Grade 9 students' accounts of conflicts and abuses in a formerly Indian school near Durban

By

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this thesis was not previously submitted for a degree at any University.

Signature:

Date   : 25/04/08.

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I would like to thank my parents for the opportunities they have provided me with. Their hard work, dedication and love, without which I would have being unable to come this far.

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Abstract

The aim of my study was to investigate the nature of possible conflicts between Grade nine learners. Focus group discussions were conducted with about forty learners; boys and girls, Black and Indian, aged between fourteen and sixteen at a formerly Indian school near Durban. In these, I started by asking very general questions and then picked up on what the young people said, asking them to elaborate and illustrate. In this way, I tried to put the onus on young people themselves to set the agenda.

I am interested in investigating whether learners will talk differently about conflict depending on whether they were in different kinds of groups marked by 'race' and gender. Therefore, I divided the participants into mono-racial single sex as well as mixed gender and mixed 'race' groups.

According to all the participants in the focus group discussions, conflicts between pupils were very common at Grade nine levels. However, what sort of conflicts they spoke about and how these were spoken about, and especially those that related to gender and 'race', differed significantly between the various kinds of focus groups mentioned above. This paper reports on these conflicts and compares the kinds of conflicts spoken about in the different kinds of groups.

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Chapter 1: introducing my research

Introduction: what I want to research

In this project I want to investigate possible conflicts between Grade 9 learners in a formerly Indian school near Durban, and the forms they take. I am interested in exploring possible relations of power between these Grade 9 learners in terms of gender, race and/or age and whether conflicts may arise from the ways such relations are commonly played out among Grade 9s in a formerly Indian school. Such a study entails a careful examination of the nature and ethos of the school itself, the kinds of pupils it draws in terms of gender, 'race' and social class. This helps to provide a contextual basis for making sense of the everyday social interactions and relations among Grade 9s in the school which may involve forms of conflict and abuse. In my study then, I shall be providing an account of the formerly Indian school itself, the composition of students and their informal interactions in terms of 'race' gender and age (drawing mainly on school records and observation) as well as focusing on students' own accounts of themselves and their interactions with those they define as similar and as Other. (Drawing on in depth focus group discussions with Black and Indian male and female students.) In the focus group discussions with students, I shall be exploring whether they speak about conflicts with other students, and if so which other students and what forms these take.

I want to examine whether such conflicts:

1) take place, and if so, whether they occur between particular individuals or groups of learners
2) are influenced by social markers of identity and status such as gender, 'race' and age
3) are long or short term
4) involve forms of open aggression, and if so whether this comprises physical or psychological abuse.

The school

After preliminary discussions with school principals and members of staff at formerly Indian secondary schools, I decided to investigate conflict and bullying among grade nine learners at "Rose Secondary High" (a pseudonym). This particular school was chosen since both the school principal and teachers specifically mentioned bullying as being a problem among the grade nine learners. This is a formerly Indian school with a slight majority of Indian learners over Black African learners and no White learners. The school is situated in Chatsworth, a township which came into being as a result of the Groups Areas Act during the apartheid regime (Desai, 2000). Thousands of Indians during the 1950's found themselves corralled into Chatsworth. The 1980's, for Chatsworth was riddled with mass unemployment, increasing divorce rates, runaway fathers and people heavily dependent on grants. Even after the first democratic election in 1994, the people in Chatsworth still faced high unemployment, gang activity and even prostitution. Thirty percent of the area in 1999 became occupied by Africans. By the year 2000 the youth of Chatsworth had bemoaned the quality of the schools as well as the lack of any form of social activities hence learners had a low regard for teachers (Desai, 2000).

Schools safe havens or sites of conflict

While schools have been popularly constructed as "safe havens" for teachers to teach children and children to learn many critics are arguing on the contrary that schools actively contribute to the formation of inequalities and hierarchies which may lead to conflict situations within schools (Curcio and First, 1993 and Harber, 2004). Schools are not gender neutral institutions that simply develop the social and intellectual skills of pupils but can be experienced by boys and girls rather differently and can carry particular risks for girl learners (Pattman, 2006). I want to examine whether girls are subordinated by boys in systematic ways, for example whether there are patterns of specific girls (or girls in general) being ridiculed and also subject to forms of sexual harassment. The issue of sexual harassment of girls in schools in Southern Africa has received much recent attention in the research literature (Morrell 1998, 2000; Human Rights Watch 2001; Jewkes et al. 2002; Bhana 2005). For example, the Human Rights Watch in South Africa reported that girls faced a number of forms of violence at school which included sexual abuse, sexualized touching, emotional abuse in the forms of threats of violence (2001). These studies have pointed to imbalances of power between the male perpetrators and female victims of sexual harassment, and how sexual harassment itself helps to reinforce these power differentials.

Studies in the West, for example Connolly (1998) and Sewell (1997), have examined how schools may be implicated in producing racialised as well as gendered inequalities and power relations, and how conflicts between male pupils, especially, may stem from these. More recently Pattman and Bhana (2007) have focused on Black girls' experiences of marginalisation and discrimination in a formerly Indian school in South Africa and how this contributes to conflicts, in particular between Black and Indian girls at the school. (See my Literature Review for a more detailed account of all these studies.)

Research aims

I want to find out whether Grade 9 learners in my study experience conflicts in school, and, if so, what forms these take. As the literature indicates, conflicts may be deeply embedded in schools and affect the lives of many young people going to schools in very problematic ways. Yet these receive remarkably little attention, partly, I suggest, because of popular assumptions that schools are safe havens. I see my research, partly, as a way of highlighting the problem of conflicts within schools.

Key Research Questions

1) Do Grade 9 students experience conflict in school? If so, which students do and what form does this conflict take?
2) To what extent do these conflicts occur between particular individuals or groups of learners
3) Are these conflicts influenced by social markers of identity such as gender, 'race' and age?
4) Do these conflicts involve open aggression, and if so, does this comprise physical or psychological abuse?
5) Do teachers feature in learners' accounts of conflicts in school? If so, how?

Structure of dissertation

Chapter one explains the focus of the study, the purpose as well as the motivation for the study. I also provide a brief description of the setting in which the research was conducted.

Chapter two is a review of related literature. This chapter focuses on international and local literature. I draw on literature which examines how power relations are produced in schools and the sorts of conflicts which emanate from these.

Chapter three focuses on some of the theoretical concerns and influences in this project.

Chapter four describes the research methods employed. Methods of data collection and data analysis that were employed to achieve the objectives of the study are discussed in detail as well as ethical considerations in undertaking this research.

Chapter five combines findings emanating from the focus group discussions and interviews with young people and interviews with teachers and analysis of these findings.

Chapter six draws conclusions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction: situating my own study in relation to recent literature

Recent literature on conflicts in schools has challenged popular assumptions about schools as generally 'safe havens' and has argued, instead, that schools represent key sites in which conflicts are played out between different kinds of learners and between teachers and learners. This literature is informed by an assumption that much conflict stems from power relations and the negotiation of these between different pupils, and that such relations are structured by gender, 'race', social class, age, among other factors. This literature suggests that schools, far from being neutral institutions may operate as sites in which gender power relations, for example, are produced through forms of sexual bullying and harassment, or racialised power relations through racist name calling and abuse. In terms of this literature bullying and forms of conflict (whether in school or elsewhere) are not understood as emanating from particular problematic relations between individuals but as resulting from ordinary relations which boys and girls from various social backgrounds enter into on a daily basis.

Much of this literature is based on qualitative studies, (employing ethnography and loosely structured interviews) to explore the cultures and identities of different (groups of) students, their experiences of schooling and their relations with teachers and students they define as Other.

My own study draws very much on this recent literature, a literature which tends to be informed by social constructionist and feminist theories which argue that identities such as masculine/feminine,Black/White/Indian/Coloured, are not fixed, but produced and negotiated relationally in everyday forms of interaction in particular social contexts such as schools. These theories argue, crucially, that such relations are often marked by power and that their everyday negotiation involves taking up particular power positions and relationships vis a vis those defined as (gendered or 'racial') others. Drawing on these theories, this literature investigates how various young people construct their cultures and identities in particular social contexts such as schools, characterised by a particular regime, ethos and social/ cultural composition of students. It also focuses on how conflicts between groups of young people (and pupils in school) may emanate from their everyday processes of identification and the relations they establish with those they define as Other.

Literature on Bullying

Conflicts between learners in school, especially where these are understood as arising from imbalances of power, are often referred to as forms of bullying. Smith and Sharp (1994) define bullying as being the systematic abuse of power which is repeated and deliberate and occurs over a sustained period of time. Rigby (1996:15) also characterises bullying as repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons," and indicates that this can be psychological or physical or both. Olewus (1993), too, defines bullying as involving a combination of verbal and physical aggressions and aggravations directed from an agent or agents whom he identifies as the bullies and directed towards the victims (Roberts, 2006:14) and occurring over a long period of time and where there

is an imbalance of power among people. Such power differentials may derive, according to Rigby (1996: 15), from interpretations of 'physical' differences where the victim is, for example, smaller than the perpetrator/s and constructed as weaker, and/or from psychological differences where the victim, for example, is quieter or more introverted than the perpetrator/s and weakness is attributed to these characteristics.

Roberts (2006) argues that the psychological aspects of bullying can be as damaging as the physical. Bullying and teasing behaviours when left free are some of the "seeds to our violent society" (ibid, 2006:3). When these behaviours occur in our schools, an opportunity is offered to break the early learning pattern where children develop the idea that force and intimidation either physical or psychological are acceptable means of resolving conflicts (ibid, 2006). However much bullying goes undetected by the authorities precisely because the victims may be afraid to report it because of fear of intimidation from the perpetrators and/or because of concerns about being perceived as weak.

Gendered dimensions of bullying and conflicts in school

In my study I am interested in examining the imbalances of power which give rise to and reinforce forms of conflicts between students in schools which are often referred to as forms of bullying. I am also interested in the gendered dimensions of conflicts and how particular kinds of gender power relations (between boys and girls, boys and other boys and girls and other girls) may promote form of conflicts.

Conflicts arising from trying to live up to hegemonic masculine ideals

Contemporary theories of masculinities, influenced by the work of Bob Connell, (1995), suggest that bullying may be endemic to popular ways of displaying masculinities. Connell argues that particular cultural stereotypes of masculinity associated with physical and emotional toughness, public confidence, quick wit, muscularity play a key part in structuring power relations between males and between males and females. Much pressure is put on boys and men to live up to these stereotypes of hegemonic masculinity, and one of the main strategies through which boys demonstrate their 'masculinity,' conceived in this way, is by subordinating, picking on, teasing and harassing either girls or other boys who are constructed as inferior or not proper males and feminized.

Connell (1995), in his work on masculinities has argued that a hegemonic masculinity exists and that some men dominate other men. The patterns of behaviour associated with hegemonic masculinity are heterosexuality, aggressiveness, authoritativeness competitiveness and physically bravery and sportyness (Connell, 1995, Pattman & Chege, 2003, Lesko, 2000, Bhana, 2005).

Hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that men strive for as this form of is not embodied by all men (Connell, 1995, Bhana, 2005). Drawing on research conducted by Bhana (2005), suggests that these are different patterns of masculinity

hence there exists different ways to being a boy and these differences are also linked to concepts such as race, class as well as sexuality.

Whilst men in general may benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, however, they do not benefit equally (Connell, 2002). Boys and men who stray away from dominant forms of masculinity (hegemonic),for example if they show vulnerabilities, anxieties or even affection, or if they are viewed as not sufficiently committed to sport, or too conscientious may be subject to verbal abuse as well as discrimination and can also be easy targets of violence (ibid,2002) (Frosh et al, 2002). However, those men that strive to live up to hegemonic forms of masculinity also suffer, for example not being able to express their feeling of sadness/loneliness or dependency.

Drawing on Connell's work, studies on boys and masculinities conducted mainly in the West, such as Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman, (2002), Duncan (1999) Nayak and Kehily (1996) and Mills (2001), have examined forms of bullying which entail certain boys being singled out for failing to measure up to specific hegemonic masculine ideals and being effeminized and made subject to various forms of ridicule and homophobic abuse.

Epstein and Johnson (1998) also argue that in an attempt to assert themselves as tough and strong often boys try to distance themselves from versions of femininity, defining other boys who may be small or not very good at sports or conscientious as effeminate. Often this takes the form of homophobic abuse, with the implication that they are not 'proper' males. Feeling for the most part is also forbidden for boys at school and boys are often pressurized to display specific hegemonic masculine ideals for example being macho (ibid, 1998). Epstein and Johnson (1998), in their interviews and observations of classroom behaviours, found that homophobia expressed towards non-macho boys was often in terms of their similarity to girls. The behaviour of "tomboys" was seen as more acceptable than the behaviour of "sissies" (ibid, 1998:168). In other words, for a girl to be more like a boy is interpreted in a more positive view than a boy being more like a girl. Teasing and insults like "poof" and "Nancy- boy" are used not only to control the sexuality of boys but also the forms of masculinity that boys adopt within the context of school (ibid, 1998).Masculinities are produced and policed by the need by both boys and men to boast their sexual prowess for example by the comparing of penis size and other body parts (Epstein and Johnson, 1998)

Kehily and Nayak (1997) argue that the use of humour and insult constitutes as a common practice among boys in school through which they establish and exhibit heterosexual masculinities (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). The humour or insults employed by the boys, Kehily and Nayak (1997),suggest are either sexist, for example the teasing or harassment of girls, or insults to other boys which either take the form of homophobic abuse of those who fail to live up to hegemonic masculine ideals or the insulting of sisters or mothers (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). Kehily and Nayak (1997:84) argue that humour was a style for the perpetual display of "hard" masculinity and also a means of displacing fears and uncertainties (Epstein and Johnson, 1998).

In South Africa, Elaine Salo (2005), in her study of masculinities among Coloured male gang members in the Cape Flats, also found that homophobic abuse, meted out

to specific males, was a key strategy through which these young men asserted themselves, in contrast, as 'real men,' and Deevia Bhana (2005), found that violence itself became a hegemonic ideal for boys achieving status by being violent towards other boys whom they subordinated in the process.

In his study of young boys in US schools, Pollack (1998) found that many boys hid behind a mask of masculinity and felt compelled to conform to expectations associated with hegemonic forms of masculinity. The effect of this, he argues, was for boys to learn that fear and a sense of loneliness and uncertainty are unacceptable feelings, and cannot therefore be discussed and dealt with collectively. Since boys wear the mask of masculinity so skilfully, those who want to assist boys who may be experiencing anxieties and fear, find immense difficulty doing so, since these boys on the outside appear cheerful, resilient, whilst inside they are troubled, lonely and afraid, emotions not fitting of the "male model" (Pollack ,1998:6).

Pollack terms this form of masculinity "the boy code" and suggests that this code places boys and men into a "gender straitjacket" that constrains them and others around them as well (1998). Pollack points that the "boy code" can be so strong and subtle that boys may be unaware that they are living in accordance to this. However, when a boy strays away from the "code", social policing becomes very apparent and often takes the form of taunts by a sibling, a comment from a parent or teacher or even ostracism from classmates.

Recent school based studies in South Africa have examined how boys may present themselves as tough and strong in groups of males partly through misogyny and humour, yet, in diaries and individual interviews, express anxieties about conflicts stemming from competition with other males and the need to assert themselves as strong as well as idealizations of girls as 'soft' and as people with whom they can talk about problems and anxieties. (Pattman, 2005).

Not drawing clear cut distinctions between powerful perpetrators and vulnerable victims

Earlier writers on bullying such as some of those featured at the beginning of this review, tended to draw clear cut distinctions between bullies as the powerful perpetrators and the people they picked on as the vulnerable victims. These have been criticized in some of the contemporary literature on bullying. For example, Ahmed, (2001) and others have argued that bullies should, themselves, be seen as victims in the sense of experiencing shame and developing defences to deal with this and conceal their vulnerabilities. To address 'bullies' in intervention programmes designed to deal with the problem of bullying, as powerful and bad, may actually be counterproductive and make people labelled as bullies more defensive, and more likely to assert themselves by picking on people they construct as weaker in various forms. The above studies, influenced by Connell's understanding of the complexity of gender power relations, illustrate how, in the case of gendered forms of bullying and abuse, perpetrators should also be addressed, in the sense which Ahmed (2001) suggests, as victims.

Bullying and conflict does not stem only from asserting masculinities

While much of the research literature has focused on bullying as a specifically male phenomenon (or at least the perpetrators as male), some contemporary writers such as Harber (2004) and Rigby (1996) and Roberts (2006) argue that both boys and girls are victims and perpetrators of school bullying. The failure to address girls as bullies partly reflects common assumptions which link aggression and violence to males (as perpetrators). Images of "bad girls" are threatening, according to authors Chesney Lind and Shelden (2004), since they undermine conventional constructions of gender and normality. For boys, the breaking of rules or any form of deviant behaviour may be regarded as part of growing up (ibid, 2004).

Roberts argues that it is critical to understand as well as accept that both boys and girls can be bullies, the only difference maybe in the tactics used by either group to achieve their goals (2006:13). He suggests that girls can be identified as the "divas of psychological intimidation"(2006:14).Name calling, the spreading of rumours, gossiping and the threat to reveal secrets are just some of the forms psychological intimidation can take.

Bullying among females has been termed by Roberts, as relational aggression and he argues that just as bullying has been neglected among boys because it is accepted as just boys been themselves, so to has this been the case among females (2006:59). Roberts suggests that due to the socialization of boys and girls and the different emphasis this brings to the two genders, boys and girls display differences in their bullying tactics. Since much emphasis is placed on communication among girls in their socialization, Roberts suggest that intimidation among girls relies on psychological prowess (2006).

Therefore, whilst boys display more physical and outward expressions of aggression, girls on the other hand, who are more likely to be discouraged than boys to express aggression, may find more socially acceptable ways to display aggression. In a recent peer review of the literature, Apal, Garch and Harris, (2005), found that girls were likely to use a number of strategic to show contempt and disapproval without being aggressive. These included, excluding individuals, sulking, talking behind backs and seeking revenge (without showing aggression). These they suggest can be classified as being indirect forms of aggression.

Apal, Garch and Harris, (2005), like Roberts (2006), also suggest that it is not usually recognized that frictions and tensions among females partly occur as a result of the inability to express aggression directly, as this is not regarded as acceptable ideal for femininity. Culturally it is more unacceptable for girls than men to display any type of aggression specifically in the public sphere. In a study by Valrie Hey, (1997) on middle class girls attempts to keep their conflicts hidden as they wanted to conform to the ideal form of femininity namely being complaint and nice (Apal, Garch and Harris, 2005).

Some researchers in the West, focusing on teenage girls' cultures and norms of popularity and unpopularity, have found that it is often in relation to heterosexual attraction that girls divide themselves hierarchically, with those who are constructed as the least attractive, or sometimes, conversely, as the most sexual, being denigrated and abused by girls. (Aapal et al, 2005).

Sexual harassment of girls stemming from male teachers/male learners

Schools should be safe havens for learning (Human Rights Watch, 2001). However, violence in schools has become rife. Researchers like Bhana (2005), and Curioc and First (1993), view violence as an issue which interferes with the ability of school to produce an environment which is safe for learning. Studies like that conducted by the Human Rights Watch (2001), reveal that not only are schools not safe but that girls are at a high risk.

I am interested to examine whether girls are subordinated by boys in systematic ways, for example, of particular kinds of girls are picked upon and subordinated by boys and whether these take specific form such as sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is very much a feature of bullying in terms of the definition of bullying with which I am working.

Human Rights Watch study (2001), examined the barrier to an equal educational opportunity faced by girls as a result of the South African governments failure to effectively address the gender violence prevalent in the South African school system.

Whilst girls have a better access to schools in South Africa when compared to other Sub Saharan African countries, issues such as sexual violence as well as sexual harassment in schools impede a girl's access to education (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Human Rights Watch (2001) reported that sexual abuse and harassment of girls by teachers as well as learners is widespread in South Africa. Similarly Morrell (2000) also identified teachers and fellow students as perpetrators of sexual violence against girls. The report indicated that girls faced a number of forms of violence at school which included sexual abuse, sexualized touching and emotional abuse in the forms of threats of violence (Human Rights Watch,2001).These studies have pointed to imbalances of power between the male perpetrators and female victims of sexual harassment itself helps to reinforce power differentials.

Sexual violence against girls in schools impedes on their education. A study conducted by Morrell (2000) on the issue of single sex schools found the effects of sexual harassment on girls in schools impacts negatively on their education to the extent that many school girls leave school, sometimes forever, or the harassment results in pregnancy. Similarly, the girls interviewed by the Human Rights Watch (2001) complained of losing interest in school, leaving school and changing schools. However, this was not the only challenge faced by girls in schools as sexual violence also meant there were health risks as well, such as unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS (ibid,2001).

The study conducted by Mukasa (1999:58), which aimed to find out the reality of sexual harassment in a secondary school outside Cape Town in Khayelitsha, also found that male teachers had interpreted the attention girl learners gave them as a sign of "sexual come on". The behaviours of girls, Mukasa suggests had been interpreted by the males teachers as a sign of asking to be sexually harassed (1999). In comparison female teachers in this study handled propositions by male learners differently, as female teachers counselled learners instead (Mukasa, 1999).

Mukasa's (1999) study however differed from the study conducted by Human Rights Watch (2001) as the girls did not identify male students as perpetrators of sexual violence and if a problem did arise the girls was able to deal with it. However teachers in the study again were seen as the perpetrators indirectly since teachers failed to ensure the safety of girl learners when a male person would want her to be excused out of the class for fear for their own safety (the teacher) (Mukasa ,1999).

Chesney-Lind and Shelden (2004) in their research found that perpetrators of sexual and physical violence were family members, for example fathers or step-fathers. Sexual abuses among females start earlier than they do with boys and many female victims as a result either run away from home or participate in status offences like shoplifting have difficulties in school as well as truancy (ibid,2004). Sexual and physical abuse has such a profound impact on girls that a study conducted in Canada found that violent girls report significantly greater rates of victimisation and abuse than their non-violent counterparts (ibid, 2004).In the United States, according to research conducted by the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect (2002), an estimate of 879,000 children were found to be victims of child abuse and neglect and this study indicates a distinct gender difference in child sexual abuse (ibid,2004). The study revealed during the year of 2000 alone, higher rates of sexual abuse for girls (1.7 per 1000) in comparison to boys (0.4 per 1000) (ibid, 2004).

Whilst these studies have explored schools as sites of sexual harassment and as been predominantly experienced by, young women and perpetrators are usually young men. Epstein and Jonhson (1998), suggest the male desire can often be rather dangerous to women and girls as well as young boys who are often victimized through the exercise of male power and often take the form of homophobic abuse. Hollway (1987) terms the "male sex drive" discourse through which males are actively displaying hegemonic masculinities and when boys begin to choose to live up to this form of masculinity can endanger young women (Epstein and Jonhson ,1998).

Violence and the School

Within schools, violence is a problem. The issue of violence in schools has become increasingly crucial in the last decade. The transformations that have occurred within schools have led to a number of challenges faced by both pupils as well as teachers. Whilst, we live in a democratic society, this has resulted in serious changes within schools in terms of the changing of the curriculum to an outcomes based education; schools are faced with a shortage of educators and measures. The violence that is prevalent within schools, threatens the wellbeing of the children.

Researchers like Bhana (2005) view violence as an issue, which interferes with the ability of schools to produce an environment that is safe for learning. The frequency of forms of bullying in schools has led to many critics, mainly in the West, questioning the popular assumption of schools as 'safe havens,' and arguing, on the contrary, that schools actively contribute to the formation of inequalities and hierarchies which may lead to bullying relations(Harber, 2004 and Curcio and First, 1993).

In school based studies on boys and masculinities in the UK, Connolly (1998) and Frosh et al. (2002) found that bullying between boys often occurred in relation to perceived sporting prowess or lack thereof, with those boys who were seen as the least sporty being picked on and marginalized by other boys. Significantly, this was particularly rife in schools, which put much premium on competitive sports. In Southern Africa, some writers have argued that corporal punishment in schools (it is still frequently used despite its illegality) conveys messages about the legitimacy of physical violence administered by a more to a less powerful person, and may be understood then as itself a form of bullying, or at least as contributing to a culture of bullying (Morrell, (2000) and Pattman and Chege (2003). Pattman and Chege (2003) noted how gendered corporal punishment was in schools in Botswana, with boys more likely to be beaten than girls were and unlike girls, on their bums. Significantly, they found that one of the effects of this was to reinforce misogynistic attitudes among some boys who were not only angry that they and not girls were picked on by teachers, but also constructed themselves as tougher than girls and able to withstand the pain.

The identity of a teacher is one which is characterized by power and hierarchy and it is these qualities which contribute to violence (Monnill, 2001). The use of corporal punishment and sexual harassment are just some of the ways that teachers contribute to the violence witnessed in schools presently (Human Rights Watch, 2001, Harber, 2004, Inderpal, 2007). The role of teachers and caregivers and parents, Roberts (2006), suggest that bullying behaviour is usually learnt from adults for example parents or other caregivers like teachers. Hence, punishment either of a physical or verbal nature, which is often harsh, is meted out according to the adult resulting in the transmission of aggression through the child (Roberts, 2006). Teachers who uphold these characteristics tend to uphold a specific form of masculinity, namely hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, Pattman & Chege, 2003, Lesko, 2000).

Racialised forms of conflict between young people in schools

In this review I have focused mainly on gendered dimensions and patterns of conflict among young people in schools and other contexts. Recent studies on schooling and conflict have also addressed how this may stem from racialised power relations and divisions forged in everyday interactions. In Britain, the work of Paul Connolly (1998) in primary schools, and Tony Sewell (1997) and Frosh et al (2002) in secondary schools examines how racialised hierarchies are constructed between boys, with African Caribbean boys tending to be caricatured as embodying hegemonic male attributes, as being tough, hard and naughty and South Asian boys, by contrast, being constructed as weak and effeminate, and, as a consequence of this, subject to forms of bullying. These studies focus on how gender intersects with 'race' in the formation of

the identities of schoolboys in the UK, and how this may lead to racialised conflicts and bullying.

Despite its apartheid history there are surprisingly few studies in South Africa which focus on possibilities of racial divisions and power relations as sources of conflicts between young people in schools. One such study (Pattman and Bhana, 2007), like my study, addresses pupils' experiences, as they articulate them, of a formerly Indian school near Durban. The focus in this study was on Black African girls' experiences of schooling and their relations with other students, notably Indian girls and boys. In loosely structured group interviews conducted with Black girls about their experiences in this school, conflicts which were highly racialised emerged as a key theme. These young Black women felt much marginalised in the school which they constructed as a racist institution tended to ignore or pathologise Black people. Though they spoke about Indian boys and teachers' being racist to Black people in the school, their opposition was mainly directed at Indian girls who were constructed, as young heterosexual women, as their rivals. Indeed much of their opposition to them was around constructions and displays of heterosexual attraction, with Indian girls being attacked in the interviews by the Black African girls for flaunting 'their beauty' as conveyed most notably in their 'straight hair' in relation to the Black girls. This was linked with stories which emphasised Indian girls' presumed arrogance in relation to them, the Black girls, for example through telling Black girls at a bring and buy school cake stall not to touch the cakes.

This study illustrates how race and gender intersect as powerful sources of identity and dimensions of power among pupils at this school, and conflict stems, most notably, from the everyday relational identifications of Black and Indian girls in this formerly Indian school.

Chapter 3: Theoretical concerns and influences

Drawing on feminist accounts of conflict and bullying in schools

In the academic literature, as I have indicated in the Literature Review, conflict in schools between students which are understood as arising from imbalances of power, are often understood as forms of bullying. And accounts of bullying sometimes focus on the psychological dispositions of perpetrator and victim. I am critical of these accounts, and argue that bullying needs to be understood as a patterned and systematic form of behaviour which derives from and helps to perpetuate certain structures and imbalances of power. Furthermore, any explanation of forms of bullying, while acknowledging the direction this takes, and the power relations which structure this, must avoid a simple and clear cut distinction between powerful perpetrator and vulnerable victim. As many contemporary writers have argued, especially those addressing young people and bullying in the context of gender power relations (see for example, Frosh et al, 2002) perpetrators may themselves be victims in the sense of engaging in abusive behaviour against people they construct as weaker as, in part, a response to their own anxieties generated by social expectations relating to gender.

Following Rigby (1997), and others, my understanding is that bullying emanates from structured or patterned relations of power. Furthermore I suggest that these are often linked to 'race' gender and age. Here I am influenced by and draw on a number of contemporary writers and researchers, who have suggested that such relations may be tied to common ways in which young people assert their gendered and racialised identities in relation to those they, define as Other. For example, contemporary studies on young people and school based violence in the region and in the west (eg. Frosh et al (2002), Sewell (1997), Pattman and Chege (2003), Pattman and Bhana (2007), Morrell (1998), Bhana (2005)and others) have examined how gendered forms of abuse arise in the context of everyday assertions of hegemonic masculinity (Connell) or how racialised oppositions and antagonisms among young people may arise in the context of structured imbalances of 'race' and power.

Addressing the gendered and racialised dimensions of bullying, I am drawing on contemporary theories of gender, race and power which :
1) locate the causes of gendered and racialised forms of violence and bullying not in the individual psyches of the aggressors or indeed the victims but in patriarchal cultures
2) challenge assumptions about a homogenous masculinity existing in relation to a homogenous femininity and differentiate between different kinds of masculinities and different kinds of femininities and how these are structured in relations of power. This latter position has been most succinctly elaborated upon by the gender theorist Bob Connell whose work I have already discussed in the Literature Review. In formulating gender power relations in the way I have described in the Introduction, Connell provides a feminist account not only of how and why girls or certain girls may be systematically abused by boys, but also why certain boys, exhibiting certain kinds of hegemonic

masculinity may abuse other kinds of boys. (And indeed why and how girls may abuse girls and boys).

3) acknowledge the direction of gendered and racialised forms of violence while critiquing clear cut distinctions between powerful perpetrators and vulnerable victims. In this project I argue, drawing on Connell's understanding of hegemonic masculinity, that certain boys and teachers engaging in abusive behaviour against other boys and girls may be doing so partly in response to anxieties they experience as a result of trying (unsuccessfully) to live up to hegemonic male ideals. In my study I want to hold onto the notion that bullying takes particular forms and directions and that some people are more likely to be bullied than others, without reifying the perpetrators as always powerful and victims as always weak.

Theorizing young people as active agents

My research is informed by the 'new sociology of childhood' (James and Prout, 1997) which takes issue with paradigms of childhood derived from developmental psychology which construct children as not fully fledged adults rather than as active agents in their own right. My concern to address the Grade 9 students in my study as active agents is reflected in the participatory methods I am using in which I try to put the onus on the young people to set the agenda, and in my approach to the presentation and analysis of my findings. (See section on methodology)

Addressing identities and drawing on social constructionism

The social constructionist position addresses people as active individuals who are always producing and negotiating (whether consciously or not) their identities often in relation to people they define as Other (Pattman and Chege, 2003). For example in Pattman and Chege's study many boys described themselves as free, tough, active in opposition to girls and the characteristics that they associate with femininity for example being passive and emotionally weak (2003). In my research I am particularly interested in finding out about the lives and identities of Grade 9 male and female Indian and Black students at a formerly Indian school and how they speak about conflict and difference and whether race and gender become for them sources of identification, difference and conflict. Do they construct their identities in relation to Others defined along racial and gendered lines and, if so, what evidence is there of this from what they say about themselves and their relations with others at school, and from how they speak and relate to each other in the focus group discussions themselves. Feminists and race theorists, drawing on social constructionist ideas, have argued that these kinds of gender polarised and race polarised relations are imbued with power (see for example Connell, 1995) and may lead to forms of conflict violence and abuse. In my study I want to examine, in part, the salience and significance of race and gender for various students at this formerly Indian school in relation to the ways they construct their identities, and whether the kind of identifications they forge, help to generate particular conflicts and abuses.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Participants in focus group discussions

After preliminary discussions with the school principal and members of staff who specifically mentioned bullying being a problem among grade nine learners, I decided to make Grade 9 learners the subjects of my study and to investigate their accounts, experiences and understandings of conflict and bullying at school. Thereafter, I met with the class teachers of the grade nines as well as the nine grade nine classes and as a result of conversations with both the teachers and learners chose a particular grade nine class upon which to focus.

I conducted 4 focus mono racial and single sex group discussions in this class. My reasons for opting for mono-'racial' and single sex groups is that, as a number of contemporary researchers have found, (Frosh et al, 2002, Pattman and Chege, 2003) people when discussing themselves and their relations with others especially where these may involve possible cross gender and cross 'racial' conflicts, are more open in these than in 'racially' and gender mixed groups. For example, it may be more difficult for girls to talk about sexual harassment in the presence of boys than with other girls (Pattman & Chege, 2003) or for young people to talk about forms of racialised bullying in mixed rather than 'mono-racial' groups. (See Pattman & Bhana, 2007).

I also conducted three sets of mixed focus group discussions in terms of 'race' and gender in order to explore whether young people raise different issues in relation to bullying or elaborate in different ways on this in the different contexts ie in mixed 'race', mixed sex and mono racial and single sex focus groups. I initially conducted the first mixed focus group discussion with Indian and Black girls thereafter with Indian and Black boys and the third was a combination of Indian girls/boys and Black girls/boys.

There were roughly eight students per focus group.

Conducting focus group discussions

I was particularly concerned to make students feel comfortable and relaxed and talking to students in groups of people with their contemporaries with whom they were familiar, helped, I think, to promote this. I also wanted the students not to see me as a researcher with all the questions to put to them to answer but rather as someone who wanted to find out from them about repeated forms of conflict and if so, whether they occurred between particular individuals or groups of learners. I also wanted to explore possible power relations between students and about their experiences and concerns.

While I had certain themes which I wanted to introduce into the focus groups my concern was to encourage the young people themselves to set the agenda and dictate

the pace and direction of the discussion. I did not ask them specifically about bullying in school, precisely because bullying is popularly defined in quiet restrictive ways, which may exclude patterns of conflict emanating from unequal power relations such as sexual or 'racial' harassment and/or sustained and repeated forms of verbal abuse which I wanted to address. I asked them rather about conflict between pupils (and also between pupils and teachers) in the school, and what forms this took and whether certain boys and girls were popular and others unpopular or less popular and if so, what were the criteria of popularity for boys and girls and whether unpopular or less popular boys and girls were picked on in certain ways and if so how? I then picked up on and explored concerns and issues which they raised relating to specific conflicts experienced at school.

Analysis of focus group discussions: what people say and how they say it

The focus group discussions were being taped and transcribed. In analyzing these tapes I focusing not only on what the young people have been saying but also how they say it and the ways they present themselves as well as the relations they forge in the focus group discussions. I have been particularly interested in looking at how the boys and girls displayed masculinities and femininities in the focus group discussions for example whether certain boys/girls tend to dominate, are loud, funny etc and whether other boys/girls are much quieter. Focusing on such displays in the focus groups, may, as Frosh et al (2002) argue provide insights into the formation of hierarchies between boys (and between girls) which may give rise to patterns of conflict and bullying.

Individual interviews

One of the problems raised by a number of studies which deal with forms of bullying concerns the difficulty of victims reporting this. This is not surprising given the imbalance of power between perpetrator and victim, and the fear of possible reprisals as well as, in some cases, fears of being disbelieved or not taken seriously. Leach et al (2003), for example, argue in research conducted in Zimbabwe, Ghana and Malawi that sexual harassment of girls was widespread and in most instances girls were reluctant to report cases of sexual violence . This was partly because they feared being blamed for being 'bad,' especially when the perpetrators were powerful male teachers.

The fear of reporting bullying has important implications for how I conducted my research. While I wanted to use focus groups to generate discussions among Grade nine pupils about popularity and unpopularity among boys and girls and power relations between pupils and forms of bullying and harassment, I was very aware that it may be impossible for people who are victims of bullying to report and elaborate upon their particular experiences in groups. Frosh et al (2002), in their study on boys and masculinities in London, found that when interviewed individually some of the same boys, who had been interviewed previously in groups and had seemed to gel with the others, were much more serious and sad and spoke about being picked on by other boys. To have spoken like this in the group, Frosh et al argue, would not only

have been seen as a form of 'grassing,' but also as a sign of weakness as a male, and would have incited recriminations from other boys.

Partly for these reasons I conducted individual interviews with selected boys and girls, following the focus group discussions. But individual interviews also allow for the possibility of getting to know specific young people better, how they identify themselves as particular kinds of boys and girls, how they relate to other boys and girls, whether these involve or entail forms of conflict (and bullying), and what their particular views are regarding forms of bullying among Grade nines. In the individual interviews, I tried to cover similar themes, as in the focus groups, and my concern in these, as in the focus group discussions, was on being 'young person centred,' (Frosh et al, 2002) and encouraging my interviewees to set the agenda, picking up on points they raise and making it conversational.

I selected boys and girls for the individual interviews who were particularly loud and dominant in the focus groups as well as those who are particularly quiet and relatively marginalized. I interviewed three Indian girls, three Black girls, three Indian boys and could only interview one Black boy as a result of pupils being absent.

Interviews with teachers

After conducting the various focus group discussions with the pupils I interviewed the Principal as well as two of the class teachers who work closely with the pupils. In these interviews I wanted to put to them concerns the young people I had been speaking to raised about abuse and bullying between pupils and from teachers to pupils at school.

Ethical issues

I have followed the usual procedures, by firstly writing a letter of consent to the school principal explaining what the research is about and the kinds of questions I will be asking the pupils. Thereafter I wrote letters to the students and their parents, explaining to them what the research was about and asked for consent as well as making it clear that everything they said would be kept in confidence, and that pseudonyms will be used to refer to specific participants, since I may quote the participants verbatim in writing up the research. I also made it clear to the participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any point should they so wish.

This particular project, however, raises other ethical concerns, notably what to do if a participant speaks about being bullied himself/herself. Should I, as researcher observe confidentiality, if the participant does not want this to be reported, and not report this to the authorities? I have decided to follow Frosh et al's position on this, and make it clear on the letter I present to the boys and girls and their parents, that if extreme forms of abuse and bullying are reported, I will be under obligation to report these to appropriate authorities.

In order to contribute to a relatively relaxed relationship between researcher and researched, some researchers working with young people have advocated supplying

soft drinks and sweets to the young people. For example Pattman and Chege (2003) argue, not only may this be seen as a token of appreciation for the young people's time, but also may be associated with chatting and more relaxed forms of conversation which perhaps rarely occur in the formal classroom settings where school based interviews and discussions (including mine) often take place. For these reasons I have provided my interviewees with chocolates after the focus group discussions.

Chapter 5: Findings and Analysis

Introduction

I have divided my findings into the key kinds of conflicts which students spoke about in the focus group discussions. These consisted of conflicts rooted in various kinds of abusive relations between various kinds of students or rooted in abusive relations between teachers and students (with the teachers being constructed as the abusers).

Where conflicts between students were raised and discussed by the students these were often racialised and also gendered. Thus, for example dominant themes emerging in the focus group discussions were conflicts between Black girls and Indian girls or between Black boys and Indian boys or between Indian boys and Black girls or between Black boys and male Indian teachers or Black girls and female Indian teachers. Significantly, however, racialised conflicts were introduced and spoken about by participants in the mono racial focus groups I conducted (perhaps it would have been too embarrassing or uncomfortable for students to talk about these in racially mixed groups). More specifically, it was in the focus groups with Indian girls that racialised conflicts between Indian and Black girls emerged as a key concern, with Black girls being blamed as the perpetrators and Indian girls constructing themselves as the victims. And it was in focus groups with Indian boys that conflicts between them and Black girls were addressed, with the Indian boys blaming Black girls.

Intimidation, teasing and bullying between students was also spoken about in the focus group discussions in ways which did not focus on the race or gender of the students, but seemed to attribute this behaviour simply to marked differentials in status and popularity between students, unrelated to race and gender. (Although criteria of popularity/unpopularity seemed to be quite gendered and, certainly for girls, was tied up with heterosexual attraction) I have referred to these as 'Conflicts emanating from status differentials.' These were spoken about in both mono racial and mixed race interviews. Black girls, for example, complained about being bullied by older boys and girls.

Where conflicts were raised which focused on teachers and their (abusive) relations with students, these took three forms, and these were often inter-related in the students' accounts. First, corporal punishment was spoken about by most boys and girls as a form of abuse. Second, sexual abuse from male teachers to female students which was raised as a major concern only in single sex group discussions with girls. Third, racism from teachers to particular students was raised as a major concern only in all Black student groups.

In this section I address these themes, namely
1) racialised and gendered conflicts and abuses between students
2) conflicts and abuses between students attributed to lack of popularity not (explicitly) related in the students' accounts to race and gender
3) forms of corporal punishment
4) verbal sexual abuse and harassment by male teachers of female students
5) racist abuse by teachers directed at black students

I shall draw quite extensively upon extracts from the focus group discussions with students in order to illustrate how particular students addressed these themes, what they said about them and their engagement when doing so, and their relationships with other students in the group. As argued in the Methodology Section, my research aims to be student-centred, addressing young people as 'experts' and encouraging their voices, and I try to do justice to these precisely by including substantial extracts from the group discussions.

In this section I shall also draw on interviews with teachers where I put to them students' accounts of racialised conflicts and abuses between students at school as well as students' concerns about corporal punishment.

Finally I refer briefly to the individual interviews with students, focusing on how similar or different students' presentations of conflicts and abuses in their school were in these and in the focus group discussions. There was little difference between what students said about conflicts and abuses in the individual interviews and in the mono racial focus group discussions. It seemed that it was whether there with other students who were being interviewed collectively from same or different races or gender which crucially affected how and what people said about conflicts and abuses at school.

Grade 9 students' accounts of racialised and gendered conflicts and abuses between students

Indian girls' accounts of conflicts between Black and Indian female students

Racialised conflict emerged as a dominant feature and concern in a mono-racial discussion with eight Indian girls. It is important to make it clear that the young women, themselves, put this on the agenda not me. They introduced this not in response to specific questions I was asking about whether conflicts at school took racialised forms and patterns, but in response simply to a request I put at the beginning as a way of starting a discussion for them to elaborate on their day at school. Clearly this reflects the significance they attached to racialised conflicts at school, and, as they went on to illustrate graphically, conflicts between themselves and Black girls, with Black girls constructed very much as the perpetrators and themselves as the victims.

I asked the girls to describe how their day starts and the atmosphere in their class and the school, and the girls began to discuss the situation between themselves and the Black girls in their class.

> Riya : our class is situated (2) with all kinds of different groups
> The other girls laugh and giggle
> Q ; What kind of groups?
> Riya : Blacks and Indians
> Lesley: how in the morning when we all there with the black girls

In this very first extract, Riya pauses for a moment, as if to think of the way to phrase what she is about to say in a politically correct manner so as to not appear to be racist in anyway. The girls began categorizing themselves as Indians different from Blacks learners in the school. With Riya, dividing the class into different groups, then into specific race groups, Black and Indian and Lesely again stressing the division that exists between the two groups by describing themselves the Indian and then the Black girls.

The issue of race was introduced by the Indian girls, themselves, and it is clear that for the Indian girl's race features as an important issue in their relations at school. (As Dolby (2001) states race persists as a crucial aspect in the lives of learners in schools in post apartheid South Africa.) The laughter of the girls may signify embarrassment at not wanting to be seen as racist, given the social taboos around this in contemporary South Africa.

The girls began discussing the situation in the classroom after assembly.

> Riya : we don't have a problem like that in our class because the Indian girls we all together
> NB: All the girls talk over each making it difficult to identify with what they are saying
> Liesley : but in the morning they come and sometimes they irritate you
> Kaylie: they come in the middle of conservation and scream at your face and stuff and say things about you
> Kia : we know that they talking about us because they using our names
> Ashley : they in the class (2) they think that they rule the school, take for example this morning, we all sitting in our places they come and all of a sudden they start shouting and screaming for food. They screaming, screaming, screaming and you know how they can scream
> NB: all the girls break out in laughter and giggles
> Ashley: they are screaming and fighting (giggles) and we can't even hear ourselves talking to each other and yet we are so close like this but we can't hear what we saying. I went up to them and told them to please keep it down because we also want to hear what other people are saying not only you'll. Then she turned around and told me we not going to keep quiet for you'll

The Indian girls are constructing themselves in this extract as not only different but also in opposition to Black girls. The Indian girls are very emotionally engaged in this interview, and the above can be seen as a collective performance by these girls with each girl building on what the other has to say. The Indian girls are denigrating Black girls by picking on specific behaviours exhibited by Black girls such as screaming, being the dominant group and taking others belongings. The Indian girls have constructed Black girls as being disruptive and unable to control themselves whereas they talk softly, very politely take for example the way Ashley describes the manner in which she approached the Black girls, "please keep it down" and the Black girl replied "we not going to keep quiet for you'll". The Indian girls are being highly critical of Black girls and their behaviours.

They see the Black girls as important in relation to the ways in which they think and construct themselves. Their central argument signals the importance they attach to

Black girls as an identity group in relation to whom they identify themselves. Riya : "we don't have a problem like that in our class because the Indian girls we all together" , in other words, Indian girls are forming friendships in opposition to the Black girls as well as constructing their identities in opposition to the Black girls. The manner in which Riya phrases her comments, "we don't have a problem like that in our class", so taken for granted is her common sense of identity as an Indian.

The repetition of words, the break out of laughter and giggles by the girls can be signifiers of the taboo of race as a discussion among South Africans. The girls in the first extract are very cautious not to be wanted to be labelled as being a racist however they're asserting how powerful these Black girls are, so not only are there different race groups but are seen as being in opposition to each other and maybe that is why the conflict is so embarrassing.

The ability of these girls to be able to express these emotions explicitly in a more formal context with me an outsider, an Indian women, a little older than them may be interpreted by them as a little naughty. However I think they felt at ease with me because I was listening to them, without being judgmental, and perhaps talking explicitly about these conflicts could be quiet cathartic.

I wanted the Indian girls to elaborate on their relations with black girls and asked if they had ever been in conflict situations with the Black girls.

> Q : Do you girls or have you been in conflict situations with Black girls ?
> NB : all the girls laugh and giggles
> Riya: ya
> Kia : for simple things
> Riya : like they just start screaming and shouting. All of them will gang up. We all got together and we suppose to do a play on Aids and drugs and we asked the Blacks to come for practice, they, they wanted to change the whole thing around when we wanted to have training during the lunch break, they wanted to bring all their friends into the class.
> Liesel : and you couldn't tell them anything
> Ashley : because they just turn around and just start swearing you or something
> Riya : at the end of they just to go over it and we did end up doing it. They think that they want to run everything in the school just because they black

Again in this extract, the Indian girls make a clear distinction from themselves and the Black girls. Yet again, Black girls are being constructed as irresponsible, dominant, disruptive in stark contrast to Indian girls who actually want to work and are highly co-operative.

The situation between the Indian and Black girls is very conflictual. The Indian girls feel that the Black girls are undermining them. Indian girls are arguing that just because of the "skin color", of these Black girls they think they can do as they wish. Riya "want to run everything....just because they Black". Race and racism was put on the agenda by the Indian girls themselves. The Indian girls are constructing themselves as being victims of "racism" by Black girls. The class dynamics of South Africa and this school/class in particular is so saturated with race and racialsed conflict is endemic and plays itself through practices that go beyond the schoolyard

fight or the racial slur (Dolby, 2001). Yet again, in this extract, Riya and the other girls are asserting how powerful the Blacks girls are and the break of laughter and giggles by the girls' may be a sign that the conflict they are experiencing is so embarrassing.

Girls had again in this focus group discussion brought up their relationship with Black girls in their school and their class.

> Liesel : some black girls are nice and some not
> Ashlea : some have an attitude and we don't like it
> Riya : like, because Indian's they'll ask if you got a maid or is she black, then you must be rich then they have a problem with that, they feel that we have a better life then them.

Indian girls are presenting their relationship with Black girls in terms of an inferiority/ superiority complex. They are constructing Black girls as feeling a sense of inferiority towards them. Indian girls feel that the Black girls are imposing themselves on them. Indian girls are feeling got at by Black girls. Historically in South Africa manual labour and domestic work has being characterized as Black. Poverty, labour controls and a lack of employment alternatives combine to trap many African women in domestic service (Cock, 2001). Cock refers to African women being "trapped" because of low wages, long working hours and the demeaning treatment they endure from employers (2001). Most Black women in South Africa are employed as domestics still today. While wages and working conditions may have improved, Black girls in the school may regard having maids and especially Black maids as sense of being oppressed.

Black people have been maids for both Indian and Whites during apartheid and in post apartheid as well. So, not only is this a reality in post apartheid South Africa but also a symbol of inferiority. For the Indian girls the Black girls were constructing themselves as victims in relation to them, were producing an inferiority complex by drawing on key cultural symbols of Black (female) subservience and inferiority, such as the Black domestic worker, working for Indian and White families and (unfairly, in the eyes of the Indian girls) making this into an issue which affected relations between Black and Indian girls at school. Clearly the problem for Indian girls did not reside in them (the Indian girls) flaunting a sense of superiority, but in the Black girls imputing to them (the Indian girls) a sense of superiority.

Black girls' accounts of conflicts between Black female students, Black female and Black male students and between Black female and Indian male students

While conflicts between Indian and Black girls featured so prominently and were spoken about in such emotionally engaged ways in focus group discussions with Indian girls, these were conspicuous by their absence in the focus group discussions with Black girls. This may be because the Indian girls identified with me (an Indian woman) whereas the Black girls may have been concerned about offending me. Or it may be that the Indian girls attracted much more significance to this conflict because

they were the ones (in terms of their presentation of it) who were being blamed, troubled and victimized by Black girls. The Black girls did however, speak a great deal about conflicts between pupils where they featured (as victims) but these were conflicts not with Indian girls but generally with older pupils. In their accounts of these conflicts they did not particularly attribute these to racial tensions since the people with whom they were in conflict were, apart from Indian boys, older Black girls and (older) Black boys. However what was striking was that their protagonists were always defined in terms of race, namely older Black girls, older Black boys and Indian boys.

When referring to relations with older Black girls, they complained of being teased and bullied by them:

> Portia: Black girls fight with Grade 11 students, the Grade 11 Black girls they (3) tease us the grade 9's
> Q: How do they tease you?
> Saneliswe: call you names, bitches, spit on you, call outside gangs, hit us and some girls cut girls pony tails
> Portia: but we stand up to the bullies
> Thandisile : the Grade 8 girls they rude towards us, mostly the Grade 8 girls do this
> Gladness: pick on me to go to the tuck-shop, hit [me]
> Q: Who hits you?
> Gladness: the Black girls in the Grade 11

The focus in the above extract was on Grade 11 Black girls picking on and bullying them (Grade 9 Black girls), as if they were, putting people like them (ie Black girls) who were their juniors in their place. Interestingly one of the girls, Thandisile, briefly mentions conflict between them (Grade 9 Black girls) and Grade 8 girls, blaming the Grade 8 girls for being rude to them rather than they (Grade 9 girls) for bullying them. Clearly age power hierarchies are highly significant among the Black girls at school, with girls in higher classes asserting themselves in relation to those in lower classes through the kinds of 'bullying' strategies mentioned in the above extract and people in lower classes accepting or resisting this or both.

Whilst, Portia may regard the Grade 11 Black girl bullies as non-threatening, on the other hand Gladness, another learner in the same class, speaks of the way the Black girls hit her if she refuses to go to the tuck-shop. According to Roberts, aggressive behaviours are not limited to only males (2006) as popular stereotypes might suggest. Girls may also become physically aggressive especially when they are involved in gang activities (ibid, 2006). Indeed some of the Black girls mentioned fighting with weapons against those with whom they were in conflict, weapons such as shambocks, knob sticks and electricity wires. But bullying among girls, Roberts suggests often involves name calling and spreading rumours, also evident in the above extract.

After the Black girls spoke about the difficulties they encountered with older Black girls I then asked them to describe the kind of relationship they shared with the boys. They also spoke about being picked on by Black boys, again notably older boys. Here they mentioned verbal sexual abuse and touching, perpetrated by Black boys against them, as well as nonsexual physical abuse.

Q: What about the boys?
Londiwe: the Black boys pick on the Black girls
Q: How do they pick on you girls?
Portia: touch the girls
Thandsile : pick on you
Siza: call names, like you got a ugly body, sometimes they say rude things like we not a virgin, bitch, slut
Q: Who are these boys?
All the girls: grade 11 boys pick on grade 9 girls
Portia: they trip you when you walk past and in the class some boys they pull your chair

These Black girls complained about forms of sexual harassment and verbal abuse from Black boys, and as we shall see later, male teachers were also blamed, notably by Indian girls, for passing sexual comments about them and degrading and undermining them. The issue of sexual harassment of girls in schools in Southern Africa has received much recent attention in research literature. For example, the Human Rights Watch in South Africa have reported that girls faced a number of forms of violence at school which included sexual abuse, sexualized touching, emotional abuse in the forms of threats of violence (2001). These studies have pointed to imbalances of power between the male perpetrators and female victims of sexual harassment and to how sexual harassment itself helps to reinforce these power differences (2001).

In contrast to Pattman and Bhana (2007) who found that Black girls in a formerly Indian schools were critical of Indian girls and not Indian boys (for marginalising them and discriminating against them), the Black girls in this study were highly critical of Indian boys. While Pattman and Bhana (2007) argue that it was in relation to heterosexuality and Indian girls (as their heterosexual rivals) that Black girls expressed their opposition to forms of marginalisation they experienced at schools, in this study the Black girls criticised Indian boys for treating them in sexually derogatory ways and for their condescending attitudes towards them, imploring them not to act like a 'big girl'.

On their relationship with Indian boys the Black girls complained also about them calling them sexist names and accusing them of trying to act big:

Gugu: Indian boys call Black girls names like you a Bitch like when Gladness, this Indian boy slapped her because he thought she touched his bum while we were going to the next period (2) then Gladness slapped him back and he called her a bitch
Nompilo: one Indian boy he punched me on my chest also because someone touched him and then I slapped him and kicking him in the front and he tried to chock me
Portia : but I was only talking to my friend about how Grade 11 act and the girl told me "don't act like a big girl " and threaten to slap me, she called me names, you Tsunami disaster and picked on me, you short piece of shit and swore at me.

Indian boys" accounts of conflicts between Indian male and Black female students,
Indian male and Black male students and Indian female and Black female students

Conflicts between Black girls and Indian boys were affirmed as common in the focus group discussions with Indian boys, with Black girls being blamed for perpetuating these. Like the Indian girls, the Indian boys complained about Black girls swearing and developing an inferiority complex in relation to them or feeling they are in a 'lower class' and blaming them for being racist.

> Sabir : the Black girls they always screaming, take your stuff from the tuck shop when you buy
> Fareed : they start screaming, take your stuff, act like they're drunk, they scream, laugh
> Keaton: Black girls take advantage of you because it's a big deal if boys hits girls and if girls hits boys not big deal
> Munro : Black boys, Indian boys have normal conflicts
> Warren : some Black girls call them racist if Indian boys call them African
> Keaton : but if African girls call them "Koolie", then we call them a " kaffir"

Just as they Indian girls portrayed themselves in stark contrast to Black girls so did the Indian boys, constructing the Black girls (in implicit opposition to them as civilised and mature) as barbaric people who can not control their emotions, who steal, scream and laugh. But the Indian boys also spoke about the ways in which they felt that Black girls took advantage of them, as boys, who were not supposed to hit girls. Whereas the Indian girls agued that the Black girls took advantage of historical racial classifications (outside school) to construct themselves (inside school) in relation to Indians as victims, the Indian boys suggested the Black girls invoked norms and values which protected women to legitimate their (the Black girls') aggression towards them (the Indian boys).

Interestingly, one of the Indian boys, Munro, characterises conflicts between Black and Indian boys as 'normal'. Presumably in this context this means: in contrast to conflicts between Indian boys and Black girls, ones which do not refer explicitly to race. However this seems to be contradicted, as we shall see, by Black boys who speaks about conflicts and fights between them and Indian boys. Or it may be that the term 'normal' indicates that differences between Indian and Black boys are so taken for granted that conflicts between them are simply attributed to what are viewed as natural boyish competitive urges.

While Indian boys spoke about their conflicts with Black girls, they went on to describe relations between Indian girls and Black girls as being particularly polarised.

> Sabir: Indian girls don't get on with Black Girls they back chat and that they don't understand their language
> Adriel : Black girls feel like they in a lower class
> Prineshan : all the black sit on one side and Indians on the other side

Prineshan speaks of the atmosphere in the class with either race group sitting on either side of the class. However this is not only the case when they sit in the class but also during the mixed focus group discussions. Both the boys and girls sat with their own race groups on either side. However when I questioned them about this, boys and girls laughed among themselves and replied by saying that they wanted to sit next to their friends. Thus suggesting to me that no friendship exists across the race lines, and, further, that it is almost taken for granted that friendship only exists between people of the same races.

Black boys' accounts of conflicts between Black male and Indian male students, Indian female students and Black students in general

In the mono racial focus group discussions with Black boys (aged 14-16) racial conflicts emerged as dominant themes, and in these the focus was on conflicts with Indian boys. We were discussing criteria of popularity among students when they raised the issue of how students may feel excluded from groups and how this could lead to conflict. So I posed the question of conflicts between learners taking on a racialised form:

Q : Is conflict between learners in school ever racialised or have you boys ever been involved in an incident of this nature?

All the boys simultaneously agreed [responding one after each other in quick session]

Q: Describe an incident?
Siya : last year [2] O! in grade 8. One Black boy had some words with a Indian boy.
Vinecnt : then, the Black boys gang and the Indian boys gang had some words and said they 'll see each other after school. We'll get them after school; let them act like hero's.
Mthosi: after school, we went got our weapons, me I stay in 1104, brought our gangs and the Indian boys brought their gang.
Vincent: we used any weapons, knives, bricks anything. Even the police got involved the school road, the main road was closed and teachers could not even come out of the school.
Q: were there particular boys involved?
Vincent: no. all ages.
Mthosi : it was the Black boys against the Indian boys.

The boys' response to the question was rather energetic as each one spoke over the other, building on each other, in a collective performance as they described a specific incident of racial conflict among Indian and Black boys in particular. From the above excerpt and the other mono-racial focus group discussion conducted with the Indian girls and boys and the Black girls, race and racial conflict play an important role. Yet again, the school is divided along racial lines,, with the Black boys and Indian boys on opposing sides and the involvement of gang activity.

Vincent tells of the severity of the incident with road blockages and police assistance. So, what may have began with a "simple" dispute between two learners, Siya : "one Black boy had some words with a Indian boy", had turned into a serious racial

situation. No longer was the exchange of words that had transpired between the boys a personal matter between two learners, rather it became a matter of vested importance to all boys (Black and Indian) of all ages.

These boys indicated that Black people at school sometimes felt marginalized, and I asked them if they ever felt picked upon because of their race. The boys all affirmed this, in engaged ways, keen perhaps to tell an Indian interviewer whom they perceived as sympathetic (for putting such a question to them) about their experiences of racism at school:

> Q : have you ever been picked on because you were Black?
> Siya : Ya! I can say yes
> Sanele : yes
> Mithois : yes, the Indian girls in our class [speaks over Sanele]
> Siya: I can say maybe you get one Indian girl and boy they playing with they cellphone and once you giving there and look what they doing, they A! you see they faces, they look at you like, their body languages, you must just watch their body language.
> Vincent : they look at you like you smelling
> NB: the other boys all in agreement with Vincent's comments.
> Sanele: when the teacher puts an Indian girl to sit next to a Black boy, the Indian girls say to the teacher Aya! Sis! Mam, can I sit next to someone else, I can't sit next to this boy.
> NB: the other boys; all agree, this is what they do

From the above excerpt, Black boys feel rather strongly that they are being marginalized because of their skin color. Whilst Siya and Sanele are in firm agreement that they are been marginalized, Mthosi specifically mentions Indian girls as being the perpetrators of this form of marginalization. While Mthosi portrays Indian girls in their class as being racist, Siya immediately affirms that both Indian girls and boys are racist towards them, by excluding them from their groups (interactions). However, though Siya implicates both Indian girls and boys as displaying racist behaviour towards Blacks, Sanele again, affirms Indian girls as the main perpetrators of racist behaviour, "the Indian girls say to the teacher, Aya! Sis!, mam, can I sit next to someone else" and immediately the other boys are in agreement and fuelled with anger as they all speak over each other.

According to the comments from these boys, they are constructing their relationship with Indian girls in particular as quite segregated and conflictual in nature. The Black boys feel that they are been marginalised as boys and are been made to feel that they are less sexually attractive and this can be attributed to the racial tensions between the two groups (Indian and Black) and feel denigrated as Indian girls responded in disgust "sis" by even being seated next to a "Black boy".

In this focus group discussion the boys provided examples of subtle and blatant forms of racism which was mainly perpetrated by Indian girls against them and during the discussion the boys were highly engaged emotionally responding in quick succession and often talking over each other. The incidences of racist behaviours they spoke of were clearly common cultural ones that appeared to symbolize common experience of marginalization they felt as young Black boys. (Compare with Pattman and Bhana,

2007, and the accounts of racism told collectively by Black girls at a formerly Indian school).

Yet again, race and racial conflicts can be seen as playing a pivotal role among the conflicts emanating between the learners. While the Black boys had spoken about conflicts and tensions between them and Indian boys, the examples they gave of being discriminated against in school made Indian girls the perpetrators. I was interested in why they had not mentioned Indian boys as perpetrators of racism against them, and was told that Indian boys were 'scared' of them:

Q : what about the Indian boys ?
NB [the boys speak over each other]
Sanele & Siya : no
Vincent & Mthosi : no, they won't say anything, they're afraid of us
Sanele : they scared of us
Q : why?
Vincent : because [1] we are the Black people
Q : how does that make you feel?
Vincent : makes you feel bad
Mthosi : not much you can do
Sanele : because if you go the tell the teacher, you can't complain, the teacher will tell you that you being racist like that
Siya : you feel bad
Sanele : you feel sad, sometimes angry
Vincent: sometimes the teachers behave the same way
Q: how? Can you explain?
Vincent: when you come near to them at their desk, they tell you to take so many steps back
Mthosi : ya! But if an Indian child comes near to their desk, they don't say that
Vincent: sometimes they won't mark your page if you do something like that
Q: why?
Siya : maybe because they think you stinking
Vincent: Ya! Something like that
Sanele : we wouldn't know
Mthosi ; but if an Indian child is coming, they can come as close to you as they want but you must not.

From the extract, it is clear how racialised hierarchies are being constructed between the boys. The Black boys are constructing themselves as embodying hegemonic male attributes, as being tough and hard and Indian boys as weak and effeminate in comparison. This is supported by studies in the UK such as Paul Conolly (1998) and Tony Sewell (1997) as well as Frosh et al (2002) which have examined racialised hierarchies and relations between boys. They found that African Caribbean boys were constructed as embodying hegemonic male ideals of toughness and South Asian boys, in comparison, were constructed as weak. As in these studies, within this school, gender intersects with race in the formation of identities of the schoolboys and can lead to racialised conflicts and bullying.

So, not only are Black boys marginalized by Indian girls and also Indian boys but they do not perceive them as perpetrators of racist behaviour. I think Black boys do not feel that Indian boys pose a threat to them since they (Black boys) perceive that they are "scared" of them .On the other hand, the "relationship" shared with Indian girls is of disgust and denigration and feeling of being less sexually attractive since the girls would not even want to be seated next to them.

Despite these Black boys constructing themselves as embodying hegemonic male attributes, these boys spoke of their emotions/feelings of sadness and sense of helplessness of the manner in which they are perceived by the Indian learners. Even seeking out assistance from teachers within school is futile since they (Black boys) are instead constructed as being racist. Indeed the Indian (male?) teachers are identified like the Indian boys as being scared of them. While, in all mono-racial/single sex discussions, race and racial conflict was a central theme raised by the learners, it was only in the discussion with the Black boys that the issue of racial tensions between students (them) and (Indian) teachers was raised.

While it appears that these boys depict themselves as upholding hegemonic male attributes, it is, in this extract that boys discuss their sense of loneliness and uncertainty. As Pollack (1998) argues boys wear the mask of masculinity so skilfully as these boys do, since they have constructed themselves as tough and fearful, so, even if there are those who want to assist, find immense difficulty since these boys appear on the outside cheerful, resilient whilst inside they may be troubled, lonely and afraid, emotions not fitting of the male model .

Individual Loosely Structured Interviews

I had chosen to conduct individual loosely structured interviews with a few learners who, as mentioned in the methodology section, were particularly loud, dominant or relatively quiet. These individuals were selected from both the mono racial and racially mixed groups as well as the single sex and mixed sex groups. Significantly in the individual interviews, learners who had participated in all these different kinds of group discussions, raised similar themes as in the mono-racial group discussions, and spoke a great deal about racialised and gendered conflicts. As mentioned above these were not addressed very much in the racially and gender mixed groups

Racially mixed focus groups and accounts of racial conflicts

It was very striking that in the racially mixed focus groups discussions, accounts of racialised conflicts featured much less than in the mono racial focus groups, and where they did feature the participants were much less engaged. I suggest that this was, at least in part, due to the embarrassment this would have produced. As Pattman, (2007) argues in a study on student identities and relations at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, race is highly significant in structuring relations, but talking about race, let alone racial conflicts and antagonisms, is almost taboo between people of different races. In the monoethnic interviews race emerged spontaneously when issues of conflict were being discussed i.e. it was introduced by the students themselves, whereas in the mixed interviews it was always me who introduced it by asking specifically whether conflicts were ever racialised.

I refer here to one racially mixed girls' focus group discussion where I asked this question. Though a Black and Indian girl respond by affirming that there are such conflicts, significantly they do so in a way which seems to play these down, even (in the case of Ashlea, the Indian girl) seeming to contradict herself and suggesting that conflicts are not really racialised after all:

> Q: Do you girls experience any conflicts with each other as Indians and Black learners?
> Londi (Black girl): (2) Yes! It depends. Some other people don't get along and some do, just fine. Like some other people just they don't get along very well (2). Like sometimes, no it's like that all the time. If a Zulu person and a Indian person (2) the Africans will fight all the time. So, they think like they so fresh (2) the Africans.
> Ashlea (Indian girl): JA! There is sometime in our class but not like big problems. Like you can just say that the problem is just not between the Indian and the Black but everyone in the classroom. Like for example (4) bunking in our class, that is a big problem. They get along well (2), they do (4). Most of the Indian girls (2) there's not a lot of girls in our class, there's very little and we get along (laughter) almost very well.

Immediately with just a brief hesitation, Londi , a Black girl is in firm agreement that there is indeed racial conflicts been experienced among the Indian and Black learners in this school. However, in contrast to the accounts in the mono-racial group discussions, Londi, is rather vague, with whom, whether it is the Indian boys/girls or both that a conflictual relationship is shared with. Londi only makes mention of a "Zulu person" and a "Indian person".

Ashlea suggests that, racial conflict is not really a major issue and that the relationship shared between Indian girls and Black girls is rather good. However, she mentions "most Indian girls", hence suggesting that not all the Indian girls feel the way she does and do not echo her sentiments. Her emphasis, however, in contrast to the accounts in the mono-racial interviews, is on Blacks and Indians in general getting on well with each other.

The laughter at the close of Ashlea's comments may suggest perhaps a recognition that in her fairy rosy account of relations between Indians and Blacks in the school, she may be playing down conflicts.

Teachers' perceptions of race relations in the school and their responses to students' accounts of racial conflicts

Since this issue of racial conflict was put on the agenda by learners themselves, therefore suggesting the significance of this issue within their lives, I directly asked their subject teachers, who took the students for English and Afrikaans and Life Orientation and worked closely with them on a daily basis, and the schools' principal for their opinions on this matter.

Female subject teacher:

> Q: How would you describe the relationship between Indian and Black learners? (4) umm...they come along way.(2) So, now I'll tell you that most of the learners, don't think and act like that, more and more the African children are trying to make themselves err..(4) seem to be (4) like disadvantaged when they not. (4) They think and feel that way but they don't (3), I think they find faults with other race groups.

While recognising that they may be problematic, and perhaps also displaying through her frequent long pauses that this is a contentious topic, she emphasises (as in the racially mixed focus group discussions with the students) that things have improved and that most of the learners 'don't think and act like that.' Presumably she means, here, think and act as if they are in conflict with people from other races. Interestingly, I did not even mention this in my question. I simply asked her to describe the relationship between Black and Indian learners, and she interpreted being asked about this as implying that the relationship was problematic. I suggest that this is another example of how talking about 'race' and 'race' relations has become almost taboo and synonymous with apartheid thinking. Like the Indian girls, the teacher blames African children (in a piece punctuated by lots of pauses, presumably reflecting her concern not to be seen to be racist) for playing at victims 'when they are not' and introducing the race card.

Male subject Teacher :

> I think that it's good of the boys to connect [with people of other races] that (2) see here, you'll find that there is a certain divide between races, you know what I'm saying. Just make an observation during the break and you'll see when children are free and time is at their disposable, to do what they want to do. I mean they'll obviously (3) join learners of their own race. I don't think it's racist. It's just natural for them to be in the company of people they feel most comfortable with. Let's suppose a new Grade 8 class comes right and (2) you don't give them a specific place to sit and just allow them say (4) to sit next to who ever they want. You'll find that the African girls will go and sit next to an African child and same with the Indian child. I think it's their choice and in a democracy you got a choice.

The male subject teacher responded by acknowledging that Indian and Black students did not mix but not problematising this, indeed constructing this as 'natural.' Though this seems to contradict the first part of his response where he eulogises about (some) boys at school 'connecting' with people from other races (with the implication that girls are much less likely to do so.) Rather than understanding people from different races as naturally flocking to their own groups, my view is that students were constructing themselves as similar or different from each along racial lines, and that such constructions, as was apparent in the some of the mono racial focus discussions could involve indifference but also hostility to those defined as racial Others. Not only is it learners who are gripped by fear of embracing diversity but also some of the teachers themselves. Yet it is teachers, who, in my view, should be playing a role encouraging learners to forge friendships with race groups other than their own.

Principal

In contrast to the subject teachers the Principal not only emphasised that relations between Black and Indian students were problematic but attributed this to the school being historically, numerically and symbolically an Indian school. In stark contrast to the female subject teacher he blamed Indians not Blacks for 'making' 'racial issues.'

> You see (2) I don't really think this is the true nature of what they have reported to you because (6) majority of the problems that we have, is amongst the Indian population. Most of the problem is amongst themselves (4) and I'll say that ninety percent will be the Indian learners and ten percent will be the African learners (4).

> And because you see our schools were predominantly Indian school, the Indian learners feel that this school is only an Indian school, they don't realize you have to move with democracy, now so, (2) according to them it still an Indian school. So, whatever they say or do, everybody has to follow the line and I think it is (2) very difficult that Indian have not fully accepted the transformation in the school situation.

> (2) So maybe, they feel that (4) the African learners maybe intimidating them (6) but most of the problem that happens between the Indian and African learners starts with the Indian learner. Because (4) from the investigation that I do and I feel that every learner is equal here, when a problem of that nature comes (4), I try to find out what the root of the problem is and 99.9 % of the time you find that the Indians are the root of the problem and they make it into a racial issue.

The principal is attributing what he views as a problematic relationship shared between the learners of different race groups to Indian learners, who he argues are unable to come to terms with the fact that the school is no longer an Indian school, and who don't gel with Black learners. While there is no doubt that Black students feel a sense of marginalisation in this school, my view, on the basis of the focus group discussions I have conducted with Black and Indian students, is that both groups have developed quite polarised views of those they define as Other along racial lines, and that any intervention programme aimed at encouraging Black and Indian learners to engage with each other would need to avoid blaming one side or the other and address each others' fears and concerns about those they define as racial Others.

Grade 9 students' accounts of conflicts emanating from hierarchies of popularity

Conflicts between students often seemed to be attributed to hierarchies of popularity, which were not (at least explicitly) linked with race or gender, with the unpopular students defined as the ones who were likely to experience bullying, abuse and marginalization.

Black girls' accounts of markers and hierarchies of popularity, and conflicts emanating from these

Hierarchies of popularity were quite gendered, with criteria of heterosexual attraction being particularly significant as markers of popularity for girls, as we see in the following discussion with girls. In this, as we see, in the following extract from the focus group discussion with Black girls, girls who were seen not to live up to these were liable to be called derogatory names.

> Q: girls tell me are there different groups in your school?
> Gladness: you get the popular ones and the unpopular ones
> Gugu : must hang out with boys
> Sanseliwe : wear make up, jewellery, track suit, short skirts, pants must be tight
> Gugu :Ya! if you not rich don't fit in a group
> Portia: if it not name brands or else you excluded
> Gladness: some of us don't smoke and don't do it, you called "stupid", "chicken", "lightie"

Girls who did not 'hang out with boys' nor wear the necessary clothes and brands to make them heterosexually attractive and fashionable were liable to be 'excluded' and called derogatory names, and this, as Gugu suggested, was linked to relative affluence, and whether you could afford to buy the brands which made them attractive. Yet girls, as we have already seen, complained of being called sexually derogatory names if they were perceived as being too sexual. It seems, as Cowie and Lees argued in her study of 'slags and drags' in the UK (1981), that the popularity of girls depended on them treading a thin line between attractive for boys without being seen as 'loose' or promiscuous.

The Black girls elaborated on how girls were constructed as unpopular, partly for being unattractive not dressing appropriately, and partly for showing they were poor, and how this led to them being laughed at, and, in particular by boys.

> Londiwe : [They are] picked on [for having] no cell phone
> Nompilo: dress code, money, how rich you
> Portia: basically anything that they feel is wrong with you
> Gladness: they even pick on your hairstyles, they called my plait ugly
> Thandasile : even a pony tail is ugly and short hair is ugly
> Q: how do they pick on them?
> Gladness: they laugh at them
> Q: who laughs?
> Thandalise: older boys, who fail, the Gr 11 boys
> Portia: all boys

While the Black girls appeared to be speaking here about conflicts which arose in school from the construction of (non racialised but gendered) hierarchies of popularity/unpopularity in school, it may be that what counted as attractive/unattractive (as a criteria of popularity) was racialised. For example, 'short hair' was mentioned as 'ugly', and in Pattman and Bhana's (2007) study on Black

girls in a formerly Indian school, the Black girls complained about how the Indian girls flaunted their long hair in ways which made them (the Black girls) feel inferior. (For the Black girls in Pattman and Bhana's study, sexuality became a focal point through which they contested the racism which they complained permeated their everyday lives at the school.)

Since these girls only spoke about girls when identifying two prominent groups, a popular and unpopular group, I asked them to tell me about popular boys (and by implication) unpopular boys in their school.

> Q: Tell me about popular boys in your school?
> All the girls laugh
> Nompilo : must have a car
> Portia: silver teeth, dollar, 1 or u star sign
> Gugu : Ja! Must not have a full piece
> Gladness: smoke, must
> Londiwe : boys wear brands, black pants, boot leg not ordinary school boy pants
> Siza : unpopular boys wear anareck jacket and boys get picked on, "what you borrowed from your grandfather"
> Gugu : even if your pants are to grey, you get picked on
> Nompilo : unpopular boys too quiet
> Portia : if you wear toughies, black big shoes, don't have grasshoppers, you must flush yourself in the toilet
> Londiwe : if you intelligent
> Gladness: even creative they pick on you

The girls all broke out into laughter when I asked them about popular boys. Fashion, style, cars, deviant behaviours were all mentioned as indicators of popularity among boys in the school. In contrast, being an introvert, intelligent and adhering to school rules in terms of uniform were frowned upon and taken as things unpopular boys did. Recent school based studies in the West on the cultures and identities of boys have also suggested that boys who are seen to be too committed to the school's work ethic may be picked on, (See, for example, Frosh et al, 2002) Responses from Gugu, "even if your pants are to grey, you get picked on" and Gladness "even creative they pick on you" indicate a sense of shock and sympathy for the boys constructed as unpopular. I asked them to elaborate on the unpopular boys and how they were picked upon.

> Q: how else are unpopular boys picked on?
> Nompilo: they ask them for money
> Gugu: do their homework
> Portia: and if you don't they hit them, fight
> Thandlise : when they get to angry, then only they fight
> Siza: the unpopular boy the get help from outside their big brothers or cousins
> Londiwe: Ja! They fight with weapons, bricks, knives

The unpopular boys were picked upon for their appearances and intelligence and creativity as affirmed in the previous extract, and the popular boys took advantage of the unpopular boys by not only bullying them to do their homework but also to extract money from them.

According to Roberts the social status of a child can make him or her vulnerable to "abusive behaviour" towards them (2006:21). Writing about criteria of social status among young people in the West, Roberts identifies fashion, style, attitude, shoes, cars, electronic equipment for example cell phones and computers. A child found deviating from the acceptable social status is prone to become victims of bullying. It is evident according to the learners' responses above that the perceived social status of a learner plays a key part in whether they will be picked upon.

Indian boys' accounts of markers and hierarchies of popularity, and conflicts emanating from these

There seemed to be a consensus across the different gendered and racial groups I spoke to about what constituted dominant criteria of popularity/unpopularity for boys and girls. For example the Indian boys spoke about boys who were naughty and subverted school values, who wore the latest brands, who looked affluent wearing gold and diamonds, who were (sexually) attractive to girls and good at sport as being popular, and girls who looked and behaved in heterosexually attractive ways, linked to affluence, as popular.

Popular boys were, according to the Indian boys:
>   Fareed: boys who play sport
>   Sabir : the smokers
>   Prineshan: popular boys gamble
>   Judane: hang out with older boys
>   Warren: boys that hang out with girls
>   Munro: boys wearing certain brand makes you popular
>   Keaton: Hygiene, boys that are clean
>   Prineshan : gold, fifty cent dollar chains
>   Fareed: gold silts, upside down caps
>   Keaton : earnings, one side like a stud, diamond stud, thick studs
>   Judane : body piercing in your tongue

Popular girls were, according to the Indian boys:
>   Judane : rich, must be rich
>   Keaton : must have attitude
>   Fareed : short skirts, must be tight, skirt out of the pants
>   Warren : leave their hair open
>   Sabir : wear make up
>   Munro: fancy shoes, like scandals
>   Adriel : hair braids, streaks and long hair like shoulder length

When I asked the Indian boys about unpopular people in their school, their focus was on boys and how and why these unpopular boys got picked upon.

>   Warren: if you quiet but strong don't get picked on
>   Munro: but if you quiet and skinny then you get picked on

> Adriel : they pick on things that wrong with you like if your eyes looks a certain way like not straight

Unpopular boys seem to be most far removed from hegemonic male ideals, physical strength, confidence, loudness, being able to take up space physically and verbally. As Warren indicates lacking in one of those characteristics (loudness) and being quiet does not necessarily make one susceptible to bullying as long as the boy as able to compensate for this (lacking) with 'strong'. Indeed a powerful image, often associated with hegemonic masculinity, is of the strong silent type, a male who is so strong that he does not need to advertise his presence through loud displays. But a physically weak male who is quiet, has in terms of popular constructions of hegemonic masculinity, nothing going for him. His quietness is taken not as a sign of strength and self containment but as reflecting his overall weakness, and it is such boys, the least hegemonically male, who are picked upon. As argued in the Literature Review, a number of contemporary writers in the West and in South Africa, such as Frosh et al (2002) Salo, (2005) Morrell, (2000) Nayak and Kehily (1996) argue that picking on and teasing boys who are constructed as deviating most from hegemonic ideals of masculinity may allow boys faced with constant anxieties about proving themselves as proper males, to do precisely this.

Some of these Indian boys mentioned being called nicknames as examples of how unpopular boys were picked upon, though they made it clear it depended on the kinds of nicknames which were used. This arose when they were discussing the nicknames they were given.

> Judane : hurts your feelings when the names are hurtful
> Prinesshen: call me "burgers, it's done in a fun way

Roberts (2006) argues that name calling and teasing among boys (in the West) can be viewed as normal and indeed positive encouraging playfulness. However other researchers have argued 'name calling' is often hurtful or that there is often a thin line between being playful and hurtful name calling, and that boys accused of being hurtful may claim they are only being playful and undermine the 'victim' further for lacking a sense of humour. (See for example, Frosh et al, 2002, on boys 'cussing' other boys as 'gay' in schools in London.)

Black boys' accounts of markers and hierarchies of popularity, and conflicts emanating from these

When asked whether there were groups in the schools which were based on popularity, Black boys indicated that there were and identified as criteria of popularity 'style', including dress, attitude and ways of walking and looking, and being a (sexual) 'player.' In contrast, an unpopular person was someone who lacked 'style' in all these various expressions

> Q: what does one have to do to be popular?
> Vincent: the way you dress, the way you walk, your attitude, you must be a player with the boys and the girls, the way you look
> Mthosis: wear earrings in your ears (1) you a glamour boy

> Siza: call them charmers or donono's
> Q: how would you describe an unpopular person?
> Sanele : person who keep quiet
> Mthokzi : people don't know you
> Vincent: person who does not have no girlfriend
> Siya : person with no "style"
> Q: what do you mean by "style"?
> Siya : someone who has no dress style, walking
> Vincent : no cell phone, what shoe you wearing, what cut style pants
> you wearing
> Mthokzi : what cut style shoe

When I asked whether popular boys picked on unpopular boys, it was clear that these boys did not identify with unpopular boys, (perhaps viewing themselves as popular, or at least aspiring to be). They attributed unpopular boys' failure to fit in not to them (the boys in the focus group discussion or to popular boys generally) but to the unpopular boys themselves and denied that they (the boys in the focus group discussion) picked on them.

> Q: Do popular boys pick on unpopular boys?
> Vincent : we don't pick on them
> Siya : no, we don't pick on them
> Sanele : no, aish ! they know when they don't fit in the group, then I
> better not go in that group
> All the boys : yes! They don't
> Vinent: Ja! They know they don't fit in, so they say to themselves that
> they rather not go.

While the Black boys dis-identified from boys they constructed as unpopular, they also seemed to suggest that they were excluded from certain groups, based on their relative lack of affluence, and that as a result they were subject to forms of denigration. Like the Indian boys, Black boys indicated that material possessions were signifiers of popularity, but were more critical of this than the Indian boys, seeming to question these connections and the exclusivity and elitism of people who were seen to flaunt these possessions and denigrate poorer boys:

> Sanele: .... There's groups where the kids who think they're rich, if
> you're poor you can' t come to these groups
> Q: when you say "who think they rich", how do these people act?
> Sanele: they have money, the way they dress, tracksuit and expensive
> jackets and wear Levi shirts
> Siya: they buy pies and think you can't afford to buy it
> Vincent: there's people who have fancy things, like cell phone then see
> I'm not rich I don't have cell phone they think that they top and that
> you nothing and they exclude you cause you don't have one

It was clear that when referring to 'those who think they're rich' they were not referring to them (the Black boys in the focus group). Rather they identified with those who were perceived as inferior and 'not rich', with Vincent using the first

person pronoun in this context. Interestingly Sanile referred to boys 'who think they're rich' rather than as actually rich, perhaps because he, himself, like the other Black boys, attributed significance to material possessions as a criteria of popularity and did not wanted to present these boys as playing at being rich. It may be that there was a racialised dimension to this, with those who were viewed as rich or rather 'thinking' they're rich being Indian and among those they exclude for not being rich, Black students. There is evidence for example in Pattman and Bhana (2007) of Black girls at a formerly Indian school feeling devalued by Indian female students.

Grade 9 Student Accounts of Abuse of Students by Teachers

When learners were asked to describe their relationship with their teachers and if teachers tended to pick on certain types of learners, students spoke in engaged ways providing much detail about forms of abuse they were subjected to, including sexual abuse and name calling (mentioned by Black and Indian female students) racist abuse (mentioned by Black female students) and corporal punishment.

Indian girls' accounts of Verbal Sexual Abuse and Harassment by Male Teachers of Female Students

When asked simply to describe relationships between teachers and students at the school, the Indian girls in the focus group discussion introduced as a key concern male teachers' abuse of them by making sexually derogatory comments. As we see in the following extract where five girls provide different examples of such abuse, this was not something which was uncommon or a matter of concern only for the odd student.

> Q: How would you describe the relationship between the teachers in the school and the learners?
> Ria : the males are degrading because they pick on you
> Q: how do they pick on you?
> Ashley: they call you names, like fat, prostitutes
> Lisel : look at your ass
> Ashley: I am fat and the teacher whenever I do anything picks on how much I eat...
> Kaylia: the male teachers look at our ass, whenever we leave the calls and calls girls prostitutes.
> Ria: our form teacher, teases one of the girls in our class, airbags because she has big breasts.

I went further, to probe the girls and what Ria meant by "they pick on you", as this could mean a number of things and since I wanted the young people to tell me about their experiences, rather than me imposing my own ideas upon them.

The girls provide graphic descriptions of the forms this "pickings" takes. Anything from name calling to denigrating behaviours by the males towards specific body parts such as large breasts being mentioned to degrading names such as prostitutes as well as looking at their posterior. Males thus treat the female learners as mere "sex objects".

This type of sexual abuse being administered by "males", who are identified as the perpetrators, is deeply problematic, as teachers are placed in positions of authority over learners and it is these very teachers who, according to these girls, are responsible for gross injustices over them. When I asked these girls how they felt about these male teachers' behaviour, they reported feeling uncomfortable, embarrassed and disgusted:

> Q: how do you girls feel about the behaviour of the male teachers?
> Anabel: Mam, we feel uncomfortable, it is embarrassing
> Kayla: disgusted with them
> Kia : but some girls have a don't care attitude and some flirt
> Riya: and some girls are very friendly to these male teachers
> Lesley: these teachers are just very rude…

Whilst, these girls position me in terms of a figure of authority, "mam", they are still able to openly express, without hesitations their feelings as female learners. Maybe, while I may be positioned as a figure of authority, these girls feel that I can identify with them and their experiences as a female. Since I am not very much older than them (10 years older) and am listening to what they have to say.

Their responses articulated clearly their emotions of embarrassment and injustice. But, also what is apparent from the extract, the girls are "disgusted" not only with the behaviour of the male teachers but also "other girls", who do not have a problem with teachers (males) treatment towards them, and indeed 'flirt' with them.

From the responses of these girls, Kayla : "male teachers" and Ria : "males", it is clear that abuses experienced by these learners are not just from a single teacher but teachers, and that girls in general are potentially susceptible to this abuse.

Since the girls spoke at length on the kind of (abusive) relationships they shared with male teachers, I was intrigued with the sorts of relations they shared with the female teachers, and as they did not introduce this relationship I asked them specifically about it. The girls responded by contrasting the female teachers with (abusive) male teachers.

Ashlea said "they show respect towards girls", which is in stark contrast to male teachers who they described earlier as "just very rude".

> Samantha: the female teachers don't hit the girls.
> Lesley: we have no problem with the female teacher.
> Riya : they only scold the girls and boys are picked on when they behave naughty.
> Ashley: they show respect towards girls.

Verbal sexual abuse and harassment within this school is clearly evident from the constructions formed by these girl learners. Similar to the studies conducted by the Human Rights Watch (2001) and Morrell (2000) this study revealed that schools are not only unsafe learning environments but involve greater risks for girls than boys,

thus severely interfering with their rights to access education. Verbal sexual abuse and harassment by male teachers towards female learners reinforces the vulnerabilities of these girls over which the teachers are taking advantage.

When asked whether they ever reported incidences of verbal sexual abuse by teachers to another teacher or the school principal, the girls responded by indicating they would be extremely afraid to report such incidences to anybody, even their parents.

> Chiristal : in this school and especially the community we are living in, you have to take the matters into your own hands, teachers take everything like a joke.
> Kia : because they grudge you
> Samantha: yes! They give you lower grades and they interfere with you
> Ria : we so scared to report when teachers hit you, frightened to complain to teachers or parents, we just don't have someone to talk to...
> Kia: sometimes, students are so afraid even to come to school..

The girls provided rich examples of the motivation behind not reporting such incidences, which ranged fro m being "grudged", to running the risk of "obtaining low grades". Samantha responded, "They interfere with you", and while she did not elaborate on what she meant, from the extracts already discussed, I believe she was referring to teachers sexually harassing learners. In this extract, learners were portrayed as really being afraid of teachers, who were in positions of power. Learners were expressing a great sense of fear and anxiety of the repercussions of reporting. They also seemed to be experiencing a sense of being alone, and incapable of changing or improving or even possessing the ability to report incidences. Perhaps they were able to report this to me because they did not perceive me as a figure of authority because of my age (less than 10 year solder than them) and also because I was pursing this with them and encouraging them to talk about it.

Girls' Accounts of teachers hitting them

While the girls may have been the subjects of such verbal abuse, physical abuse in the form of hitting was according to these girls administered in the same ways to boys and girls. The girls reported that it was male teachers in their school that hit them and that they hit boys and girls in the "same way". When asked what they meant by the "same way", they provided examples of circumstances when teachers would hit both boys and girls anywhere on the body. Some girls spoke of other incidents where male teachers would hit learners when they were found bunking, not doing work, talking in class or even chewing bubblegum:

> Annabell: The teachers hit you anywhere he wants to, does not matter if you're a boy or girl, he hits you on the head, sometimes he even boots you or hits you with a piece of pipe, banged one girls head on the wall and he even punches you with his fists.

> Samantha: it was the first day of school at the beginning of the year and I could

not find my report card... my form teacher then banged me on my head with his hand and it was so hard that my ponytail had opened...

When asked whether teachers picked on certain learners, the Black girls, like the Indian girls spoke about verbal abuse, but, unlike the Black girls, did not speak about sexualised verbal abuse, and focused mainly on forms of physical abuse, hitting or corporal punishment. In their accounts male teachers yet again featured as the perpetrators. They spoke of how male teachers hit girls hard with various implements like water pipes or broomsticks on their entire bodies for often trivial offences, or would punch them and verbally abuse them, as if they (the teachers) had lost control:

> Londi : teachers use whatever objects they have in their class for example, the class broomstick. When I wore the same school shirt twice I was hit.

Pretty, Precious and Sanele spoke of where else the teachers would hit them especially the male teachers... they kick you, punch you in the stomach and when they get really angry they swear you, you fucking idiot...

The Black girls concentrated on the treatment of male teachers towards girls so I asked them if the boys in their class were ever hit.

> Thembi: one of the boys in the class was just smiling and then the teacher asked him, "what you fucking smiling for", then the teacher hit him on the head.

Even when the learners "smile", teachers are constructed as perceiving this to be an indication that learners are undermining their authority. Are teachers feeling insecure that they no longer can legally practice corporal punishment and thus feel that the power and control that they once held is now in the hands of the learners, whom it is clear that they regard as their subordinates? Perhaps this leads to great deal of insecurity and the need to regain that power/control that they feel they have lost by resorting to verbal and physical abuse.

Boys' Accounts of teachers hitting them

In the focus groups discussions with Indian boys, male teachers were also blamed for hitting them when, for example, they arrived late, were eating in the class, did not do their homework or when they did not wear the correct school attire.

> Lloyd: I had forgotten to wear my school tie and my teacher banged my head on the wall.

> Kevin: I was caught bunking school and my form teacher booted me in my stomach and my private part... then I fell from a few steps and rolled down the bank then he picked me up and started slapping me and I was dragged to the office where he continued to beat me up in the presence of the other teachers and the school administrator.

When I asked whether teachers hit girls, Kevin responded by giving an example of a Black girl who was hit by a teacher. Whether Black girls were more likely than Indian

girls to be hit was not made clear, but it seems from the greater attention given to teachers hitting by the Black than the Indian girls in the focus groups, that perhaps this was the case.

> Kevin : our form teacher hit a black for not doing her homework and another black girl asked her if the slap hurt , the teacher then slapped the girl even harder across her face and asked her if that hurt.

And when I asked about female teachers and whether they hit learners, Lloyd replied that if they did it was usually a pinch on their arms unless they got 'really angry', the implication being that hitting was much more likely and common coming from male teachers.

When I asked the Black boys if they had ever been hit by a teacher, they all replied (speaking over each other and with some consternation) that they had. Again they indicated (without me asking) that it was mainly men teachers who hit them and (in contrast to the other groups I spoke to) made it clear that they saw forms of corporal punishment as racialised, as more likely to be meted out to Black boys than Indian boys. Interestingly they focus on boys (not girls) as possible victims of corporal punishment:

> Q: Have you ever been hit by a teacher?
> Vincent and Mthosi and Siya : Yes! [all speaking over each other]
> Vincent: Mam, when you come late to class
> Siya: when you don't do your homework
> Mthosi : when you smoking
> Siya: the male teachers especially will slap you across your face
> Mthosi : they keep you in the closet, hit you with objects
> Vincent: when Black boys caught smoking mam, you get hiding but when the Indian boys are found smoking, he just talk to them, he don't even take them down to the office
> Siya: the Indian female teachers just call you names
> Sanele: Ja! or they hit you with the ruler or something.

Despite me being Indian, these boys are able to discuss the unjust and racist behaviour by the teachers who are all Indian. Maybe, they are able to express themselves since I encouraged them to and are interested in their views. These boys also discuss their relationship they share with female teachers who in contrast to males make use of alternative "softer" methods such as name calling. However, they do not go into much detail. Perhaps they regard the relationship with female teachers as less significant than their relationship with male teachers. This maybe because they feel undermined and subordinated as males in relation to the male teachers and in relation to Indian boys.

Black girls' accounts of racist verbal abuse from teachers

While Black boys spoke about the racism of male (Indian) teachers (in relation to administering corporal punishment) the Black girls complained about Indian female teachers being racist towards them. This emerged when I asked the Black girls (who,

like the Indian girls, had focused initially on their relationship with male teachers), about their relationship with female teachers. Ntombi provided what she saw as an example of this:

> It was a very hot day, so I was spraying perfume on myself in the class and the teacher said out loudly to the entire that the perfume.... *Ntombi began to cry....* It smelt like "doom" (*a household spray for killing cockroaches*).

Some of the other girls spoke of the female teachers always picking on the Black learners whenever something was smelling in the class and often calling them "stinking onions", in the presence of the other learners in the class. The teachers were said to pick especially on those Black girls who gained bad marks or were not interested in school and were absent often. According to Precious and Sandile:

> The teachers when you don't do your homework they tell us to go sell mielies (*selling mielies or in the streets is an activity normally associated with lower class Black women*) or go wash your brothers napkins and when you ask for the worksheet when you get absent they (teachers) tell you that you want it to use as toilet paper.

This description of relations with female teachers by Black girls was in stark contrast to the sentiments and responses from Indian girls who spoke in almost a way of admiration, since they argued that female teachers (in contrast to male teachers) respected them, Ashlea: "they show respect towards girls". These were obviously not sentiments that these Black girls feel. Instead, they felt got at by the female teachers, all of whom were Indian. Precious and Sandile are critical of female teachers for racially stereotyping them. Instead of encouraging and empowering them as students, they are degrading them, making them feel that they will not be able to accomplish much and that their futures are as "domestic workers" or "hawkers". Not only did the Black learners feel like the teachers were undermining them and that the treatment was unjust, they also felt a great sense of hurt and sadness. The responses from the Black girls were strong and filled with emotion. Ntombi even began to cry.

Teachers' responses to the use of corporal punishment within schools

Since teachers hitting students had been a common theme emerging in all the focus group discussions, I put this to the two teachers, to whom I referred earlier, as well as the schools' principal.

Male teacher:

> Basically....I'm sorry (laughter), there is no opinion because corporal punishment (5), I 'm very sorry...if any teacher practices corporal punishment they can be dismissed (6) and there are certain misconducts that are enlisted in the teachers handbook and (6) when we talk about them we talk about teachers misconducts, but I don't think it's something that is negotiable or that we should have...

The male teacher seemed to be rather apologetic. From the laughter and pauses, he seemed shocked that the learners had raised corporal punishment as an issue. He goes on to assert strongly (in contrast to the majority of teachers in Morrell's study, who were not "happy" with the abolishment and felt it could perhaps be effective in terms of school governance (2001:147)) that this form of punishment should not be used by teachers.

Female teacher:

(8) Ja! But you see, I will tell you that children who do their work, never ever get scolded; never ever get hit or anything like that. Like you see (4) we try alternative methods of punishment (4) but it just doesn't work you see this is a public school, you know the private school or the semi-private school they got set detention were the teacher is on duty on daily basis, it has been entrenched into that (6) particular school and community and for the learners there aware of the punishment and here we do not do this and its difficult for us to do it another way....

In contrast to the first teacher, this teacher is not particularly shocked to learn of the use of corporal punishment by teachers in the school, and, indeed, goes on to try and justify its usage. (Whether the first teacher was feigning surprise because he did not want to create the impression that corporal punishment was a common practice in the school, is unclear. But given the female teachers' response this may have been so.) The pause at the very start can be seen as an indication that the teacher was thinking about the most appropriate manner to phrase her response, perhaps because this was a contentious issue.

This teacher implied that the learners were far more unruly at public schools in comparison to other types of schooling and thus corporal punishment was the only means of maintaining discipline. She actually went on to give an example of how she used corporal punishment, claiming that she was 'driven' to do so.

I don't give corporal punishment that way (2), like I'll give a child a slap once in a couple of months or something. Like one morning I walked into a class and the girl shouted out "FUCK" loudly like that (2). I don't even use language like that and I gave her a slap, I gave her two, one for using a swear word and the second one is for swearing me, now d you blame me, you know what I mean (3). They drive you to do what you do (8). If I know I can't handle a situation, that is what the office is there for and that is what I do, that is what you should being doing, if you think that you can handle a situation then its fine....

At the start, it is unclear from the extract what she means when she says "I don't give corporal punishment that way" but goes into great detail explaining an incident in which she resorts to corporal punishment. Her casual attitude "like I'll give a child a slap once in a couple of months or something", is rather astonishing, suggesting no concern that this form of punishment is an illegal act and a violation of a teachers conduct, as well as the disregard of the message that is being sent out to learners and how they deal with conflicts among themselves.

<u>School principal</u>:

> (4) you see educators are fully aware that corporal punishment is not allowed okay (2) and there has been workshops that the department has circulated but (5) sometimes you may get that one or two teachers may get frustrated (2) because they sitting with very large numbers in the class (3), we are looking at between forty five to about forty eight learners in a class...

The Principal, (pausing initially like the other teachers), accepts (like the female teacher) that corporal punishment is practised in the school, even in spite of the recognition of its illegality. Though, unlike the female teacher, he indicates that it is very much a minority of teachers who practice it. Like the female teacher he almost condones its use by attributing it to the frustrations of teachers, in this case induced by large class numbers. Since, he had put so much emphasis on the size of the class as being the leading contributing factor to the use of corporal punishment by teachers; I asked the principal what size of class would be preferable:

> Q: okay! What will a normal size class be?
> A: (3) the ideal size will be about thirty nine learners. The classes at the moment are overcrowded (2) and sometimes children often tempt the patience of the teachers (3) and take advantage of teachers who are quieter as well and because the teacher tends to be quieter they tend to manipulate the teachers and (5) there are certain teachers who don't tolerate that sort of behaviour and (3) most of them react in that fashion (talking about hitting the learner). I'm not saying it does not happen, so it does happen and you'll find that though it happens that children don't take advantage of those teachers you know because those teachers are very firm and don't take any nonsense from them. But the teachers are fully aware, that if it happens no matter to what limits they are tried of they know it is a violation of department's regulations.

I find the response of the principal to be rather contradictory. On the one hand, it seems that he is condoning corporal punishment by sympathising with the difficult situations he suggests teachers experience with large classes and children who 'tempt their patience' and take advantage of them, yet, on the other, he emphasises how corporal punishment is legally unacceptable and therefore should not be tolerated.

However and in spite of his latter comments, during my observation of learners behaviours at lunchtime, the school principal had openly by this I mean in the presence of the other learners on the school grounds and another senior female teacher had not only verbally but physically abused a boy learner. The boy was hit all over his body and spoken down to, for not adhering to the school attire. This sort of behaviour thus suggests the total disregard this school principal has for the law and respect he accords to learners of the school. Thus implying that he to regards his position as head of the school as means through which power/control of teachers can be regained and maintained by instilling of fear into learners by humiliating this boy in the presence of his peers and treat as a mere subordinate. By the principal himself practising corporal punishment therefore sends a powerful message to teachers in the

school as well and this can therefore be the reason that teachers show no fear in using this as a form of punishment.

Corporal punishment in schools has been criticised by writers such as Pattman and Chege (2003) and Morrell (2001) for conveying messages about the legitimacy of physical violence administered by a more to a less powerful person and maybe understood then as itself as a form of bullying or at least as contributing to a culture of bullying. Morrell (2001) argues that this form of punishment had "symbolized" and "secured hierarchical dominance" (2001:142). That is, by the adults over the children, in terms of schooling environment, by the learned over the learner (ibid, 2001:142).

In South African schools, corporal punishment has been a common practice (Morrell, 2001). However, since the onset of democracy, this form of punishment had been banned. The South African Schools Act (1996) together with the Abolition of corporal punishment act (1997) had made this form of punishment an illegal act not only in schools but prisons and reformatories (Morrell, 2001:140). Despite the measures taken by the government, teachers blatant disregard and continued use of corporal punishment, as indicated by the pupils and accepted and almost condoned by the Principal of this school, is astonishing. This is despite provisions made by the government, who have provided teachers with workshops and training for developing alternative methods of discipline. During my study a male teacher at this school was found guilty by a court of law for practicing corporal punishment and was subsequently fined. This, however, has not appeared to diminish a culture of corporal punishment at this school.

Conclusion:

My objective in conducting this research was to investigate possible conflicts among the Grade 9 learners. I conducted loosely structured focus group discussions with young people in which I tried to put the onus on them to set the agenda by asking general questions about social relations at school and picking up on specific issues they raised and asking them to elaborate on these. My interest was in exploring the concerns and issues the young people, themselves, introduced regarding conflict at school.

Rose Secondary (a pseudonym), from the outside may appear to be to any outsider like a melting pot of cultures and ethnicities. However, once on the inside and from my observations and group discussions with both the learners and the teachers, there was not much mixing. Indeed the young people I spoke to, in the mono racial discussions mentioned 'race' as being something which was very influential in shaping their lives and friendships at school as well as influencing conflicts between students and between teachers and students.

Racialised and gendered conflicts and abuses were key themes that emanated during different kinds of group discussions. Friendships for example by Indian girls are forged in opposition to the Black girls. The Black girls on the other hand share a rather problematic and highly conflictual relation with Indian boys, who also shared similar concerns about relations with Black girls. Black boys felt somewhat marginalized by Indian learners, and more so by Indian girls who disregard them as heterosexually attractive. The Black boys also raised concerns about conflictual relations with Indian boys, however these relations were normalized as boys just being boys.

These issues emerged mainly during the mono-racial and single sex focus group discussions. I argue that this probably occurred as learners did not want to raise race or racial conflict during mixed group discussions, through fear of embarrassing themselves and others and being labeled as racist. Though 'race' seemed to be accorded so much significance in everyday encounters at the school, talking about it, in mixed groups, seemed taboo.

Despite teachers and the school principal advocating notions of democracy and the school being fair and just in terms of discipline, from the findings it appears that teacher's behaviours can be sexist and racially biased. This is particularly problematic because teachers may act as role models for learners and in some situations are the only role models that learners have. In order to encourage integration teachers, in my view, need to actively encourage mixed race activities. Teachers could possibly group learners of mixed races to work on assignments or projects thus providing the platform to open the communication lines between the Indian and the Black learners, and perhaps help to challenge possible biases and prejudices that learners may have towards different race groups.

It is at the grass root levels of schooling that learners need to learn to socialize and interact with learners across the different race groups. Teachers should promote

activities that will enable the interactions of mixed race activities thus bridging the racial divides that clearly exist within this school.

Another key theme that emerged from group discussions was the emergence of conflicts and abuses between students that can be associated with hierarchies of popularity. Learners, Indian and Black, boys and girls, identified similar characteristics learners would have to possess to be popular/unpopular. Learners that were characterized as unpopular were often seemed to be subjected to abuse, marginalization and bullying.

Black and Indian learners also spoke of conflicts arising from relationships with teachers. Corporal punishment within this school (on both boys and girls) was spoken about by the learners as a form of bullying. Male teachers were constructed by Indian girls as the main perpetrators of verbal sexual abuse and harassment while Black girls on the other hand raised concerns about the physical and racist verbal abuse that both they and the Black boys were subjected to. Female teachers were also reported by the Black learners as displaying racist verbal abuse. Indian boys too, discussed the various forms of physical abuse they encountered from mostly male teachers.

While students' accounts of corporal punishment usually implicated male teachers as the perpetrators, the female subject teacher who was interviewed also admitted to resorting to corporal punishment. Despite the government providing teachers with workshops in alternative forms of discipline to corporal punishment, this, clearly, has not been successful in this school.

My research study, through the participant's accounts, has revealed that conflicts do emanate among Grade 9 learners within this school. The conflicts that do occur transpire between particular groups such as racial conflict experienced between the Indian and Black learners. However, conflicts also arise not only between the race groups but also between the learners in general irrespective of race.

In gathering information, I have employed both mono-racial single sex and mixed race focus group discussions with the learners. All learners were much more able to express racial and gendered conflicts within the school during mono-racial and single sex focus group discussion, than in racially mixed and in gender mixed discussions. Hence, I want to argue for the importance of using (at least some) mono-racial and single sex interviews in research with young people attending similar kinds of mixed race schools in South Africa.

I envisaged my research, with the emphasis on addressing young people as active agents, as providing a platform, to some extent, for Grade 9 learners to raise and discuss issues that perhaps they may find difficult or uncomfortable to do in other contexts, for example with teachers present or in racially and gendered mixed groups. This research study has highlighted the significance of listening to what the young people raise and are interested in and concerned about, by putting the onus onto them to set the agenda. This research also indicates the importance of actually going into the school itself and finding out from the young people themselves how they experience schooling and their relations with other learners and teachers.

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