a platform to openly share their experiences with other participants who are supportive of them. De Vos *et al* (2002, p.307) maintains that focus group interviews are advantageous to a qualitative study when the researcher enters the "lived experiences" of the participant in his or her own natural environment. The school therefore served as the ideal natural environment for the focus group discussions to be held.

3.9. Trustworthiness

Being trustworthy as a qualitative researcher requires that the research process is carried out fairly and that the products represent, as closely as possible, the experiences of people who are studied (Ely, 1991, p.93). Trustworthiness was ensured by having a peer researcher assist with the interpretation of the data into codes, categories and themes (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p.80).

3.10. Validity

In order to achieve validity and minimize bias as much as possible the study was piloted. The purpose of piloting the study is to gain feedback on whether there are misunderstandings or misperceptions on the part of the participants. The study was piloted during the school break with learners from the researcher's own class and using the Grade Seven facilitator for the actual focus group discussion. The facilitator was told what her role in the focus group discussion was. Her role was to give the questions and to ensure that every student had a chance to speak. If there were any misunderstandings of the discussion topics, these were adjusted for the focus group discussion (Cohen *et al*, 2007, p.341).

To address the issue of power relationships between the researcher and participants, the researcher was not part of the focus group discussion. As an educator doing inside research, it was felt that the children would say things in the interview to please the educator.

3.11. Key research question

- What are children saying about violence in their school?

3.12. The role of the facilitator

The facilitator was trained not to judge, censor or chastise the children and neither was she to influence what the participants spoke about.

3.13. Producing data

Consideration: As an adult, who is also an educator at the site of the study, the researcher was aware that she would not have access to the children's discourse. Consequently, she used a Grade Seven student to facilitate the focus group discussion. She organized one focus group discussion session and the children were used to produce the data. This ended with a debriefing session to deal with children's feelings and inform them about confidentiality, anonymity and to counsel learners when they needed counselling.

In the first focus group discussion the children were asked to talk about violence in school. In the second focus group discussion the children were asked why was there violence in schools.

3.14. Ethical considerations

All ethical measures such as confidentiality and anonymity were adhered to. Babbie (1990, p.342) concurs by saying that anonymity implies that it should not be possible for any participant to be identified by anyone including the researcher. Consent and anonymity included:

- Application for ethical clearance was approved by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

- Application for ethical clearance was approved by the Department of Education.
- Informed Consent letters were given to the learners and parents or guardians. Hakim (2000, p.143), considers informed consent a necessary condition rather than an impediment.
- An Informed Consent letter was given to the principal of the school.

As the participants in this study were minors, a written Informed Consent for the study was obtained from the parents / guardians. In terms of the Child care Act 74 of 1983, children under the age of twenty-one must first be given consent by the parent to participate in the study. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any point and that participation was voluntary.

3.15. Limitations and delimitations

The study is delimited to one school context and to nine Grade Five students and one Grade Seven student. There is no verification of the data. What the children say is accepted as truthful responses.

3.16. Conclusion

This chapter has provided discussions on the research design and explained the suitability of the qualitative research approach utilized in this study. An explanation of the methodological strategy outlined the data collection and data analysis procedure. The focus of the next chapter will discuss the emergent themes obtained from the focus group discussions.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

“Victory attained by violence is tantamount to a defeat, for it is momentary” - Gandhi

WHAT YOUNG CHILDREN SAY ABOUT VIOLENCE

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter an analysis of young children’s discourse of violence is presented. The discourse, as indicated in previous chapters, was produced through a single focus group interview comprising ten children. The interview was chaired by a learner whose main task was to keep the discussion focused and not to share her opinion with the interviewees. What young children say is analysed by grouping the data into two major themes.

This chapter is organized in terms of two themes:

1. What, according to young children, is violence?
2. Young children’s perspectives of the causes of violence.

4.2. Theme 1: What, according to young children is violence?

Eighteen categories or descriptions are provided by the young children of the study (see fig. 2). Some categories like bullying and stealing have been found in other studies and some like graffiti, and “nonsense” are unusual. Each category is analysed repeatedly and the data is cited with codes described in chapter 3.

<u>What young children say constitutes violence</u>	
Teasing	Jealousy
Swearing	Stealing
Calling each other names	Hitting each other
Reporting to the teacher	Playing violent games
Being bullied	Substance abuse
Being betrayed by friends	Graffiti
Being competitive	Being racist
Mimicking violent acts seen at home	Homosexuality
Fighting over nonsense	Being physically and sexually abused
<u>Fig.2</u>	

4.2.1. Teasing is violence

The children tease each other about physical characteristics such as the weight of their parents. At a parents' meeting, for example, Rashaad relates how it provides opportunities for children accompanying their parents to see what other children's parents look like. When they see that a parent is fat, they use the information to tease.

Some people at parents' meetings, when their parents come, some of the children also come and when they see that their mother or father is fat or something, or thin, they start teasing the child at school. (Ra 10)

Another feature that becomes the focus of teasing is hair. The children tease each other about the type of hair they have. Straight hair is seen as more desirable than wavy hair. Chanyce recounts that violence is triggered when the quality of hair, especially those with wavy hair, results in teasing, and eventually in hitting. The reason that this occurs is the value placed on straight hair in the Coloured community. Straight hair is more desirable as it is associated with western norms

of beauty whilst wavy hair is associated with blackness or ugliness. This is related to the history of South Africa in which racial purity played an essential role. It is generally believed that Coloureds are a “mixed race” and hence, those displaying African characteristics are less worthy and less beautiful.

Chanyce: There is violence in our school because of say for example, I have cruise⁴ hair and she has straight hair, and she teases me. So I will start to fight with Jordan and it will end up a big thing. (Ch 2)

Teasing about the size of a person’s body, head, ears and nose is also mentioned. The same also applies to other parts of the body, particularly the size of heads, noses, ears and teeth, as evidenced by Adrian and Alonzo’s statements.

Adrian: Some people tease each other because they have big heads, small noses, big ears and then they start fighting. (Ad 10)

If a child has big teeth, the word “gavolos⁵” (A17) is used to tease them.

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 violence. The children place great emphasis on appearance and physical beauty and attractiveness. Those children and members of their families who do not satisfy such norms are targets of ridicule, and this is construed by the children in this study as violence.

⁴ Hair that is wavy.

⁵ Big teeth.

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 the 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 violence. Though teasing does lead to physical and verbal altercations in some instances, it can also cause emotional pain (Thorne, 1993).

4.2.2. Swearing and joking is violence

The children at this school believe that swearing constitutes violence, particularly when they are unable to see swearing as a “joke”. Swearing at each other as well as each others’ relatives, such as grandparents, is also seen as violence. The children call each other names such as “cow” (*A 19*) and “skank” (*A 19*) and once it is reported to a teacher the name-caller brushes it off as a joke. This could be a means or ruse to get out of trouble. For example, Malique describes how his best friend swore at his granny and his retributory response resulted in a fight and getting into “trouble” because he did not know it was a “joke”.

Malique: Me and my best friend went to Pietermaritzburg and he started swearing my granny and I never know he was joking and then I also started swearing and we got into a big fight and we got into big trouble. (Ma 4)

When Malique mentions that he was in, “big trouble”, he probably meant the swearing incident was reported to his parents as the incident did not take place at school and one can surmise that he was reprimanded for it. From the above statement, it can be assumed that swearing is acceptable to the children when joking, but, at other times, it is unacceptable and has negative consequences.

The children have no idea about how “joking” is used to hurt one another. They also do not know who to “joke” with as reported by Alonzo (A 19). There are obviously children in the school who do not see swearing as a “joke”. They see it as a serious offence. From Alonzo’s perspective, the problem lies with the person who is the butt of the joke as they fail to see it as harmless:

Alonzo: I think there’s violence in my school because a lot of children joke around and joke around with children that wanna take it seriously. Like when I said to Leeshay, “ You a cow, you a skank⁶” or this and all and she didn’t know that I was joking with her. (A 19)

It is obvious from the children’s responses that they sometimes fool around by swearing at each other and that they do not see this kind of behaviour as serious. When it is reported they resort to justification by stating it was a “joke”.

4.2.3. Calling each other names is violence

Names such as “Jack” and words such as “Mama” that are inoffensive in themselves are used as derogatory terms by children. “Mama Jack”, which is about a physically-oversized character in a movie, is used to insult a child because of his big size.

Malique: Some children tease me because they say I’m fat and they call me, “Mama Jack”, and when they carry on swearing I say, “I’m gonna catch you home time!” (Ma 9)

Malique threatens to use violence on anyone who teases him in order to resolve his ongoing problem of being teased because of his size and, perhaps because

⁶ A pejorative term equivalent to calling a girl a “bitch”.

“mama” resonates with the female gender and this form of name-calling questions his male status.

Alonzo: In our class there's one boy, his name is Quron and he started it. There's violence in our school because of him. He started it with Shanelle and his calling her, “ Big Mama! Big Mama!” and then now his making us all talk about it like that. That's why she gets cross. (A 11)

Name calling is a form of rejection that is often painful and remembered by children for long periods of time (Klewin *et al*, 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. Calling each other names is a form of violence for children. The idea for teasing in this instance is appropriated from film culture and it is a demonstration of how cinema influences and is used by children as a powerful form of hurting each other.

4.2.4. Reporting to the teacher is violence

The act of reporting to educators is seen as violence by children at this school.

Leeshay: Last week, um, Miss Y wanted to give me double detention⁷ because Darne's busy saying I'm swearing other children. (Le 10)

Violence here can be seen as the consequences of reporting, as in this instance Leeshay received double detention.

Reporting to the teacher can also make one vulnerable to acts of violence as suggested by Jermaine. He explains that when children do not have anonymity for reporting then they can become victims of violence.

Jermaine: One boy in our class when Shayden got hurt so whenever we go to him and then some boys laughed at him and he said, "I will catch you home time and I'll bring a knife for you!" And then he brought a knife and he was sent to the office and he got suspended. (Je 4)

The children are punished according to the severity of the misdemeanor. At this school punishment includes detention during breaks or after school, and suspension.

4.2.5. Being bullied is violence

The children are bullied for their personal possessions, money, lunch, for reporting to the teachers and prefects, and about their size.

Jordan: I've seen bigger boys bullying smaller children for their lunch and money. (Jo 5)

The "bigger" boys that Jordan refers to are those boys who are older in age and taller and heavier in size. Their "bigness" allows them to threaten and intimidate smaller and younger children.

Adrian: There's violence in school because some children, they walk around and if a small child is in their way they push them out the way. "What you doing in my way?", and then they hit them. (Ad 15)

⁷ Leeshay's reference to "double detention" means having detention over two consecutive days.

Of course, in another context, size is the reason to be teased as explained earlier, demonstrating how a disadvantage in one instance, is an advantage in another. It is often the older and physically larger children who bully the younger children at school. They see them as easy targets to bully as the younger children are smaller and are probably too scared to report them. It is a situation that reflects an “imbalance of strength” (Olweus, 1993). Violence is therefore, probably caused by the older children who are the bullies at school. Bullying is the most overt form of violence and is a common occurrence in most schools. For the children, bullying is violence.

4.2.6. Being betrayed by friends is violence

To the children, being betrayed is exemplified by breaking a promise, being disloyal to a friend, sharing information with others that should have been kept confidential and blaming friends for their own actions. The children are also betrayed by their friends over their involvement in romantic relationships.

Rashaad: Sometimes there's violence 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 then it becomes a big thing. (Ra 7)

When the children start romantic relationships at school and they experience problems in that relationship, they normally turn to a friend for help **(Ra 7)**.

The friend then tells other children what happened and the news eventually gets back to the dating couple and this causes conflict.

Friendships also sour as a result of children influencing each other and going against the standards set by the parents at home.

Alrika: I once had a friend. She was my best friend, her name was Mikayla. She used to go out with boys like Brinley and all the other boys and then she went home and told her father that I'm influencing her to go out with boys and told her mother that me and Shanelle and Alonzo were calling her bad names. (Al 4)

In this instance Mikayla uses her friend as a scapegoat for her own actions. According to Alrika, Mikayla, of her own volition, fraternized with boys but reported her (Alrika) to her father as the “bad” influence. Furthermore, she accused her friends of calling her names. These untruths to justify her actions to her parents, ruined friendships and are viewed as violent acts by Alrika. Mikayla probably justified her actions by blaming her friend when she tried to explain to her parents why she was engaging in activities that her parents did not approve of.

Very often children break promises to each other as for example when Jordan expected Cher to replace the biscuits she had given to her. When this did not happen, it became a point of argument and conflict between the two children.

Jordan: Like my friend Cher. She took all my biscuits, so she said she's going to buy me something and she never ever bought me something and we started arguing and fighting. (Jo 3)

The conflict resulted in fighting, a form of violence involving physical contact.

Dormant issues, which were probably secrets, are brought up in front of others and this also leads to violence.

Rashaad: I think there's violence in school because some children wanna carry things from the past and then they spread it to other children and then when it gets back to the child they were talking about it becomes a fight. (Ra 11)

4.2.7. Being competitive is violence

Being competitive refers specifically to one-upmanship that the children engage in. They wish to indicate how they are better than their peers. They do this in various ways. For example, they compare the size of homes in relation to wealth. There does not have to be evidence. Malique's account is exemplary:

Malique: This other boy, Donelle and his friend Damian and he said, "Hey Damian!", Damian said "Hey, I don't live there! Better than your house!". And one boy, Donelle said, "Hey! my house is a mansion. What your'll got?". And he said, "I got uh, I'm richer than your'll. Our family got twenty cars!", everything like that. And then they got into a fight and then he said, "Hey! you gonna see tomorrow, you gonna catch a hiding!". (Ma 12)

Some children just brag. It is usually about who can say they own something desirable. When they have nothing more to say they start fighting. It begins as a war of words which leads to violence, thus, when a statement cannot be bettered violence is threatened.

To the children, coming to school in a fancy car, having a sophisticated cell-phone and living in a large house makes them feel that they are of a better social class than the children who do not get dropped off in fancy cars or live in

large houses. This sets the scene for comparisons and arguments eventuating in violent acts.

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because of the cars. Some children come in Hummers⁸ and some children come in those olden days cars and every-time they walk in the school they start teasing the person. (Ch 18)

The boys also compete over the attractiveness of their girlfriends.

Leeshay: Last year, two boys were fighting, uh, teasing each other about who got pretty girlfriend and who got an ugly girlfriend and then eventually in the end you just found the boys hitting each other with hockey sticks. (Le 5)

Young boys and girls are engaged 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 a girlfriend is ugly can lead to conflict. Their girlfriend's beauty is related to the boys' egos. The more macho the boy the prettier the girl he is supposed to have. The boys use macho ways to fight such as the use of hockey sticks (Le 5), scissors (Ra 2), and even knives (Je 4) and this can result in serious physical injury.

Rashaad: A boy named Tristan said something bad about Cody, and Cody got cross and he started telling Brenlin, and he picked up a scissors and wanted to stab him. (Ra 2)

Jermaine: One boy in our class, when Shayden got hurt, so whenever we go to him and then some boys laughed at him

⁸ A multi-purpose vehicle.

and he said I will catch you home time and I'll bring a knife for you. And he brought a knife and he was sent to the office and he got suspended. (Je 4)

4.2.8. Mimicking violent acts seen at home is violence

Weapons such as scissors (Ra 2), hockey sticks (Le 5), and knives (Ad 13) are used to fight at school. Children are exposed to more images of violence today via the electronic media than at any time in history (Roberts, 2006, p.5). The social cognitive learning theory of Bandura (Seifert & Hoffnung, 2000, p.45), states the tendency of a child to imitate or model behaviour or learning by observing others. The children also imitate their screen heroes through violent games at school. Violent games such as wrestling are seen as a form of entertainment. Action figures, toy guns and video games that depict heroes whose heroism is tied to the ability to destroy the enemy are a familiar part of many children's play world (Bemak & Keys, 2000, p.22). The message that this communicates to youth is that violence is everywhere and that it is not unacceptable.

Jordan: Some children play wrestling at school and when like one child hits another real hard and then they get into a fight over that one thing. (Jo 4)

Sometimes the children's games go too far and they cannot distinguish between reality and fantasy and this often leads to fights.

Malique: In grade four, me and Alonzo were playing a game and we got very violent and home time we had a fight. (Ma 3)

Studies (Bemak & Keys, 2000; Cox, Bynun & Davidson, 2004; Klewin, 2003; Neustatter & Gonis, 2004), have shown that children who are exposed to violent and graphic scenes in the media become more aggressive and are no longer upset by violence and its consequences. The prevalence of violence in the media is another factor that places youth at risk of violent behaviour. Popular and successful movies, television programmes and music videos frequently use interpersonal violence as a major theme. Typically, they fail to portray the aftermath of violence which is the loss, grieving, mourning and the fear that often accompanies a violent episode (Bemak & Keys, 2000, p.21).

A child's temperament might, at an early age, place this individual on a path toward violent behaviour. Other factors might include impulsivity, lack of empathy for others' feelings, a belief that factors beyond the individual's control are responsible for behaviour, and a history of being a victim of violence (Bemak & Keys, 2000, p.16). Some of the things that may contribute to some children becoming aggressive or violent later in life, otherwise known as gateway behaviour (Galbraith, 1997), start with little things such as tripping children and deliberately injuring others through play.

Jermaine: Once I was tripping children in my class and one child he came up to me and told my teacher ... and as we got outside then I hit him, cause he told. (Je 3)

Rashaad: I was gonna sift chalk and I crushed it in my hand ... and then they hit the chalk and it went in my nose and I started fighting (Ra 3)

4.2.9. Fighting over “nonsense” is violence

Children sometimes cannot seem to make sense of why they fight with each other and refer to this as “nonsense” as is evident in Jordan’s statement.

Jordan: I think there’s violence at this school because some children just fight over nonsense. (Jo 17)

Violence 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 week-end by a parent can cause children to express their frustration at school.

Chanyce: Say for example, my mother was shouting at me and then my mother didn’t want to take me somewhere. So now when I come to school and someone teases me I start hitting the person for no reason cause of just that one moment I never had. (Ch 13)

A simple thing such as collecting books from children in the classroom can lead to violence.

Adrian: I’ve seen two people in my class. He, the one boy was just collecting a book and then the girl said, “I’m still busy”, and then they started fighting and they hit each other. (Ad 1)

Small issues therefore 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 frustrations out on others over things that may have happened at home. Violent behaviour is also

learnt elsewhere. They start off playing at home with bigger children not necessarily at the school **(Ad 12)**. They learn how to hit and as a result hit the children at school.

Adrian: Because some children when they go home then they play with other children which can hit them and so they bring it to school and they think that they can hit all the children because at home bigger children hit them. (Ad 12)

4.2.10. Jealousy is violence

Jealousy refers to children's feelings of envy, especially towards individuals perceived to have some advantages or privileges denied to themselves.

Alrika: I think there's violence in school because children are very jealous of each other. (Al 5)

The availability of portable possessions, particularly the latest electronic gadgets such as cell-phones triggers and feeds jealousy.

Jordan: Once my one friend brought her phone to school, and they were showing it in the toilet and the one girl came in cause she was jealous and she took the phone and dumped it in the toilet. (Jo 10)

Jealousy can also be a cause of violent acts. For example, Chanyce **(Ch 8)** relates how showing off a cellphone leads to it being grabbed by another child, and the hitting that results from trying to retrieve the cell-phone.

Chanyce: It was Valentines Day, Caitlin bought her new Nokia phone that they advertising for Brr⁹. The new slide up phone. So then Caitlin was showing us her phone, Ashley grabbed the phone out of her hand and Caitlin was hitting her with a ruler. (Ch 8)

If a girl is physically attractive and her appearance is commented on by a boy, she may be targeted by a friend who is envious of her popularity with boys.

Chanyce: On breaking up day I was modelling and after I was modelling I dunno what one of the boys told Adrian. Adrian got offended and she came to me and was telling me off and we ended up fighting. (Ch 4)

Jealousy is connected to material possessions, physical appearance and popularity. In each incident described by the children, jealousy resulted in acts of physical violence such as hitting with a ruler, and punching. Friendships are vulnerable to the outbreak of violence because the things that some children possess, others may not be able to have or own and so jealousy occurs. In a materialistic age, with constant technological development and exposure to media and glamorous images, the children are more aware of desirables and do not know how to express their frustrations when they cannot possess what other children have. It is possible that when some parents provide their children with luxuries other children feel deprived. Feelings of deprivation are translated into actions driven by jealousy. Hence, from children's perspective, jealousy is a form of violence.

⁹ "Brr" is an advertising agency for cell-phones.

4.2.11. Stealing is a form of violence

Stealing is the taking of others' possessions without asking for permission. For the children in this focus group, stealing is violence. They steal money (**Ad 5**), food (**Ma 11**) and cellphones (**Ad 7**).

Adrian: On the Ushaka trip, there were two boys fighting over money. They put their money together and left it on the blanket. When they came back, one of them took everything and then they started fighting. (Ad 5)

Malique: I saw Travis break time and he was punching another boy and he just told the boy, "Give me a slice!". The boy said, "No", and he just punched the boy and he opened up his lunch box and he took a slice of bread. (Ma 11)

Adrian: Last year in the class, Kwazi, and I don't know who, stole Chanyce's phone. (Ad 7)

Jermaine: One person can lend someone else their stationery and when they lose it, they hit each other for it. (Je 2)

The older children in the school often pick on the younger children because they are easy targets (**Jo 7**). Physical violence is used by a child to take away someone else's lunch (**Jo 5**). Children are even caught stealing each others cell-phones (**Ad 7**).

Jordan: Sometimes the bigger children take advantage of the smaller children. (Jo 7)

Jordan: I've seen bigger boys bullying smaller children for no reason. (Jo 5)

Adrian: Last year in the class, Kwazi, and I don't know who, stole Chanyce's phone. (Ad 7)

When children steal others' possessions there is normally an underlying reason. Maybe the bully who took away the child's lunch could not afford to bring lunch to school. Cellphones are valuable items that are not allowed to be brought to school. According to the school's code of conduct stealing is a criminal act that is punishable by detention. Although the code of conduct is there to protect the children, teachers and property, it is often disobeyed and disregarded by children who engage in petty criminal offences such as stealing and in the opinion of the young children of this study, stealing is violence.

4.2.12. Hitting each other is violence

Physical abuse is any kind of physical injury or harm that is committed by someone (Lewis, 1999, p.84). The children encourage each other to publicly fight and also to get involved in other children's fighting. The children often hit and threaten each other when bad behaviour is reported to the teachers. Sometimes weapons such as scissors (**Ra 2**), knives (**Je 4**), and hockey sticks (**Al 4**) are used to threaten and hit each other.

Rashaad: A boy named Tristan said something bad about Cody, and Cody got cross and he started telling Brenlin and he picked up a scissors and wanted to stab him. (Ra 2)

Jermaine: One boy in our class when Shayden got hurt so whenever we go to him and then some boys laugh at him and he said I will catch you home time and I'll bring a knife for you. And then he brought a knife and he was sent to the office and he got suspended. (Je 4)

Alonzo: Uh, one boy's name is Roland and another boy's name is Gabby. They were fighting over a small thing and the next day River came with a ball and a stick and Gabby came with a hockey stick and they wanted to hit each other with the hockey stick and the ball over a small little thing. (Al 4)

The girls even pull each other's hair and the boys encourage the girls to fight.

Alonzo: Chanyce and Cher, they were fighting over a small thing and Cher pulled Chanyce's hair and Chanyce ran into the car park and then Cher ran after Chanyce and all the boys were encouraging them to fight and saying, "Para! Para!"¹⁰ (A 7)

Violence then becomes a spectacle in the sense that there are entertainers (the fighters) and an audience such as the children who witness the act.

Violence at the school also spreads when other children become involved in fighting that they did not initiate. Other children may join in a fight that is already happening.

Jordan: I think that there's violence in school because Alonzo might be fighting with you and then I just jump in

¹⁰ "Para" means fight.

and then it will be a big thing between the three of us. (Jo 19)

The children who try to behave sensibly are threatened with physical violence, as reported by Jordan, who is threatened with physical violence if she reports someone who she sees writing on the school wall.

Jordan: Once I saw a girl busy writing, "Leeshay", it was funny names on the wall about Leeshay. So I went and I reported her. So then, when they called for that girl, then that girl said they gonna hit me just because I reported her. (Jo 11)

Everybody fears being assaulted publicly (Ramphal, 2009). A public display involving fighting and incitement by the learner population is not only wrong but also embarrassing for the child being assaulted. Aggression in childhood, in turn, often has long-term effects on adults' social adjustment and relationships (Ramphal, 2009, p.4).

4.2.13. Playing violent games is violence

Playing, generally regarded as harmless has the potential to lead to violence. One such game is "tipping"¹¹.

Adrian: Children playing tip. Small children running around And when their friend just like mistakenly hit them hard they start fighting. (Ad 4)

¹¹ A game whereby children chase each other and the one who is tipped (touched) becomes the one to chase the other.

Children cannot differentiate between light touches and hard smacks, between what is an acceptable way of “tipping” or “wrestling” and unacceptable ways which cause hurt and pain. Playful physical contact slides into violence. These games can lead to violence.

Jordan: Some children play wrestling at school and when like one child hits another child real hard and then they get into a fight over that one thing. (Jo 4)

Violence flares up suddenly when children lose their tempers during normal game playing. Violent sports such as boxing and wrestling are widely accepted in society. Innocent games such as the children playing tipping and wrestling can lead to physical violence at school. These games can start off as fun but can eventually end in violence.

4.2.14. Smoking is related to violence

The only kind of substance abuse that is reported in the focus group discussion by the children is smoking. At school smoking is not tolerated. The children are encouraged to report smoking at school. The rules of the school forbid smoking and learners are encouraged to report it. This creates opportunities for violence to erupt because those that report are threatened with violence and are sometimes beaten up.

In Jordan’s statement **(Jo 8)**, she discusses an incident concerning little boys smoking and what happens when an older boy sees them. In this incident, size does not matter. A bigger boy reports a smaller boy for smoking.

Jordan: Once I saw two small boys, there was a cigarette on the floor and they picked it up and started smoking it,

so then a bigger boy named River came and went to report them. So then, when the small boys heard that River reported them the small boy wanted to hit the big boy. (Jo 8)

Alonzo: One boy, his name is Diego, he was smoking and the small boy reported him to one of the parents and he got into big trouble and he said to that boy, "You gonna see! You gonna see! You always wanna tell about me! I'm gonna catch you home time!" (A 3)

Children like to do what adults do. Smoking is a form of rebelliousness. To some children it is an expression of their individuality. What this does then is make the children more vulnerable to being reported and punished. This punishment then generates anger and the anger is then directed at the person who reported them. This can lead to violence when the children are also reported to their parents. To adults, smoking is not considered to be violent behaviour, but to the children smoking is seen as a form of violence, perhaps because of its potential to end in physical violence.

4.2.15. Graffiti is violence

Graffiti has been listed as a symptom of 21st century life involving drug-pushers and hooligans (Neustatter & Gonis, 2004, p.34). Deliberately damaging somebody's property is an act of violence. The children use the toilet walls to reveal who, in their opinion the "bitches" (A 6) in the school are.

Alonzo: Uh, Alrika went to the toilet and wrote on the walls that I'm a bitch and a skank and I asked her if she done it and she said, "Yes", and I said, "You gonna see

home time we gonna fight!”, and we were punching books to act like we strong and then home time we wanted to fight but then Alrika started crying. (A 6)

Graffiti is not done to damage the children’s property at school but it is an opportunistic use of school property by the children to name, shame, publicize and publicly embarrass their peers. The children deliberately write expletives and the names of children on the toilet walls at school.

Reporting graffiti is also dangerous. For example, Jordan was threatened when she reported someone writing graffiti on the toilet wall.

Jordan: Once I saw a girl busy writing, “Leeshay”. It was funny names on the wall about Leeshay. So I went and I reported her. So then, when they called for that girl, then that girl said they gonna hit me just because I reported her. (Jo 11)

Graffiti in itself is not a form of violence, but once it is used as a medium to communicate negative images, it does lead to violence.

Chanyce: My cousins were in the school. And my cousin was doing wrong things. They were writing rude things on the wall at the back of the boys’ toilet. So then, the last time all of us, all the girls saw and we reported them and my cousin and them were chasing us and they wanted to hit us. (Ch 10)

Graffiti is also a means for children to display in a public space the names of children they do not like, leading to embarrassment and to let all the learners in the school know who the “bad” children are. The effects of graffiti can be far-reaching. It is

possible that children spread the message about other children by writing on walls as this acts as a news medium. The other learners at school then know where salacious news about peers is available. In this way the “news” is amplified, perhaps, resulting in teasing and damaged egos and shattered self-esteem. Thus graffiti, from the children’s point of view, is a form of violence.

4.2.16. Cultural differences is linked to violence

The children believe that violence exists at school because of differences in culture. A dance that could be associated with the Black culture is seen as funny and not normal.

Leeshay: There is violence in our school because of the different cultures. (Le 6)

There is conflict between the children over race and culture.

Jordan: Say if I’m Indian and you’re Black. And then I tell you, “Ooh, what a funny Black dance your’ll have!”, and then we start arguing just because of that. (Jo 13)

The way that children behave in one culture is sometimes completely unacceptable by the children in another culture. The children are not all tolerant and respectful of the differences of others at school, increasing the potential for violent outbreaks.

Jordan: I think there’s violence in this school because some children are racist. (Jo 14)

The fact that children look at skin colour and hair indicates that there are children who believe that they are superior to others at school. It could be

assumed that children who look different to others are seen as outsiders and are victimized at school.

4.2.17. Homosexuality is linked to violence

Chanyce describes an incident in which a boy was seen kissing another boy at school. The incident was reported to the boy's teacher who happened to be passing them at the time. The teacher responded to their report by singing about kissing a boy.

Chanyce: ... the one boy told me that Ethan was kissing another boy and now we were making a joke of it and he wanted to hit us. And suddenly his teacher walked passed and we said, "Sir, Ethan kissed a boy" and the teacher was singing, "I kissed a boy!". (Ch 7)

It could have been in this case that the teacher did not know how to address the problem and so the incident was trivialized. Unintentionally, and perhaps misguidedly, the teacher appeared to endorse the idea that same-sex kissers can be made fun of.

Homosexuality describes the sexual orientation, behaviour, and/or identity of persons inclined to be physically, sexually / erotically, and emotionally attracted, committed to, or interested in persons of the same gender (Compos, 2005, p.108). 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 being rejected by their peers. Studies confirm that learning communities are hostile toward gay and lesbian youth. Human Rights Watch (2001), the American Association of University Women (2001), have consistently

reported that gay and lesbian youth are victimized more often than heterosexual youth, and teachers often dismiss, trivialize, or ignore the plight of these youth (Campos, 2005, p.9).

4.3. THEME 2: What young children say are the causes of violence

The children in this study believe that violence is generated through a multitude of ways and persons. These include teachers, friends, prefects, the home, personal characteristics, rivalry and gender relations. In this section these causes are discussed..

4.3.1. Teachers as a cause of violence

Children believe that teachers cause violence at school by teasing the children.

Rashaad: I think there's violence in the school because of the teachers. ... teachers say something about a child and other people start teasing them and it becomes into a fight.
(Ra 9)

Children feel that issues such as height or a child's size that is commented on by a teacher gives the other children reason to tease. According to the children, the teachers give the other children reason to call their friends names. In other words, they feel that if a figure of authority can call them names, then that gives them a reason or permission to tease others.

Alonzo: I think there's violence in this school because if a teacher just says ..., you short and you must stand in front then they want to start calling them a sausage and all those other names. (A 16)

Children feel that teachers take advantage of children if they are smaller than other learners of the same age.

Chanyce: I think there's violence in school because of some of the teachers. Some of the teachers take advantage of smaller pupils and they start hitting them. (Ch 21)

4.3.2. Friends as a cause of violence

Friendships that have turned sour are also a reason that children believe causes violence at school. In some cases, having a boyfriend or girlfriend may also be a way of claiming status with one's peers (Thorne, 1993, p.153). Children also lose their friends over issues such as problems in romantic relationships and by being betrayed by their friends when they confide in them.

Rashaad: Sometimes there's violence in school because children start relationships that they can't handle and then they go to someone else and then that person finds out and then it becomes a big thing. (Ra 7)

As adults, some of the issues that children experience can also be unrelated such as Alrika speaking about having to tick yes or no on a letter about liking a boy who will put a gold tooth in her mouth if she dates him.

Alrika: There's this one boy named Mathemba ... he wrote a letter to me ... and he said, "Do you love me? Tick yes or no." ... Then he said if I go out with you, he will put a gold tooth in my mouth. ... Then my teacher said, "He's a Little Man Taxi"¹² because he's short and I'm the taxi", and I was also teasing him Little Man Taxi. (A1 8)

Breaking promises to a friend is also a reason that children view as a cause of violence.

Jordan: Like my friend Cher. She took all my biscuits, so she said she's going to buy me something and she never ever bought me something and we started arguing and fighting. (Jo 3)

4.3.3. Physical characteristics as a cause of violence

Physical characteristics, such as the type of hair that a child has, the size of a person's head, nose, ears and teeth, how fat a child is, what his or her height is, what his or her parents look like, a lisp, the colour of a child's hair and skin, are a combination of factors that children view as causes of violence at school. The children in the study are eleven to thirteen years old and are all going through puberty and have to deal with issues of acceptance and the physical changes that accompany the process of becoming a young adult. Personal issues such as a girl menstruating may be used to embarrass her at school.

Alonzo: Kelly, when she had her period for the first time another boy saw and he went to go tell everybody in the school and it made her feel offended. (A 1)

¹² "Little Man Taxi" is the name of a kombi that is used for public transportation.

Teasing is considered to be less physical and more verbal than bullying (Roberts, 2006, p.13). The children place great emphasis on the type of hair that they have. The girls often see straight hair as being more desirable. According to the girls, the type of hair and the colour of their hair often lead to fights.

Chanyce: Some children fight because of the colour of their hair and the colour of their skin. (Ch 1)

Chanyce: There is violence in our school because say for example, I have cruise hair and she has straight hair, and she teases me. So I will start to fight with Jordan and it will end up a big thing. (Ch 2)

Girls' physical appearance and behaviour are normativised by peers. If a girl's appearance is constantly put down by her peers, she develops low self-esteem (Roberts, 2006). Children often hurt each other by the things that they say. Physical bruises may mark a person but words hurt in other ways.

4.3.4. Events at home as a cause of violence

Olweus (in Roberts, 2006, p.14) conceptualizes bullying as "an exposure to long-term, repeated negative actions on the part of one or more persons." Children also learn about violence from their friends, the bullies at school and from their experiences at home. Being bullied at school may lead to a child wanting to get revenge. Bullying is a combination of verbal and physical aggression and is directed from an agent (the bully) towards a target (the victim) (Roberts, 2004, p.14). Coming from a dysfunctional home environment where there is domestic abuse and sexual abuse leads to aggressive behaviour where there are figures of authority such as educators and prefects at school. Children who witness acts of violence at home react aggressively.

Leeshay: Children are fighting because they think it's right because at home you see parents fighting with each other and their children start to get angry and bring it to school. (Le 7)

Jordan: Chanyce is very violent because she has a violent father, they're very violent at home. (Jo 12)

The anger and frustration that children experience at home is directly targeted at their peers and teachers. Children sometimes express their anger through play at school.

Malique: In grade four, me and Alonzo were playing a game and we got very violent and home time we had a fight. (Ma 3)

Another example of abuse at home is when Chanyce speaks of sexual abuse that possibly takes place in the home environment.

Chanyce: Some children ... will get sexually abused and bring it to school. (Ch 11)

Sometimes things that happen at home such as parents' partners physically abusing the children, or having hardship at home, or being shouted at by a parent cause children to bring their anger and frustrations to school. Parents who demonstrate poor self-control and aggressive and violent behaviour become role models for their children. Youngsters who grow up in these circumstances have little opportunity outside of school to learn positive ways to respond to conflict (Bemak & Keys, 2000, p.17).

Leeshay: Children taking their anger out on what happens at home. (Le 2)

4.3.5. Prefects as a cause of violence

Some children at school have legitimate power vested in them; these include school prefects and the scholar patrol members. Sometimes, the children fight when prefects and scholar patrol do not do their duty at school. In other instances, the prefects exert their authority over the children by hitting them when they do not listen.

Adrian:... some prefects when the children don't listen, they tell them not to do that and if the children don't listen they end up hitting the children (Ad 2)

The abuse of authority is a cause of violence, according to the young children in this study.

4.3.6. Rivalry as a cause of violence

Children also believe that measurable factors such as social status and class cause violence at school. Children are often victimized because of their social status. The in-group are normally those with money, fashionable clothes and electronic gadgets such as cellphones. Children feel that the amount of money that they have, the type of car that they come to school in, how popular they are, and the size of the house that they live in gives them a particular status at school. That is, they are seen as rich and popular if they wear branded clothes, bring money to school, come to school in a flashy car and live in a large house. These are

the markers of social status in the school. Social status abuse is even more devastating when directed by children, whose families are economically secure, at children who are not (Roberts, 2004, p.22). Neighborhoods with inadequate housing, high unemployment rates, high rates of crime and violence and few, or non-existent, community-based services such as job training, day care, recreation and public transportation further contribute to violence (Bemak & Keys, 2000, p.21).

If a child comes to school in a dilapidated, dirty car, lives in a small house and goes to the feeding scheme then they are considered to be poor and unpopular. There is a marked difference between the children who have and the children who do not have. As mentioned below the so-called “rich” children hit those who are poor.

Jermaine: I think there's violence in school because some of the children think they are too big for their boots and they hit other children because they are poorer than them and they go to feeding scheme and the richer children laugh at them. (Je 6)

Children, especially boys, are competitive about the size of the houses that they live in.

Malique: ... Donelle said, ... “My house is a mansion. What your'll got?” And he said, “I'm richer than your'll. Our family got twenty cars!”, everything like that. (Ma 12)

Cars are also seen as a status symbol.

Chanyce: Some children come to school in Hummers and some children come to school in those olden-days cars and

every-time ... they walk in the school they start teasing the person. (Ch 18)

4.3.7. Gender relations as a cause of violence

Gender refers to how society shapes the identity of each person based on whether the person is a male or a female. Where gender issues can create problems is when the power relations between males and females are unequal. Boys, for example, are seen as physically stronger than girls and often enjoy more power at school than girls.

Gender and power relations between boys and girls and prefects and children also cause violence at school. A boy hitting a girl because of impatient demands causes violence.

Adrian: ... the one boy was just collecting a book and then the girl said I'm still busy and then they started fighting.
(Ad 1)

Sometimes a boy may not be able to control his anger when he is teased by girls. Power and control are at play in bullying and teasing interactions (Roberts, 2006, 14).

Malique: Raquel and Shanelle were fighting ... in grade four because they were teasing and River gets angry too quick and he started hitting a girl, Shanelle. (Ma 5)

A weapon such as a hockey stick is also used to hit a girl.

Adrian: ... the one boy was just collecting a book and then the girl said I'm still busy and then they started fighting.
(Ad 1)

Older siblings also fight with younger siblings at school. The size of a child plays a role in violence at school. The smaller a child is in stature, the more likely it is he or she will be beaten and bullied at school.

4.3.8. Things children do as a cause of violence

Children sometimes test the limits or push boundaries to see how far adults and other children can be pushed at school. Children seek attention from their teachers at school. An example is when Leeshay speaks about being chased out of the classroom for laughing.

Leeshay: Shanelle making me laugh in class and we both got chased out and my teacher started to get angry with us. (Le 3)

Children seek attention from their friends.

Rashaad: Some people brought money to school to make themselves look good in front of their friends. (Ra 6)

Children enjoy copying what they think adults may be doing. At home children may see their parents gambling and so they try to imitate them.

Alrika: I've seen children gambling and fighting over money. (Al 1)

4.4. Conclusion

As an endeavour to make a contribution to understanding violence, this chapter analyses what ten young children have to say about violence. From their responses, two sets of information were gleaned: What is violence and what causes violence? Their revelations are markedly different to what adults may consider as violence. According to the young children, teasing, swearing, calling each other names, reporting incidents to the teacher, being bullied, being betrayed by friends, being competitive, mimicking violent acts seen at home, “fighting over nonsense”, jealousy, stealing, hitting each other, playing violent games, smoking, graffiti, cultural differences, and homosexual behaviour constitute violence and the following are the causes of violence: teachers, friends, physical characteristics, events at home, prefects, rivalry, gender relations, and the things that children do. In the next chapter the findings in relation to school, and home are discussed.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“Indeed, unless we become a part of humanity, we cannot even faintly understand the just indignation that accumulates in a human soul, the burning, surging passion that makes the storm inevitable” – Emma Goldman

5.1. Introduction

In this final chapter about a study which explores what young children say about violence, the children’s conception of “what is violence” is presented. These conceptions were arrived at by analyzing a single focus group interview with children chaired by a child, and they reflect their uninhibited opinions and insights into a school where violence is enacted. Furthermore, the analysis provides important insights about understanding violence in schools from the children’s points of view and how these differ from adults’ points of view.

5.2. What, according to children is violence?

The children talk about three kinds of violence: emotional, physical and psychological.

Emotional violence is any act that denies the child the experience of being loved, of being wanted and of feeling secure (Lewis, 1999, p.84). Examples of the kinds of emotional violence experienced by the children in the study are rejection, verbal abuse, insults and intimidation. In this study emotional abuse for the

children is teasing and swearing at someone, calling each other names, being betrayed by their friends, being jealous and writing on walls and desks.

Physical violence that is experienced by the children in this study include being hit by friends and teachers, sexual abuse and substance abuse.

The children in this study experience psychological abuse when they are bullied by their friends, when they fear being reported to figures of authority, when other children adopt a racist attitude towards them and if they display homosexual tendencies. From the themes that emerged in this study, it is also evident that the children's experiences have affected them negatively. The children experience feelings of anger, divided loyalties, rejection and ostracism.

5.3. How does violence differ when seen from an adult's point of view?

5.3.1. What adults may regard as trivial are real concerns for children

As adults what the children in this study are saying may be seen as trivial, but young children see it as violence. It appears that the children's views of violence are very basic. From the researcher's own experience she knows that when a child reports acts of violence, the teachers see it as a part of growing up. Perhaps children are not reprimanded often enough about school rules, or that teachers discount these incidents as part of growing up, or that the children know about the rule but are daring and swear to be rebellious or that being suspended or being reported to parents are not sufficient forms of deterrence. Whatever the reasons, there is a link, according to the children, between swearing and violence.

The young children in this study are not talking about guns, knives, rape and hard-core acts of violence that adults and the media refer to. In that sense their talk may be regarded as basic. It is however, more serious than simply being a part of growing up. For the children, teasing, swearing, calling each other names, reporting to the teacher, betrayal, competition, jealousy, bullying, playing violent games, substance abuse, graffiti, racism and homosexuality are real experiences that affect them negatively.

Adults can also behave like children and fight, but unlike children, adults have rights. Adults have alternatives. They can go to a court of law and sue for “crimen injuria” or can lay charges for assault. Children do not have these options in school. They have to live with acts and effects of violence.

Violence at school is initiated over very petty and seemingly silly reasons. The carrying of tales to each other results in confrontations where everybody is trying to get a kick or a punch in.

5.3.2. Teachers are unwittingly implicated in the generation of violence at school

Teachers are not aware that when they tease the children and pick up comments about teasing and making jokes or ask the children to report incidents then it makes children vulnerable to violence. Even though violent incidents are reported, the children do not often speak about what the teacher does when they report to him or her. A chain of events follows if a child reports something to the teacher. If they report to a figure of authority, they get beaten up by the peers they have reported. There are conflicting emotions: should they do what is right and report

the matter and be honest and risk the chance of being beaten by their friends, or should they keep quiet about what they saw?

Being betrayed by their friends and the subsequent actions of the children give adults insights into children's activities. It shows that children are emotionally and cognitively immature to deal with frustrations, anger and disappointment and this results in acts of violence. Children do not know how to express and deal with their anger and so they sometimes express and release their anger in the form of physical violence.

5.3.3. Gateway behaviours are early indicators of violence

Bullying, swearing, smoking, hitting, and threatening are all part of gateway behaviours that are early indicators that children can become violent and that teachers need to be aware of this. Stealing can be regarded as a form of gateway behaviour that leads to criminality. The children learn to bully and steal from each other at school where they sometimes get away with it. If they see that they can get away with stealing small things like stationery (**Je 2**), then eventually they move on to bigger, more expensive items. This leads to serious crime where they could probably break into people's homes in order to steal. Stealing in turn begins or ends in violence.

Some of the more serious issues found in this study are bullying, threats and intimidation, the use of dangerous items such as hockey sticks and a baseball bat. Relationships between male and female learners are also a contributing factor to violence where fights break out because of third party interference.

5.3.4. Violence in the home is re-enacted in school

Children do not only learn at school. The home environment is also a place of learning. Very often violent behaviour at school is a result of children acting out because of issues in the home environment. At home the children see how parents react to issues. Whatever the children learn at home is also played out at school. It is not only the actions of violence that the children re-enact but also their reactions to violent episodes which are played out at school. If a child is teased at school, they react by hitting. If a child is small and meek, he or she is often bullied. Very often the child, who is the victim of violence in the home, then becomes the perpetrator of violence at school. The cycle of violence continues.

5.3.5. Joking and playing games can lead to violence

One tends to think that schools are spaces where children feel safe enough to make jokes and play games as part of growing up, but what the children are saying is that harmless practices can be dangerous for them at school because they are not mature enough to understand a joke, and that a game is not merely a game: it can lead to violence.

5.3.6. Friendship can lead to violence

Value is placed on having friends in society. Friends can also become part of the complications of growing up in life, as expressed by Alrika.

Alrika: I once had a friend. She was my best friend, her name was Mikayla. She used to go out with boys like Brinley and all the other boys and then she went home

and told her father that I'm influencing her to go out with boys and told her mother that me and Shanelle and Alonzo were calling her bad names. (Al 4)

5.3.7. Schools can be dangerous spaces for young children

Schools are not necessarily safe spaces for young children. All kinds of violence can take place such as psychological violence, emotional violence and physical violence. Everyday someone is either harassed, hit, teased, sworn at, fights while playing games and or is the victim of graffiti printed about private matters. For some children it is daily violence. Simple arguments can even lead to violence.

5.3.8. Gender, race, class and culture are associated with violence

The young children in this study believe that factors such as gender, race, class, culture and social status cause violence at school. The children feel that they can be victimized because of this. Social status abuse is even more devastating when directed by children whose families are economically secure at children who are not (Roberts, 2006, p.22).

5.3.9. Children bring possessions to school which sometimes leads to violence

The children bring the latest electronic gadgets such as cellphones and MP3 players to school which makes them vulnerable to violence. Schools need to think carefully about how these can be controlled, such as bringing cellphones to school without banning them.

5.3.10. Smoking and graffiti are associated with violence

Although smoking is a form of substance abuse and graffiti is associated with art, the children in this study see them as forms of violence. The children imitate adults that they see smoking at home. The children also associate graffiti with damaging property and to them this is violence.

5.4. Recommendations for further research

Based on the limitations of this research, it is recommended that further research with a larger sample be carried out and enlisting the participation of a multi-racial group to determine if the results will be the same. Also, children from different grades across a primary school could be used to see if the results will be different. In subsequent research, triangulation of methods could be employed to compare for more comprehensive data.

5.5. Conclusion

It has been very useful to get data from children. As an educator it has provided more insight about issues of violence at school and why it is so hard to eradicate or control; more studies using children's voices will be useful.

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APPENDIX 1

Renee: Lets talk about violence at your school. (Re 1)

Alonzo: Kelly, Kelly, when she got her period for the first time another boy saw and he went to go tell everybody in the school and it made her feel offended. **(A 1)**

Leeshay: Alonzo, when I came to school she was saying some funny words like, “I’m a cow and I’m a that”, and when I went to tell my teacher and I didn’t know that she was joking. **(Le 1)**

Chanyce: Some children fight because of the colour of their hair and the colour of their skin. **(Ch 1)**

Malique: I saw another boy, his name is Dillon. He pulled out what you called, another boy named Dylan out of his seat and he started fighting. He likes bullying other people’s children. **(Ma 1)**

Rashaad: I got involved in violence because my friend Dylan wrote a letter to me and I found it when I came back from the flu and then I wrote a letter back and the teacher found it and it became into a fight. **(Ra 1)**

Chanyce: There is violence in our school because of, say, for example, I have cruise hair and she has straight hair, and she teases me. So I will start to fight with Jordan and it will end up a big thing. **(Ch 2)**

Jordan: Say for example, Alonzo has a boyfriend and then that boyfriend has another girlfriend and then when Alonzo finds it out it becomes a big thing and they start fighting over a boy. **(Jo 1)**

Adrian: I’ve seen two people in my class. He, the one boy, was just collecting a book and then the girl said, “I’m still busy”, and then they started

fighting and they hit each other. **(Ad 1)**

Jermaine: People fight because if you writing names on the board and if you write the persons name they'll say, "Carry on, carry on, I'll catch you when no one's looking!" **(Je 1)**

Alrika: I've seen children gambling and fighting over money. **(Al 1)**

Leeshay: Children taking their anger out on what happens at home. **(Le 2)**

Jordan: Chanyce once had a packet of chips in her pocket and a little boy came and grabbed it out, so then they started arguing and they were fighting over the packet of chips. **(Jo 2)**

Chanyce: The last time, I was tying my shoelaces, and a boy tripped me, and then I, I pushed him and he started fighting with me and he ended up crying because I hit him. **(Ch 3)**

Adrian: Uh, some prefects when the children don't listen, they tell them not to do that and if the children don't listen they end up hitting the children and the children cry and go and tell the teacher and the they all start fighting and get into trouble. **(Ad 2)**

Rashaad: A boy named Tristan said something bad about Cody, and Cody got cross and he started telling Brenlin and he picked up a scissors and wanted to stab him. **(Ra 2)**

Malique: Another boy named Jermaine, I never tape a CD for him, and then, it when, was home time and he said I'm gonna catch him and he'll hit me. **(Ma 2)**

Adrian: Some people, some people when they owe, as he was saying, when they give them money for something or when they owe them money, and they don't give them, they start a big fight and then they start fighting. **(Ad 3)**

Alrika: Some children when they argue with one another and then they take it out on other children. **(Al 2)**

Jordan: Like my friend Cher. She, she took all my biscuits, so she said she's going to buy me something and she never ever bought me something and we started arguing and fighting. **(Jo 3)**

Alonzo: Uh, in grade four, when I was in grade four, Shanelle used to say to me, "Why you taking my chips?", and all that, and then I got cross with her and then we were pushing each other and we got into a fight and then we had to sort it out with the teacher. **(A 2)**

Leeshay: Shanelle making me laugh in class and we both got chased out and my teacher started to get angry with us. **(Le 3)**

Malique: In grade four, me and Alonzo were playing a game and we got very violent and home time we had a fight. **(Ma 3)**

Jordan: Some children play wrestling at school and when like, one child hits another child real hard and then they get into a fight over that one thing. **(Jo 4)**

Chanyce: On breaking up day I was modelling and after I was modelling I dunno what one of the boys told Adrian. Adrian got offended and she came to me and was telling me off and we ended

up fighting. **(Ch 4)**

Adrian: Children playing tip. Small children running around and when their friends just like mistakenly hit them hard they start fighting. **(Ad 4)**

Alrika: I've seen the bigger boys bullying smaller children for no reason. **(Al 3)**

Jordan: I've seen bigger boys bullying smaller children for their lunch and money. **(Jo 5)**

Alonzo: Um, one, one boy, his name is Diego, he was smoking uh, smoking, and the small boy reported him to one of the parents and he got into big trouble and he said to that boy, "You gonna see! You gonna see! You always wanna tell about me! I'm gonna catch you home time!" **(A 3)**

Malique: Me and my best friend went to Pietermaritzberg and he started swearing my granny and I never know he was joking and then I also started swearing and we got into a big fight and we got into big trouble. **(Ma 4)**

Jordan: For example, Alonzo, one day she called Leeshay a bad name and they went, Leeshay went to go tell the principal or somebody and then Alonzo's fighting over that thing and they start fighting. **(Jo 6)**

Jermaine: One person can lend someone else their stationery and when they lose it, they hit each other for it. **(Je 2)**

Chanyce: Um, we went on excursion. We came back and this girl, Adrian, she gave her money to keep. Now it was a big thing. It was Kim and Adrian put their money together and Kim was giving her money to

everyone and Kim only had fifty rand and Adrian's money went missing and it ended up a big story. **(Ch 5)**

Jermaine: Once I was tripping children in my class and one child he came up and told my teacher and I told him I was gonna catch him and as soon as we got outside then I hit him, cause he told. **(Je 3)**

Adrian: On the Ushaka trip, there were two boys fighting over money. They put their money together and left it on the blanket. When they came back one of them took everything and then they started fighting. **(Ad 5)**

Rashaad: Once I had chalk and I was telling my friends I was gonna sift the chalk and I crushed it in my hand and I had it on my hand and then they hit the chalk and it went into my nose and I started fighting with them because the chalk went in my nose. **(Ra 3)**

Chanyce: Ok, it was early in the morning and me and my brother were walking so they saw my cousin and my cousin and me were teasing me because yesterday we went to sell. Yesterday, the one girl kicked me in my stomach and I couldn't breathe. So then, my brother was laughing at me today in school and I hit him and his teacher saw and his teacher was shouting at me. **(Ch 6)**

Malique: Raquel and Shanelle were fighting last year, um, last of last year in grade four because they were teasing and River gets angry too quick and he started hitting a girl, Shanelle. **(Ma 5)**

Adrian: Break time there's a big sister, the small sister goes for the bigger sister. Big sister says get away from me I don't want to play and then they started hitting each other. **(Ad 6)**

Jordan: Sometimes the bigger children just take advantage of the smaller children. (Jo 7)

Alrika: I once had a friend. She was my best friend. Her name was Mikayla. She used to go out with boys like Brinley and all the other boys and Then she went home and told her father that I'm influencing her to Go out with boys and told her mother that me and Shanelle and Alonzo Were calling her bad names. (Al 4)

Alonzo: Uh, one boy's name is Roland and another boy's name is Gabby. They were fighting over a small thing and the next day River came with a ball and a stick and Gabby came with a hockey stick and they wanted to hit each other with the hockey stick and the ball over a small little thing. (A 4)

Jordan: Once I saw two small boys, there was a cigarette on the floor and they picked it up and started smoking it, so then a bigger boy named River came and went to report them. So then when the small boys heard that River reported them the small boy wanted to hit the big boy. (Jo 8)

Malique: My brother and my uncle, they were smoking and I said, "I'm gonna tell on your'll", and I went to go tell on them and then my uncle started hitting me and my brother and I said, "I'm gonna tell my father!" and then they caught a hiding. They carried on hitting me. (Ma 6)

Chanyce: Like, when we came back from excursion, I saw, the one boy told me that Ethan was kissing another boy and now we were making a joke of it and he wanted to hit us. And suddenly his teacher walked

past and we said, “Sir, Ethan kissed a boy”, and the teacher was singing, “I kissed a boy!”, and Ethan got offended and he wanted to hit me and all the other children. **(Ch 7)**

Rashaad: Someone in my class told me that Kelly said that she wanted to have River’s child so because River is my friend I had to go ask him and then he told Kelly and then Kelly started fighting with me because she thinks that I made up the rumour. **(Ra 4)**

Jordan: My one friend, Kelly, just because I got a new phone then she was arguing and telling me that I don’t like your phone and we started fighting over the phone. **(Jo 9)**

Alonzo: Uh, Kelly was spreading rumours around saying Jordan’s house is dirty and it got into a big thing and then Kelly and Jordan started fighting. **(A 5)**

Chanyce: It was me, Caitlin and Ashley. Ashley is a bossy girl. She likes whatever she wants. Sometimes she has her own way. And then it was Valentines Day, Caitlin bought her new, um, Nokia phone that they advertising for Brr. The new slide up phone. So then Caitlin was showing us her phone, Ashley grabbed the phone out of her hand and Caitlin was hitting her with a ruler. **(Ch 8)**

Jordan: Once my one friend brought her phone to school, and they were showing it in the toilet and the one girl came in ‘cause she was jealous and she took the phone and dumped it in the toilet. **(Jo 10)**

Malique: Some children, uh, uh, thing, um another boy, his name is Dylan. Uh,

I think he went into the girls' toilet and he wrote, "Alonzo's fuck", and something like that there. Then he took a pencil and he scratched it off. (Ma 7)

Leeshay: Children uh, stealing other children's phones and then they bring it to school and then they go home and tell their parents and just blaming other children for no reason. (Le 4)

Adrian: Last year in the class, Kwazi, and I don't know who, stole Chanyce's phone and then Chanyce was cross and she wanted to hit him but then she just left. (Ad 7)

Alonzo: Uh, Alrika went to the toilet and wrote on the walls that I'm a bitch and a skank and I asked her if she done it and she said, "Yes", and I said, "You gonna see, home time we gonna fight!", and we were punching books to act like we strong and then home time we wanted to fight but then Alrika started crying. (A 6)

Chanyce: Once, it was once, Alrika was my friend. We live in the same road. So then Alrika and all of her friends said they gonna hit me. So I went to go ask Alrika. She said, "No." She just said that there because that was the time we weren't friends. (Ch 9)

Alonzo: Uh! uh! Chanyce and Cher, they were fighting over a small thing and Cher pulled Chanyce's hair and Chanyce ran into the car park and then Cher ran after Chanyce and all the boys were encouraging them to fight and saying, "Para! Para!", and Chanyce jumped into the car and wound up the window and all the people were teasing Chanyce and Chanyce got offended. (A 7)

Jordan: Once I saw a girl busy writing, "Leeshay". It was funny names on the

wall about Leeshay. So I went and I reported her. So then, when they called for that girl, then that girl said they gonna hit me just because I reported her. **(Jo 11)**

Malique: I caught another Grade Seven boy, um, busting a cracker in the school and then they were running and Mrs Y asked who busted the cracker and then I told. And then he said, "I'm gonna catch you and I'm gonna stab you!" and I went to the toilet one day. I went to go pee and then Wonderboy told me, "Avian said I must stab you", and he hit me. **(Ma 8)**

Chanyce: My cousins were in the school. And my cousin was doing wrong things. They were writing rude things on the wall at the back of the boys' toilet. So then, the last time all of us, all the girls saw and we reported them and my cousin and them were chasing us and they wanted to hit us. **(Ch 10)**

Alonzo: One small white boy that is in this school, um, it was home time and then I saw him, he was, he was, 'cause the van is dusty, he was writing on the van S-E-X-L-Y. One big boy, his name is Trey, came and he was booting him and this small boy pulled Trey's shoe off and ran away and when Trey got him, Trey was giving him a bad, bad hiding and this boy was crying. **(A 8)**

Adrian: I saw the same thing what Alonzo's saying and then they were fighting and then Trey was hitting the boy and then the grandpa said he's gonna hit Trey 'cause he must call his parents and not hit. **(Ad 8)**

Leeshay: Last year, two boys were fighting, uh, teasing each other about who got pretty girlfriend and who got an ugly girlfriend and then eventually in

the end you just found the boys hitting each other with hockey sticks.
(Le 5)

Adrian: Break time I saw Tyrell and Caitlin busy fighting. You see now he plays Hockey. I saw him fighting and he took the hockey stick and he hit her.
(Ad 9)

Renee: Why is there violence in your school? (Re 2)

Jordan: Chanyce is very violent because she has a violent father. They're very violent at home. (Jo 12)

Chanyce: Some children bring, um, say for example, some children will get sexually abused and bring it to school. (Ch 11)

Alonzo: Some children, their uh, mother's boyfriend or their father's girlfriends they will hit them and threaten them and they come to school and they got a very short temper to hit when another person who teases them or something. (A 9)

Leeshay: There is violence in our school because of the different cultures. (Le 6)

Jordan: Say if I'm Indian and you're Black. And then I tell you, "Ooh, what a funny Black dance your'll have!", and then we start arguing just because of that. (Jo 13)

Chanyce: For example, I have cruise hair, she has straight hair. We fight because of that. (Ch 12)

Rashaad: Some people have bad times at home and they come and bring it out on the children at school. (Ra 5)

Adrian: Some people tease each other because they have big heads, small noses, big ears and then they start fighting. **(Ad 10)**

Alonzo: My father passed away and Shanelle's father passed away and now when somebody wants to swear, when somebody swears our fathers we wanna get very angry because our fathers are passed away. **(A 10)**

Chanyce: Say for example, my mother was shouting at me and then my mother didn't want to take me somewhere. So now when I come to school and someone teases me I start hitting the person for no reason cause of just that one moment I never had. **(Ch 13)**

Malique: Some children tease me because they say I'm fat and they call me, "Mama Jack", and when they carry on swearing I say, "I'm gonna catch you home time!" **(Ma 9)**

Adrian: Uh, there's violence in school because people, also, they see that, ay, this, your mother's fat, your mother's this, your mother's that, that's how we start fighting 'cause of teasing. **(Ad 11)**

Alonzo: In our class there's one boy, his name is Quron and he started it. There's violence in our school because of him. He started it with Shanelle and his calling her, "Big Mama! Big Mama!", and then now his making us all talk about it like that. That's why she gets cross. **(A 11)**

Leeshay: Children are fighting because they think it's right because at home you see parents fighting with each other and their children start to get angry and bring it to school. **(Le 7)**

Rashaad: Uh, some people brought money to school to make themselves look

good in front of their friends. **(Ra 6)**

Malique: This one boy in our class, his name is Darnell and he got you know, big ears, and now Alonzo and them and Shanelle and they started teasing him and everybody started teasing him and he wanted to cry but his just keeping it in and he got very offended. **(Ma 10)**

Jermaine: One boy in our class, when Shayden got hurt, so whenever we go to him and then some boys laughed at him and he said I will catch you home time and I'll bring a knife for you. And then he brought a knife and he was sent to the office and he got suspended. **(Je 4)**

Chanyce: The one teacher, Mrs X, um, she walks funny, see now everytime. The first time she came in our class the beginning of this year I was laughing at her. I wanted to, you know. I had a squashed up paper so I threw it on the floor by mistake. She was shouting at me. So then, every time she was walking around the class, I was teasing her. I was saying (in a funny voice), "I'm cripple! I'm cripple!", and everyone was laughing. **(Ch 14)**

Adrian: Because some children when they go home then they play with other children which can hit them and so they bring it to school and they think that they can hit all the children because at home bigger children hit them. **(Ad 12)**

Chanyce: Like Adrian. Adrian was my friend. Ai, now I no more play with her. She comes to my house. So then, everytime we, after breaking up day we were having a dancing competition because our hair was done, she brought it to school and she started hitting me and all of that and then she started punching me. I had my teacher's cake in my hand and she made me drop it on the floor. **(Ch 15)**

Alrika: I think there's violence in school because children are very jealous of each other. **(Al 5)**

Malique: There's violence in the school because of the big boys Travis and them and all. I saw Travis break time and he was punching another boy and he just told the boy, "Give me a slice!". And he asked the boy for a slice of bread. The boy said, "No", and he just punched the boy and he opened up his lunch box and he took a slice of bread. **(Ma 11)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school because of children of how their culture and what colours they are and what kinds of hair they have. **(A 12)**

Jermaine: Because some children are rich and then they go to the poor children and they make fun of them and say, "Wah! Wah! You live in a shack!". They tease them. **(Je 5)**

Leeshay: I think there's violence in our school because some children are bullying just because they want to be popular. **(Le 8)**

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because of the big boys and girls. They bully some of them. They bully the children for their luxuries. **(Ch 16)**

Adrian: Some people, some people bully children for their money and if they don't give them they say, "I'm gonna hit!" They bring their knives and threaten them. **(Ad 13)**

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because of bullying like tripping a person and I think there's violence because of swearing big words.

(Ch 17)

Malique: This other boy, Donelle, and his friend, Damian, and he said, “Hey Damian!” Damian said, “Hey, I don’t live there! Better than your house!” One boy, Donelle, said, “Hey!, my house is a mansion. What your’ll got?”. And he said, “I got uh, I’m richer than your’ll. Our family got twenty cars!”. Everything like that. And then they got into a fight and then he said, “Hey!, you gonna see tomorrow, you gonna catch a hiding!” **(Ma 12)**

Rashaad: Sometimes there’s violence 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 then it becomes a big thing. **(Ra 7)**

Leeshay: Children fighting because prefects and scholar patrol don’t do their duty and it becomes a big story. **(Le 9)**

Jordan: I think there’s violence in this school because some children are racist. **(Jo 14)**

Alonzo: I think there’s violence in my school because of children wanna, wanna tease other children and say, “Ooh! Look at your dress. It got holes in it!”, and they go on like that. That’s why I think there’s violence in my school. **(A 13)**

Adrian: I think there’s violence at school because say like I go. We go and we put our money together and if her cousin comes and asks for money and you give them. Then we start fighting. **(Ad 14)**

Alrika: I think there’s violence in school because girls want to have big mouths and call each other skanks and all big names. **(Al 6)**

Rashaad: There's violence at school because people don't like what they have and they attempt to take other people's things. **(Ra 8)**

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because of the cars. Some children come in Hummers and some children come in those olden-days cars and everytime, everytime they walk in the school they start teasing the person. **(Ch 18)**

Malique: In the car park there's one girl named Mikayla and her father came in a old scrappy car and it was all dirty and her cousin said, "Ay, look at you. Your father's got such a dirty car!" And then she said, she said, "I don't care because its just a car!" **(Ma 13)**

Jordan: I think there's violence in this school because some children pierce their ears, their nose, everything on their face and then when one child comes along and says how old were you when you done that and the other child says, "I was old enough for you!", and they start arguing over something. **(Jo 15)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school because of one girl, her name is Chanyce and they found out her father's car was filthy and they wrote on her father's car, "Please wash me!" And she was getting all offended and she wanted to hit them. That's why. **(A 14)**

Adrian: There's violence in school because some children, they walk around and if a small child is in their way they push them out the way. "What you doing in my way?", and then they hit them. **(Ad 15)**

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because of lots of lots of bullying and some children just hit other children for no reason. **(Ch 19)**

Jermaine: I think there's violence in school because some children think they are too big for their boots and they hit other children because they are poorer than them and they go to feeding scheme and the richer children laugh at them. **(Je 6)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school when smaller children are buying at the tuck-shop and the bigger children wanna come and just push them out the way and say, "Ooh! Please! I'm bigger than you so I can buy."
(A 15)

Chanyce: I think there's violence in this school because some children are tall. Some children that are big they short, so now, they tease them and they bring it to school and they start fighting. **(Ch 20)**

Malique: Er, last of last year, in grade four er, Mr B said, whoever turns around and Jermaine was and er, I was, I was in front of Jermaine and I turned around and Mr B said, "Whoever turns around you must hit them on the head." And I turned around and Jermaine hit me on my head and I said, "Jermaine, you gonna see home-time!". And we were fighting home-time, not even the prefects could stop us and Jermaine punched me in the stomach and I started hitting him. I tripped him and I kicked him on the floor and he went around to the other children and said, "Ay, I hit, I hit Malique!", and all this here and then I got cross and we had another fight. **(Ma 14)**

Rashaad: I think there's violence in the school because of teachers. So sometimes teachers say something about a child and other people start teasing them about it and then it becomes into a fight. **(Ra 9)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school because if a teacher just says,

“Ooh! You short and you must stand in the front”. Then they want to start calling them a sausage and all those other names. **(A 16)**

Chanyce: I think there’s violence in the school because of some of the teachers. Some of the teachers take advantage of smaller pupils and they start hitting them. **(Ch 21)**

Jordan: Some children lisp, like you know what its like when they lisp and then they tease the person and then it becomes a big thing. They end up fighting over nothing. **(Jo 16)**

Adrian: Some children when they go on the week-end and they come back from wherever they went or something, they start fighting because they went to a place and they saw people fighting. **(Ad 16)**

Rashaad: Some people at parents’ meetings, when their parents come, some of the children also come and when they see that their mother or father is fat or something, or thin, they start teasing the child at school. **(Ra 10)**

Alonzo: I think there’s violence at my school cause if a child has big teeth then other children want to tease them, “Govolos! Govolos!”. **(A 17)**

Jordan: I think there’s violence at this school because some children just fight over nonsense. **(Jo 17)**

Adrian: I think there’s violence at school because some children wanna brag about this or that. It don’t have to be about what they have. And then they start fighting. **(Ad 17)**

Rashaad: I think there’s violence in school because some children wanna carry things from the past and then they spread it to other children and then

when it gets back to the child they were talking about it becomes a fight. **(Ra 11)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school because of one girl, her name is Cher, um, when um, another girl, her name is Adrian. Adrian said to Cher, ay, uh, "My house I got a pool as big as Newlands pool!" and that was two years ago and Cher came and Cher brought it out to us last year and Cher said, "Ooh, Adrian says she got a big pool that's as big as Newlands pool". So then Cher went to, uh, Cher went to Adrian and Adrian said, "Ooh, why you telling everybody that there?" Cher said, "Oh, please! Don't start with me now because you did tell me that there." And they were pulling each others' hair and they were crying and becoming emotional. **(A 18)**

Alrika: Let me carry on with Alonzo's story. Adrian went to tell the teachers that me and Alonzo got her into trouble and Mr C wanted to give us a detention and Adrian started crying because she said that we telling lies about her and she has a short temper. **(Al 7)**

Leeshay: Last week, um, Miss Y wanted to give me double detention because of thing, because Darne's busy saying I'm swearing other children. **(Le 10)**

Jordan: I think there's violence in the school because sometimes, Leeshay, Leeshay comes up to me and she's like swearing me. Then when I go tell the teacher then she says that she was joking and it becomes a big thing. **(Jo 18)**

Alonzo: I think there's violence in my school because a lot of children joke around and joke around with children that wanna take it seriously. Like when I said to Leeshay, when I was joking with her and she didn't

know what I said to Leeshay, “Ooh! Look at you. You a cow, you a skank!”, and this and all and she didn’t know that I was joking with her. And she ran off to my teacher and my teacher said, “I’m gonna phone your mother ‘cause you got a big mouth!”. **(A 19)**

Jordan: Some children, I think that there’s violence in school because Alonzo might be fighting with you and then I just jump in and then it will be a big thing between the three of us. **(Jo 19)**

Leeshay: There’s this boy in my class. His name is Jose. He was teasing Quron because of his big ears. **(Le 11)**

Adrian: Some children, just, they like, hear stories and they scandal about people. Then the people in the school there, they get back to them. They don’t know what the real story is. They just talking and they begin to fight and it becomes a big thing. **(Ad 18)**

Alrika: There’s this one boy named Mathemba, and then there’s me. And then he wrote a letter to me and he put it in my mailbox and he said, “Do you love me? Tick yes or no”, and I said, “No”. Then he said, “Are you racist?”, and I said, “No.” Then he said if I go out with you, he will put a gold tooth in my mouth. And then I said, “No”, too. Then my teacher said, “There’s a Little Man taxi because he’s short and I’m the taxi”, and I was also teasing him Little Man taxi. **(Al 8)**

Rashaad: I think there’s violence in school because people hear stuff and they take it in the wrong way and then it spreads out to everyone and it all becomes something big. **(Ra 12)**

Malique: I went to Pietermaritzberg and I went to Woodlands Primary School with all my cousins. And they wrote, another boy wrote, “F” by my

name. And I said, “Hey!, don’t swear me!” And then I had the same sleeping shorts as him. And we went to the pool and I took off my pants that I was wearing, and I was wearing, I had my sleeping shorts and he told me, “Hey boy!, Pass my sleeping shorts!” And I said, “It’s not your sleeping shorts!”, and he took my sleeping shorts off and I put my underpants on and they were chasing me and I ran all the way to my aunty’s house and they were chasing me. **(Ma 15)**

Adrian: There’s violence in schools because some people, they wanna be too big and then they wanna say you this, you that. **(Ad 19)**

Jordan: I think there’s violence in schools because some children use them for their money and their things. **(Jo 20)**

Rashaad: I think there’s violence in schools because of Mr D. He hits the Children. He hits the children for nothing. For if we talking he takes a baseball and he just hits them for nothing. And then the children, the anger that they got in the class, they take it out on people in the wrong class. **(Ra 13)**

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL : ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

17 OCTOBER 2008

MS. S BENGTSON (204515670)
EDUCATION STUDIES

Dear Ms. Bengtson

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0647/08M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

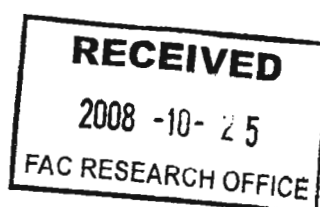
"What kids say about violence at their school"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

cc. Supervisor (Dr. N Amin)
cc. Mrs. D Buchler



APPENDIX 3



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO

Tel: 033 341 8610
Fax: 033 341 8612
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

228 Pietermaritz Street
PIETERMARITZBURG

INHLOKHOVISI	PIETERMARITZBURG	HEAD OFFICE
Imibuzo: Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar	Reference: Inkomba: 0057/2008	Date: Usuku: 27 October 2008

Ms S. Bengtson
54 Reftery Crescent
Sydenham
Durban
4091

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' and work programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools and other Departmental Officials are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools or heads of section where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **What kids say about violent at school**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

03 December 2009



Student No: 204515670

Ms S Bengston
54 Raftery Crescent
Sydenham
Durban
4091

Dear Ms Bengston

Change in Title: Master of Education (Educational Psychology)

The Faculty Higher Degrees committee at its meeting held on 30 November 2009 recommended a change in title as follows:

From:

What kids say about violence at their school.

To:

What young children say about violence at their school.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Nomsa Ndlovu", written over a horizontal line.

Nomsa Ndlovu
Postgraduate Administration

cc: Dr N Amin, School of Education School

Faculty of Education
Deputy Dean (Postgraduate Studies and Research)

100

Postal Address: Private Bag X03, Ashwood 3605, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 1169

Facsimile: +27 (0)31 260 7594

Email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

Founding Campuses:

■ Edgewood

Howard College

Medical School

■ Pietermaritzburg

Westville

APPENDIX 5: PRINCIPAL CONSENT FORM

Dear _____

I am an M.Ed student at UKZN interested in what children say about violence in their school. As part of my Masters dissertation I would like to conduct two focus group discussions with specifically selected students in your school. Each discussion will take approximately 15 minutes and will be video-taped. For the first focus group discussion the students will be asked to, "Talk about violence at your school." In the second focus group discussion the students will be asked, "Why is there violence in your school?" The data from the interview will only be used in the course that I am taking and will not be used for any other purpose without their consent. The students are not obliged to speak about violence and are free to withdraw from the study at any time. The student's decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. Please know too that no real names will be used in any material that I write up for the course and every attempt will be made to keep the material confidential. Hereby your school and students anonymity, including the confidentiality of the research will be constantly respected. The data will be securely retained for a period of three years after which it will be properly disposed of.

If you require any further information please feel free to contact me, Sharon Bengtson, on 072 109 6110 or my course supervisor, Dr Nyna Amin on 031 2607255. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Ms Sharon Bengtson

APPENDIX 6

DECLARATION

I _____ agree to allow the study to take place at my school. I understand that my school's real name and the anonymity of the students will not be used in any write-up and that their responses will be treated with confidentiality. I also understand that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time and that this will not result in any form of disadvantage. I consent to the students being video-taped.

Principal _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 7: LEARNER AND PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

Dear _____

I am an M.Ed student at UKZN interested in what learners say about violence in their school. As part of my Masters dissertation, I would like to discuss with your child/guardian what children are saying about violence in their school. The two group discussions will take approximately 15 minutes each and will be video-taped. In the first group discussion your child/guardian will be asked to, "Talk about violence at your school." In the second group discussion your child/guardian will be asked, "Why is there violence in your school?" The data from the interview will only be used in the course that I am taking and will not be used for any other purpose without your consent. Your child /guardian will not be obliged to speak about violence and will be free to withdraw from the study at any time. Your decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage. Please know too that no real names will be used in any material that I write up for the course and every attempt will be made to keep the material confidential. Hereby your anonymity and confidentiality of the research will be constantly respected. The data will be securely retained for a period of three years after which it will be properly disposed of.

If you require any further information please feel free to contact me, Sharon Bengtson, on 072 109 6110 or my course supervisor, Dr Nyna Amin on 031 2607255. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Ms Sharon Bengtson

APPENDIX 8

DECLARATION

I _____ agree to my child/guardian _____
_____ participating in this study. I understand that my
child/guardian's real name will not be used in any write-up and that his/her
responses will be treated confidentially. I also understand that he/she is free to
withdraw from the study at any time and that this will not result in any form of
disadvantage. I agree to him being video-taped.

Parent / Guardian Signature _____ Date _____