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Running head: SELF-EFFICACY, PEERS, CONFLICT & BULLYING

An investigation of the relationships between self-efficacy,  
peer relations and conflict resolution strategies in female  
adolescent bullying behaviour.

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Unless specifically indicated to the contrary, this  
dissertation is the result of my own work.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science Health Promotion in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Science, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Abstract

A cross-sectional survey design was used to establish the prevalence and form of bullying behaviour in a saturation sample of 385 Grade Eight and Nine female students in a KwaZulu-Natal high school. Relationships between peer relations, self-efficacy, conflict resolution strategies and bullying behaviour were investigated using well established measures with robust psychometric properties.

The majority (79%) of students had been involved in bullying behaviour. Both direct and indirect forms of bullying were present. A significant predictive relationship between self-efficacy and peer relations was found ( $\alpha.001$   $p<.005$ ); quantity of friends was significant in predicting peer attachment style (Beta=.000  $P<.005$ ); level of victimisation predicted peer attachment style (Beta=.018  $p<.05$ ); and bullying roles were associated with specific dominant conflict resolution strategies (Victim & Accommodating 12%; Bully & Competing/Avoiding 10%; Bully-Victim & Competing/Avoiding 4%; Bystander & Collaborating 2%; Not bullied & Avoiding 6%). These findings are discussed in the context of the relevant empirical and theoretical literature on bullying and female psychosocial development.

While the bully, victim, bully-victim and bystander differed in several important respects, further research is recommended to differentiate these roles in term of social relations, self-efficacy, identity development, psychosocial development and conflict resolution strategies in order to inform anti-bullying interventions within a school setting.

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### Acronyms

DOH Department of Health

GSE General Self-efficacy Scale (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1992)

OBVQ Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (Solberg &  
Olweus, 2003)

TKI Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (Thomas &  
Kilmann, 1974)

WAFAS Wilkinson Adolescent Friendship Attachment Scale (2006)

WHO World Health Organisation

YRBS Youth Risk Behaviour Survey

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 *Introduction*

Bullying is a significant obstacle to achieving optimal mental and physical health outcomes among school-going students globally (Beatty & Alexeyev, 2008; Gini, Albiero, Benellie & Altoe, 2008). Recent studies undertaken in South Africa have outlined the need for systematic interventions aimed at redressing this worrisome issue (e.g. Reddy et al, 2003; Townsend, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King, 2008).

This study explores bullying behaviour in a KwaZulu-Natal, South African high school and is focused on female adolescent students. In addition to investigating the prevalence and forms of bullying behaviour in this school, this study explores the impact of key socio-psychological variables on bullying, including: self-efficacy, peer relations and conflict resolution strategies.

In investigating the relationship between these variables and bullying behaviour, it is anticipated that this study will inform school based anti-bullying interventions and add value to the existing body of literature in this arena. In this respect, it is hoped that the findings of this study will have import beyond the actual behaviour under investigation and

An investigation of the relationships between 12 will shed light on the impact of peer relations, self-efficacy and conflict resolution strategies on adolescent risk behaviour more broadly.

### 1.2 *A Definition of Bullying*

Olweus' (1993) definition of bullying is arguably the most inclusive and widely used in the empirical literature, viz.: "a student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p. 9). Bullying may be of a physical, verbal or indirect type (Olweus, 1993) and the players involved include the bully, the victim, the bully-victim and the bystander (Coloroso, 2005). Given their wide support and use in the literature, this definition and categorisation has been used as the conceptual basis for this study.

### 1.3 *Rationale and Motivation*

Despite increased research into school violence and bullying behaviour in our schools over the past decade, these have largely taken the form of surveillance studies that have focused on recording the prevalence and incidences of violent acts and other risk behaviours (e.g. Naser, Ladikos & Prinsloo, 2004; Reddy et al, 2003; Townsend et al, 2008). As a result, there has been a relative paucity of research into the socio-psychological correlates of bullying in South African

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Recent unfortunate events in South African schools have brought the problem of school violence and bullying squarely into the public domain, with the considerable media attention being matched by a resurgent interest from researchers and policy-makers in understanding and ameliorating this vexing problem.

For instance, in two separate instances in KwaZulu-Natal, students stabbed fellow students, while in Umlazi, a township in south Durban, a high school student went on a rampage, shooting teachers and fellow students (Bailey & Mbuyazi, 2008). In 2008, at a Krugersdorp high school, a Matric student attacked fellow students with a Japanese sword (Ajam, 2008). Significantly, according to his mother, the Matric student was bullied throughout high school due to his relatively diminutive physical stature (Ajam, 2008). These incidents highlight the urgent need for applied research into bullying at schools in order to inform school-based and science-driven health promoting interventions.

This recent media attention has served to expose the underbelly of a relatively violent South African school culture where bullying, which often goes unreported, is

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actually endemic (Townsend et al, 2008). It is clear that focused contextually relevant research is required in order to enhance our understanding of school bullying in South Africa and to act to reverse this culture.

Further, a review of the international literature reveals that the main emphasis of researchers has been on male student bullying behaviour (Besag, 2006; Olweus, 1993). As a result, insufficient attention has been paid to female bullying and the area is marked by a deficiency in rigorous research. This study directly addresses this research lacuna into the socio-psychological correlates of female adolescent bullying.

By investigating the current state of bullying behaviour amongst schoolgirls, and its socio-psychological correlates, this study aimed to generate empirical insight that could be used to inform the development and/or adaptation of appropriate health promotion interventions needed to ensure the safe and fullest development of our school-children.

In addition to generating empirical data, this study also aimed to create awareness and dispel some of the myths or misconceptions that surround bullying behaviour amongst school-going students. Bullying has been shown to have devastating short and long-term psychological effects on schoolchildren, the most extreme being suicide and attempted

An investigation of the relationships between 15 murder of other students (Olweus, 1993; Wei, Josen-Reid, & Tsao, 2007). As you will discover in the review of literature in chapter two, bullying is neither harmless nor should it be acceptable, and it is precisely such a view which prevents us from containing its spread.

#### 1.4 *The Focus of this Research*

The key research questions addressed by this study accordingly are:

- What is the prevalence and form of bullying behaviour among adolescent girls in this specific school setting?
- What is the relationship between peer relations and bullying behaviour as it manifests in this social context?
- What is the relationship between self-efficacy and bullying behaviour as it manifests in this social context?
- What is the relationship between conflict resolution styles and bullying behaviour as it manifests in this social context?

#### 1.5 *Methodological Stance and Theoretical Approach*

A cross-sectional survey design was utilised for this research study. This design enabled the utilisation of a sampling procedure that allowed for inferences to be made

An investigation of the relationships between 16 about the specific population under study, facilitated the use of objective self-report measures to ensure that participants' views and opinions are objectively expressed and facilitated inferential statistical analysis of the relationships between the constructs that were investigated.

A quantitative stance was taken in data collection and analysis in order to allow for the utilisation of the records of all 385 Grade Eight and Nine participants' experiences and opinions. In addition, data collection was conducted in a more convenient and shorter time period than if qualitative methodology was employed. This suited the school and was in keeping with the resource limitations applicable to this relatively short dissertation study.

Three core theories formed the basis of the theoretical framework in which this research is couched. An attempt to understand the problem of bullying behaviour through a systemic, multi-level lens has been made by applying theories that deal with the individual, the interpersonal and the societal levels of influence on bullying behaviour. Erikson's Psychosocial Theory (1968) provides a means to interrogate adolescent behaviour within its developmental context, while Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) provides a means for understanding the impact of social influences on female bullying behaviour (i.e. peer relations and interactions with

An investigation of the relationships between 17 society). The Two Cultures Theory (Maltz & Booker, 1982) was seen to be critical because of its explanatory power with regard to the assigned female gender role and its implications for gendered behaviour. By utilising a number of diverse theories that explain different ecological levels, a holistic view of bullying behaviour among female students was rendered.

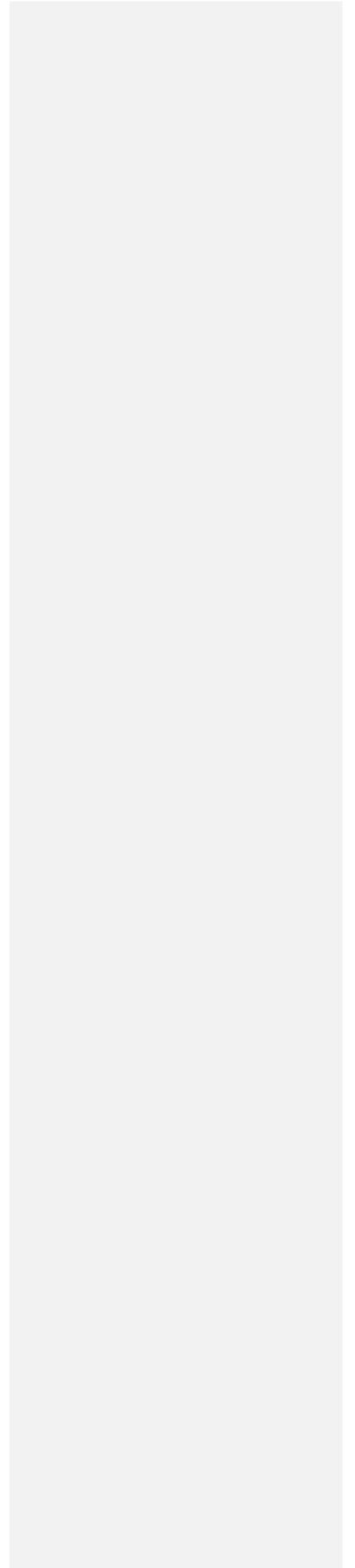
#### 1.6. *Concluding Remarks*

There has been a proliferation of anti-bullying campaigns and school-based health promotion interventions to reduce bullying in western countries (Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Peterson & Rigby, 1999; Rigby, 2002; Rigby & Slee, 1993; Salmivalli, 1999; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000), and increased empirical evidence of the efficacy of some of these interventions (Feder, 2007).

Unfortunately, however, a systematic and sustained attempt to develop and evaluate such interventions in the South African context has been hampered by a paucity of rigorous baseline research into the socio-psychological correlates of bullying.

Further research into female adolescent bullying in South African schools would allow for the development of a more tailored and targeted approach in the development of health promoting interventions. It is to this end that this study,

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located in a single school and albeit of relatively small  
scale, is directed.



Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 *Health Promoting Schools*

Schools play a vital role in promoting healthy behaviour. They provide an entry point and fertile ground for health promoting interventions. A health promoting school can be defined as a setting where community members work together to promote, protect and strengthen one's capacity for health; where health services are readily available and provided for; policies and practices are implemented to improve or maintain healthy behaviours; and a constant safe, healthy school environment is ensured (Adams, 1997; Cloete, 1997; World Health Organization (WHO), 1998)

The school presents as an ideal setting for facilitating health promoting behaviours due to a number of factors. The World Health Organisation (1996) suggests there are more children attending and staying in school for a longer duration than previously documented. The school provides an easily accessible population that may be exposed to positive health changing interventions on a consistent and annual basis. The period in which children attend school is at a receptive, formative stage in their mental development where new knowledge, skills and habits are acquired (Naidoo & Wills, 2002; Tones & Tilford, 2001; WHO, 1992).

In South Africa the notion of a health promoting school environment is actively supported and encouraged by the Department of Health (DOH) (DOH, 2003; Shisana, 1996; Tshabalala-Msimang, 2003). The DOH advocates that this entry point allows for the diffusion of improvement of mental and physical health from students to the community (Shisana, 1996). Legislation instituted by the Department of Health, such as the National School Health Policy (2003) and the National Guidelines for Developing Health Promotion Schools/Sites in South Africa (2000), reiterate the importance of the role of the school in promoting health.

Where there is widespread bullying this can create a climate of fear in the school and act as a barrier against achieving a health promoting school (WHO, 1997). For this reason, addressing bullying behaviour in a proactive way should be a central component of a school health promotion programme.

## *2.2 The Climate of Violence in South African Schools*

Reddy et al. (2003) define violence as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (p. 29).

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Unfortunately, South African statistics show that 565 people between the ages of 10 and 29 die daily due to interpersonal violence, including bullying (Reddy et al, 2003). Non-fatal violence is on the increase in mid-adolescence. Youth violence is generally preceded by such risk factors as physical fighting, carrying weapons, and bullying others. Amongst school aged children, common violent phenomena include physical fighting and bullying (Reddy et al, 2003). Of particular relevance is the increase in violence amongst female adolescents (Graves, 2007).

The Medical Research Council conducted an extensive survey of South African school aged youth in 2002. This Youth Risk Behaviour Survey (YRBS) returned a number of significant findings regarding violence in schools. Over fifty percent of the children surveyed have been either perpetrators or victims of violence and 14.9 percent of these students had been threatened or injured by another on school property. Further, 9.2 percent had been threatened or injured someone else with a weapon on school property, with more Grade Eights than Grade Elevens reporting being threatened or injured. Regrettably the highest incidence of this behaviour is in the KwaZulu-Natal province (seventeen percent).

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Just over 30.2 percent of the national sample reported being involved in a physical fight in the past six months, with children in the lower grades being more likely to have engaged in physical fighting than children in the higher grades. Of those children who engaged in physical fights, 29.3 percent required medical treatment as a result of their injuries, including 25.1 percent of children from KwaZulu-Natal.

It has been reported that 19.3 percent of these physical fights have taken place on school property nationally, and 16.4 percent in the case of KwaZulu-Natal (this represents approximately one-fifth of all students who have engaged in punching and hitting while in school). Significantly more males than females reported engaging in these fights. Close to one-third of the sample of students (31.7 percent) felt unsafe during school time and this finding did not vary by gender. The students in the lower grades felt more unsafe than those in the higher grade levels. In KwaZulu-Natal, an astounding 35.4 percent of children felt unsafe at school.

Included in this violent atmosphere prevailing within some South African schools is the phenomenon of bullying. The YRBS indicated that two in five school aged children (forty-one percent) in the national sample had been bullied within the previous month, including 35.6 percent of the KwaZulu-Natal sample. While significantly more White and Coloured children

An investigation of the relationships between 23 were bullied than Black children, no significant sex or grade difference pertained.

### *2.3 Bullying Amongst School Students*

Research into this phenomenon gained impetus in the 1970's through the work of Dan Olweus. However, research into bullying in South African schools has not been as widespread as in overseas countries (Olweus, 1993).

Olweus' definition of bullying is utilised in this study as it is has informed much of the empirical research in this area and provides a foundation on which other definitions have been built. According to Olweus (1993), "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" (p.9). Bullying is thus characterised by: an imbalance in power relations; repeated aggression; a continuum of severity; and intention to do harm (Olweus, 2003; Rigby, 2004).

#### *2.3.1 Forms of Bullying*

Bullying has been classified into two main types, viz. direct and indirect bullying. Direct bullying involves both physical and verbal bullying. According to Coloroso (2005), direct physical bullying accounts for less than a third of reported bullying. Physical bullying is characterised by:

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biting, spitting, kicking, shoving, choking, pulling of hair, punching, pushing, tripping, poking, bumping, use of weapons, slapping, scratching, stealing or damage to possessions, sabotaging schoolwork, physical restraint, knocking, hitting, and unwanted touching (Alexander, 2006; Beatty & Alexeyev, 2008; Coloroso, 2005; Field, 2007; Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1993).

Direct verbal bullying is the most common form, making up seventy percent of reported bullying (Beatty & Alexeyev, 2008; Coloroso, 2005; Rigby, 2002). Verbal bullying is characterised by: cruel criticism, whispering, taunting, threats, abusive comments, name-calling, gossip, teasing (done in a hurtful way), phone calls, 'smsing', racist or sexual remarks, sending defamatory e-mails, and character deformation (Alexander, 2006; Coloroso, 2005; Field, 2007; Ndeti et al, 2007; Rigby, 2002; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1993). Research has shown that persistent, repeated verbal bullying creates a dehumanising effect amongst all involved (Coloroso, 2005).

The second type of bullying is classified as indirect and is the most common form of bullying amongst girls (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Indirect bullying entails: spreading rumours; gossip; mean, subtle body language; shunning; mimicking; hiding or defacing property; stalking; exclusion from groups or friendships; making threats; isolating others; silent

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treatment; gestures; turning one's back; pointing; staring; sniggering and laughing (Beatty & Alexeyev, 2008; Crick, Bigbee, & Howes, 1996; Field, 2007; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1993). Included in this form is that of group bullying. This is where a group of girls will bully an individual (Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002), thereby allowing for a diffusion of responsibility amongst the group (Rigby, 2002).

### 2.3.2 *Prevalence of Bullying in Schools*

Bullying is a common, widespread global problem amongst schoolchildren (Gini et al, 2008; O'Connell, Pepler & Craig, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Smith, Talamelli, Cowie, Naylor & Chauhan, 2004). Bullying appears to occur across all nationalities and regardless of whether the school is co-ed or single-sex, private or government (Field, 2007).

The nationwide Norwegian study conducted by Olweus (1993) found that fifteen percent of the surveyed schoolchildren had been involved in bullying, with nine percent being victims. Collectively, 18,000 of the 568,000 students surveyed were bullied more than once a week.

Bradshaw, Sawyer and O'Brennan (2007) found that approximately forty-nine percent of students in their American sample had been bullied by another student. The most common form of bullying was verbal bullying. Similarly, in a study

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conducted by Peterson and Rigby (1999) in Australia, verbal bullying was also the medium of choice.

As discussed previously, South Africa appears to be suffering from a high prevalence of bullying within its schools. In Durban and Cape Town schools, 36.3 percent of students reported being involved in bullying (Townsend et al, 2008). Particularly daunting is the sixty one percent of students reportedly involved in bullying in the Tshwane province (Townsend et al, 2008).

### 2.3.3 *Differentiated Roles*

For the purpose of this study, Olweus's (1993) classification of the different players involved in bullying was adopted. Olweus differentiates four main roles, viz.: the victim, bully, bully-victim and bystander.

#### 2.3.3.1 *The Victim*

The common features associated with victims of bullying include: high levels of anxiety; insecurity; sensitivity; being reserved or quiet rather than being assertive; having low self-esteem and sense of self worth; having few or no friends (lack of social support); being withdrawn; feelings of sadness; having poor social skills; being emotional; and being different from the majority (Coloroso, 2005; Leff, 2007; Nesor et al, 2004; Olweus, 1993; Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007). It

is important to note that while these characteristics are a result of having been bullied, they also predispose children to being bullied in the first place (Rigby (2002). Children who react to the bully i.e. become upset or fight back, are more likely to be victims (Rigby, 2002). These victims often feel a sense of utter powerlessness that disables them from getting out of their situation (Field, 2007).

Olweus (1993) distinguishes between the passive/submissive and the provocative types of victims. Passive/submissive victims display features such as insecurity, worthlessness, and an inability to fight back. In comparison, provocative victims react to the bully by being either aggressive or anxious. Usually the provocative victims are hyperactive and lack concentration.

#### 2.3.3.2 *The Bully*

Olweus (1978; 1993) has done significant work concerning the factors influencing male childhood bullying behaviour as well as the typical personal characteristics of bullies. In comparison, Olweus (1993) notes that there is little known about the common features of female bullies and influential childhood factors that predispose them to taking on the bully role.

Notwithstanding this lacuna, previous research has shown that there are common characteristics associated with the label of "Bully". This includes such features as: impulsivity; aggressive reactions and behaviour towards adults and peers; a lack of empathy and insight; a failure to take responsibility for their actions; emotional immaturity; deriving satisfaction from a need to dominate and control others; attention seeking; attempts to increase their social status; poor judgement; knowledge that their actions are wrong; low levels of tolerance; being oppositional and hostile; difficulties with schoolwork; projection of their own insecurities onto others; and a need for instant gratification (Coloroso, 2005; Field, 2007; Garandeanu & Cillessen, 2006; Leff, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002; Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007).

A reading of the literature reveals two different schools of thought concerning the evolution of the bully. Both schools acknowledge that a child who bullies is prone to aggressive behaviour. One school argues that the experience of being rejected by one's peers and not being popular results in a high need to fit in, which in turn drives a child to be a bully (as discussed by Ando, Asakura & Simons-Morton, 2005; Griffin & Cross, 2004; Slee & Rigby, 1993). In contrast, the alternative view conceptualises the bully as a master of social networking and a popular figure in childhood, who acts to maintain his/her status through bullying (as outlined by

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Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006; Gini et al, 2007).

Field (2007) believes that there are two types of bullies: the malicious and the non-malicious. The first type enjoys their victims' attempts to fight back in reaction to being bullied, but lose interest when the target does not react. Non-malicious bullies, in contrast, are driven by a need to feel important, seek attention, have a high opinion of themselves, are persistent at eroding weaker children, are laid-back, and are considered everyday bullies. In addition, Olweus (1993), calls attention to the passive bully - someone who follows the lead of the dominant group.

#### 2.3.3.3 *The Bully-Victim*

The term bully-victim is indicative of an adolescent who has been both a bully as well as a victim (Holt, Finkelhor & Kantor, 2007; Marini et al, 2006). There is a paucity of information regarding this role (Marini et al, 2006). Garandeau and Cillessen (2006) suggest that the term bully-victim is a label given to provocative victims. When being victimised, these children will act aggressively towards the bully (Holt et al, 2007).

It has been suggested that bully-victims are at particularly high risk for depression, suicide, anxiety, low self-esteem,

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conduct disorders, extreme psycho-symptomatic symptoms, poor school adjustment and continuation of bullying behaviour (Ball et al, 2008; Solberg, Olweus & Endresen, 2007; Townsend et al, 2008). Marini et al (2006) posit that the bully-victim is at risk for rejection by peers, has a positive attitude towards deviance and internalises problems. The bully-victim is perhaps the most stigmatised of all the bully roles (Holt et al, 2007).

#### 2.3.3.4 *The Bystander*

A number of authors (e.g. Gini et al, 2008; Kanetsuna, Smith & Morita, 2006) note that bullying often takes place in front of others, with a recent study reporting that 70 percent of students sampled witnessed bullying (Bradshaw et al, 2007). Peers who watch the bullying often feel helpless and unable to protect the victim, often due to their fear of being the next target (Field, 2007). These witnesses may either passively or actively support the bully, by doing nothing or joining in respectively (Rigby, 2002).

Bystanders, according to Coloroso (2005), may be defenders of the bully or target, dispassionate onlookers, or passive supporters. Gini et al (2008) believe followers are those children who assist or reinforce the bully, while defenders are children who stand up for the victim. Witnessing bullying

An investigation of the relationships between 31 often causes anxiety for the bystanders and usually normalises this type of behaviour (Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007).

Coloroso (2005) suggests some reasons why children may not intervene. The first is fear (of being hurt and of retaliation by the bully). Secondly, children sometimes fear that they may make the situation worse. And thirdly, they may be unsure of what to do and lack the strategies on how to handle such a situation, such as report the incident, or try to stand up for the victim.

#### 2.3.4 *Consequences of Bullying*

There is a consensus among scholars that bullying profoundly scars individuals psychologically in the long-term (Alexander, 2006; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1993). Bullying that is non-physical has been found to be equally, and in some cases even more, damaging than physical bullying (Alexander, 2006). In fact, studies have shown that verbal abuse is ranked the most damaging by students (Besag, 2006).

Some of the possible effects (somatic, psychological, and sociological) of bullying include: a loss of self-esteem and self-worth; negative impact of event/s on one's sense of the future; depression and feelings of sadness; lack of concentration in school; introversion and withdrawal; a decrease or lack of social skills, communication and

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interaction; increase in conduct disorders; lack of motivation to participate in school; an increase in stress; insomnia; self-critical and self-destructive thoughts; a decrease in quality of academic work; absenteeism; eating disorders; anxiety disorders; stomach aches; hyper-emotionality; and in extreme cases, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and suicide (Besag, 2006; Field, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Peterson & Rigby, 1999; Rigby, 2002; Smith & Sharp, 1994; Tattum, 1993).

#### 2.3.5 *Hi-tech Bullying*

A new way of bullying that has increased steadily worldwide in recent years, and that has also become a large scale problem amongst South African youth, is hi-tech or cyber bullying (Li, 2007; Russell, 2008). Cyber bullying involves the use of the latest technologies (including cell phones and the internet) to harass and humiliate fellow students on a more widespread scale. Hi-tech bullying includes spreading rumours or negative information about another, distributing audio-visual information against another's will, posting demeaning information on the internet, and victimising another via 'sms' or e-mail (Russell, 2008).

It has been found that this type of bullying is more difficult to stop because parents and teachers often lack sufficient technological knowledge to intervene, and because the bully is seemingly assured of anonymity (Reuters, 2008).

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This form of bullying also does not take place face to face and is therefore easier to enact than conventional forms of bullying (Russell, 2008).

A 2008 article in a local newspaper cited how an adolescent boy had attempted suicide twice due to being bullied and harassed on his cell phone, through e-mail and had found his photographs posted on a website with insulting captions (Reuters, 2008). Another incident that underscores the hazardous nature of hi-tech bullying is the female student who was filmed engaged in compromising behaviour, and the footage was shown on the internet and accessed through fellow students' cell phones (Russell, 2008).

#### 2.3.6 *Age/Grade and Bullying*

There is a discernable pattern in the literature concerning the relationship between bullying and age. With an increase in grades and thus age, there is a corresponding decrease in bullying. This finding may be influenced by variances in the reporting of bullying, or the adopting of more covert, secretive forms of bullying (such as spreading rumours) by older bullies. As the student gets older s/he learns different ways of social interaction and hides her/his anger from adult view, as opposed to overt displays of physical aggression which might have been more characteristic at a younger age (Brown, 2003; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002).

Research shows that older students sometimes bully younger students i.e. inter-grade bullying (Olweus, 1993; Tattum, 1993). Reporting of incidents of bullying appears to decline when students enter high school as they begin to place more value on the fragile nature of friendships and conversely fear being stigmatised and rejected, or fear retribution from others (Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007).

#### *2.3.7 Reporting and Non-Reporting*

The majority of students do not report incidents of bullying, regardless of whether they themselves have been bullied or if they witnessed an incident (Bradshaw et al, 2007; Rigby, 2002). There are a number of suggested reasons why children choose not to tell. There is a stigma attached to reporting, a fear of being known as a snitch or tattler-tale which is seen as being immature (Rigby, 2002). The victim may feel ashamed, resigned to their 'fate' or be in denial (Coloroso, 2005; Tattum, 1993). Some children may fear retaliation from the bully, or feel the threat of violence against them (Coloroso, 2005). Research has shown that many children think adults will not believe them, or that their reporting will escalate the situation (Alexander, 2006; Coloroso, 2005). Some children believe the myth created by society about bullying being natural and a part of growing up (Coloroso, 2005). Adolescents are more likely than younger

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children not to report incidents of bullying (Kanetsuna et al, 2006). This may be because they have been socialised to feel ashamed about being bullied and feel they need to deal with their problems on their own (Alexander, 2006).

While few children report bullying to their teachers or parents, fifty percent of those who do report are likely to tell their parents first (Tattum, 1993), with 21.3 percent reporting to an adult at the school (Bradshaw et al, 2007). Olweus (1993) found that the majority of students felt that when teachers are aware of bullying, they do virtually nothing to stop it. In contrast to the above findings, an Australian study suggests that children are more likely to disclose to their peers (Peterson & Rigby, 1999).

#### 2.3.8 *Location*

Bullying takes place equally in both rural and urban domains, though it is possible that bullying in urban schools receives more public exposure than that pertaining in rural schools (Olweus, 1993). There appears to be no correlation between the size of the class or school and the prevalence of bullying (Olweus, 1993).

Empirical research demonstrates that the most popular areas for bullying in school are: the playground or break area; the

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classroom; and lastly school corridors or hallways (Olweus, 1993; Potterton, 2005; Rigby, 2002; Smith & Sharp, 1994).

#### 2.3.9 *Tendency to be a Bully or be Bullied*

Authors have posited a number of possible factors that may influence whether a child is bullied or not. These include: style of parenting; personality and temperament; family environment or background; being seen as different or having a disability; one's social status and relationships with others (Smith & Sharp, 1994). Other factors include societal conventions - myths about bullying being the norm, keeping silent, creating a sense of stigma around being bullied, praising children who are assertive, competitive and popular, and the ethos and rules of the school (Marini et al, 2006; McGuinness, 2007; Nation, Vieno, Perkins & Santinello, 2008; Rigby, 2004).

#### 2.3.10 *Gender and Bullying*

While male and female students engage in all forms of bullying, the empirical evidence demonstrates a gender-dependent discernible difference in the patterns of bullying experienced (Frisen, Jonsson & Persson, 2007; Olweus, 1993). Direct, especially physical, bullying occurs at a higher incident rate in boys than in girls, with boys being both victim and bully more often than girls (Kanetsuna et al, 2006; Olweus, 1993). Of those reported incidences, being physically

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hurt is higher amongst boys than girls (Peterson & Rigby, 1999).

Adolescent girls report experiencing more indirect (subtle, less visible), psychological and verbal forms of bullying (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Feder, 2007; Olweus, 1993) than direct physical bullying. These include exclusion, verbal degradation, and gossip (Brown, 2003; Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007). This preferred indirect method is utilised amongst girls to manage and control their friendships (Field, 2007).

Boys bully both boys and girls (Olweus, 1993). Boys bully girls for greater payoff and less risk (Rigby, 2002), while girls are more likely than boys to be bullied by both boys and girls (Rigby, 2002).

#### 2.4 *Aggression in Girls*

Bullying, as a form of violence, has been conceptually incorporated within the broad spectrum of aggression (Rigby, 2004). Aggression involves feelings and behaviour related to anger with the intention to harm or hurt another (Crick et al, 1996; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Underwood, Galen & Paquette, 2001).

In early adolescence, girls are confronted with new ideas of being female which often challenges their previous childhood

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image (Brown, 1998). One of the ultimate goals in adolescence is finding, and fitting into, a peer group (Brown, 2003). Girls are entering into a confusing new social world filled with contradictory expectations, prohibited behaviours and mixed messages (Brown, 2003). While attempting to adapt to a changing social context, mental and physical changes are occurring which present a further developmental challenge (Brown, 1998). In an attempt to gain some 'illusionary' medium of control, girls begin to label and categorise others, into 'popular girls', 'nerds', 'slackers', etc. (Brown, 2003). For these reasons, many authors have acknowledged that aggression takes a particular form in female adolescents (Brown, 1998; Chessler, 2003; Matlin, 1993; Simmons, 2002).

For instance, girls who bully others have been found to be in possession of good quality social and verbal skills (Chessler, 2003). Girls often manage to turn the victim of such bullying into a deviant who is deserving of being harassed (Chessler, 2003). It has also been postulated that inhibited aggression (in comparison with male, outward aggression) is a result of feelings of guilt and/or anxiety about aggressive actions (Matlin, 1993).

#### 2.4.1 *Culturally Patterned Female Aggression*

Society appears to deem female on female violence as unimportant in comparison to male on male violence because of

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the more observable consequences of displaying the physical violence more common in males (Chessler, 2003).

Girls learn the accepted cultural rules pertaining to aggression (Chessler, 2003; Simmons, 2002). Expressing aggression is viewed as unacceptable and girls do not allow themselves to be outwardly aggressive (Simmons, 2002). As a result, being openly assertive and displaying the need for power is associated with the male role in society (Chessler, 2003). For this reason, aggression amongst girls is often invisible, subtle and below society's radar (Brown, 2003). Girls are not taught how to deal with or express feelings of anger as they are not 'officially' allowed to show such feelings (Simmons, 2002).

Girls are socialised to value friendships, not to fight and not to be 'mean' (Brown, 2003; Graves, 2007). Thus not being allowed to show anger facilitates the movement of such feelings into the background (Brown, 2003; Simmons, 2002). Girls become very adept at reading non-verbal communication i.e. body language, due to the prioritising of social relations in female identity development (Chessler, 2003). Aggression in girls is thus understood to take on two main patterns or forms: relational aggression and indirect aggression (Chesler, 2003; Graves, 2007).

#### 2.4.1.1 *Relational Aggression*

Relational aggression operates more frequently within the realm of female friendships and relationships (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). Relational aggression can be both covert (invisible), as well as blatant (Coyne, Archer & Eslea, 2006). It is enacted through nonverbal communication, where the target is the self-esteem or social status of the potential victim (Simmons, 2002). It takes the form of ignoring or excluding someone to get one's own way or for social revenge; utilising body language (e.g. facial expressions) to convey negative messages; sabotaging other girls' friendships and threatening the break down of friendships (Salmivalli, Kaukiainen & Lagerspetz, 2000; Simmons, 2002). One is effectively able to hurt others through damage or threat to relationships, engendering feelings of exclusion and lack of acceptance (Simmons, 2002). This starts as early as the preschool years in girls, where ever-changing friendships mould and re-mould identities (Brown, 2003; Simmons, 2002). Relational aggression is more common among girls than boys, and is accepted by girls as a part of their everyday life (Crick et al, 1996).

Relationships play an important role in the life of girls (Chessler, 2003; Simmons, 2002). This is because girls are socialised to feel a need to belong, to want to be included,

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to feel a need for bondedness, companionship, social support and security (Brown, 2003; Chessler, 2003). Girls secretively employ ways of establishing and maintaining these desires by avoiding open conflict (Brown, 2003). This often results in power struggles, envy, competition, hostility and conflict (Chessler, 2003). It is thus within this milieu of unpredictable, shifting relationships that aggression operates, with relationships becoming a target of choice (Simmons, 2002). This building of alliances fuels a sense of belonging, allows one to be popular, and to gain peer affirmation (Simmons, 2002).

Relational aggression is used to establish rules and boundaries within peer groups (Brown, 2003). This can be executed through rejection and creating feelings of shame when one does not comply with the status quo (Brown, 2003). Gossip and teasing is used as a way to maintain friendships and establish consensus within groups (Brown, 2003). By acting within the safety of a group, no one girl is seen as responsible for the conflict (Simmons, 2002). The threat of loss of friendship is guaranteed by acting in a group because those ganging up against another will stick together after the conflict (Simmons, 2002).

This form of aggression is particularly destructive as the one exerting the anger is often a close friend who therefore

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knows a lot about the victim and can aim for where it really hurts (Simmons, 2002). Relational aggression also induces a sense of unworthiness in victims - a sense that they are not even worth the effort of torment (Simmons, 2002). According to Crick et al. (1996), victims of relational aggression are likely to be psychologically and socially maladjusted.

#### 2.4.1.2 *Indirect Aggression*

Due to cultural norms where open conflict among girls is frowned upon, girls rely on intentionally covert and indirect means of enacting aggression (Butovskaya, Timentshick & Burkova, 2007; Chessler, 2003; Simmons, 2002). Indirect aggression utilises the social structure to psychologically harm another, while concealing the attack through covert ways and thereby obviating the risk of face-to-face retaliation, disapproval and blame (Coyne et al, 2006; Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006).

Indirect aggression is usually more prominent in adolescence, with most social skills being acquired during this time period (Butovskaya et al, 2007). However, social manipulation skills develop at an early age (Chessler, 2003). Some of the activities associated with this type of aggression are: backbiting, spreading rumours, exclusion from social groups, gossip, manipulation, eye contact (staring, rolling),

An investigation of the relationships between 43 name-calling, and passing of notes (Besag, 2006; Butovskaya et al, 2007; Simmons, 2002).

Indirect aggression is popular because it is considered a safe option as it is non-confrontational - much takes place behind other girls' backs (Owens, Slee & Shute, 2000; Simmons, 2002). Girls exert power utilising invisibility and secrecy where aggression is concerned (Brown, 2003). Often the peer group is used as the medium through which one can attack another (Garandean & Cillessen, 2006). Exclusion of a girl from the group helps to form a group identity and is used as a control mechanism (Field, 2007). Indirect aggression is both psychologically (sadness, depression, loss of self-worth) and socially (loss of friends, social isolation) harmful (Chessler, 2003; Owens et al, 2000). Girls are extremely attuned to manipulation and subtle signs in other girls due to societal prescriptions (Brown, 2003). Thus indirect aggression involves the use of high level social skills within societal networks (Chessler, 2003).

### *2.5 A Conceptual Understanding of Bullying*

Theoretical and empirical evidence has demonstrated that social influences, and peer relations in particular, have a profound impact on adolescent bullying behaviour, from the perspective of bullies, victims, bully-victims and bystanders (Andreou, Vachou & Didaskalou, 2005; Butosvkaya et al, 2007;

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Crick et al, 1996; Frisen et al, 2007; Garandean & Cillessen, 2006; Leff, 2007). This suggests the need to explore the relationship between peer relations and bullying behaviour within a defined social context.

Likewise, self-efficacy has been theoretically and empirically implicated in the performance of a range of risk behaviours among adolescents, including bullying behaviour (Aboud & Miller, 2007; Ando et al, 2005; Andreou et al 2005; Eisenbraun, 2007; Frisen et al, 2007), suggesting the need to explore the relationship between self-efficacy and bullying among female school students.

As discussed below, personal conflict resolution strategies have been shown to influence the behaviour and experience of the bully, victim, bystander and bully-victim. For this reason, an investigation of this relationship is empirically warranted.

#### *2.5.1 Social Influences (Peer Relations)*

In the school context, arguably the most important social influence on students is peer relations, specifically friendship and group patterns. The social world of the adolescent involves many individuals, but none so important as the peer group. Friendships in adolescent girls become the core interaction from which they form bonds, explore diversity

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of opinions and inevitably end up in some forms of conflict (Frisen et al, 2007; Leff, 2007). With the fluid forming of social networks and the breaking up of social circles, we see the increasing influence of peers on adolescent behaviour (Andreou et al, 2005).

These peer interactions place bullying in a social context where individuals are influenced by the norms of the group, the status of others and the roles which various individuals occupy. The peers of an individual influence her to behave in certain ways (Butosvkaya et al, 2007). For instance, if a friend believes that it is acceptable to be nasty or gossip about another girl (who may or may not be in the protagonist's social circle) then the individual is more inclined to believe that she can behave in the same way because it is considered to be normative.

In particular, girls use social structure such as friendships and social standing to gain control and status, create bondedness, and achieve cohesiveness within their own circle (Crick et al, 1996; Garandeanu, & Cillessen, 2006). As a result relational aggression (conflict in groups) and indirect bullying (such as exclusion from a group) is common in female students (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Frisen et al, 2007; Olweus, 1993). The primacy of these friendships results in a heightened sense of the importance of peers, who exert

pressure and influence an individual to behave in certain ways, to the extent of supporting behaviours the individual might not otherwise have initiated (Frisen et al, 2007).

Because of this focus on relationships, bullying amongst girls predominantly takes the form of spreading rumours, gossiping, writing notes about each other, exclusion, persuasion, non-verbal behaviours such as 'death staring' and the manipulation of friendships (Frisen et al, 2007; Marini et al, 2006). Fighting amongst friends is complex, as a girl may pick a target who might have been her good friend a minute ago but is now a sworn enemy. Added injury is involved due to the fact that details about that ex-friends life are now used against her to hurt her where it really counts (Garandeau, & Cillessen, 2006).

The group of friends becomes a vehicle for aggression in that acting in a group enables the instigator to feel a shared sense of purpose and diffusion of responsibility such that she can hide behind the peer group (Coyne et al, 2006; Crick et al, 1996; Garandeau, & Cillessen, 2006). Children who have fewer friends (or none at all) are more frequently targeted by a bully (Bollmer, Millich, Harris & Maras, 2005). This highlights the central role of peer relations in informing bullying behaviour.

### 2.5.2 *Self-efficacy*

Self-efficacy is defined as "expectations that we have about our ability to succeed in a particular task" (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p. 650). Self-efficacy has been demonstrated to exert a powerful influence on human behaviour (Bandura, 1986), and has been particularly implicated during the adolescent stage of development, influencing a range of adolescent behaviours including sexual risk behaviour (Eaton, Flisher & Aaro, 2003), drug abuse (Morojele, Brook & Kachieng'a, 2006), and violent behaviour (Eisenbraun, 2007).

With regard to bullying, self-efficacy plays a pivotal role in determining and influencing whether adolescents are able to defend themselves against attack if they are the target, whether the victim or bystander reports the incident, what side they take in the interaction, and how the bullying is dealt with (Aboud & Miller, 2007; Frisen et al, 2007; Garandeau & Cillessen, 2006).

It has been suggested that self-efficacy plays a role in assertion (by the victim or the bystander), in aggression by the bully, and in intervening in the process of bullying (Ando et al, 2005). There is evidence that poor self-efficacy with regards to asserting oneself is implicated in the role of the victim (Ando et al, 2005), suggesting that the effect of bullying on the individual may not be as severe if they have a

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high level of self-efficacy and believe they are able to deal with the situation (Andreou et al, 2005). Bullies themselves may have low perceived self efficacy, which leads them to think that they need to act in a more aggressive way and hence bully others instead of believing that they have the ability to carry out a given positive action (Andreou et al, 2005).

In view of the documented link between self-efficacy and bullying, it is not surprising that many successful anti-bullying interventions have focused on the need to build self-efficacy amongst students, such that they may negotiate their way out of an aggressive situation, or step in to defuse a situation where bullying is taking place (Andreou et al, 2005).

### 2.5.3 *Conflict Resolution Strategies*

Conflict may be defined as a "perceived divergence of interest, or a belief that parties' current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously" (Fry & Bjorkqvist, 1997).

Conflict is a natural by-product of human interaction as it is impossible to always get what one wants (Fry & Bjorkqvist, 1997).

The ways in which adolescent females deal with conflict and aggression is implicated in bullying behaviour, the coping styles they present with and the effect bullying has on them

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(Bradshaw et al, 2007; Marini et al, 2006). Though it is commonly thought that conflict among friends is to be avoided, conflict is really an integral part of the dynamic of social relationships (Bowker, 2004).

The tactics used by girls in dealing with conflict-orientated situations impacts on bullying, with those who respond to conflict in an active, emotional way being more likely to be the targets of bullies (Wilson, Parry, Nettlebeck & Bell, 2003) and those who are better at handling conflict being more likely to be left alone by the bully (Wilson et al, 2003). Thus, the way in which an individual expresses herself when presented with a confrontation and how she handles that situation impacts on the nature of the bullying itself (Wilson et al, 2003).

Some of the conflict management strategies identified in the empirical literature include confrontational, active, passive or submissive behaviours, denial, concern for oneself, concern for others, relationship oriented behaviours, an orientation toward an issue and conflict avoidance (Haar & Krahe, 1999). Camodeca and Goossens (2005) have found that girls generally use assertive strategies in trying to resolve conflict. In contrast, Lindemann, Harraka and Keltikangas-Jarvinen (1997) suggest from their findings that girls exhibit more pro-social strategies in reducing conflict.

## 2.6. *Theoretical Framework*

A number of theoretical perspectives have been preferred to explain bullying in schools, varying from social behaviourist to biological deterministic propositions. The theoretical framework in which the current study is located includes a consideration of social and developmental perspectives on bullying behaviour.

### 2.6.1 *Social Learning Theory*

The main theoretical perspective for this study is Social Learning Theory. Social behaviour is learnt from the important role models in an individual's life (Bandura, 1986); in this case, during adolescence, peers play an instrumental role in a girl's life. Aggression is thus learnt through observation, modelling, reward, conditioning, and trial and error (Fry & Bjorkqvist, 1997). Modelling is a key principle in social learning theory, with peers becoming models for ways in which to behave, such that individuals will perform or reproduce desired actions or responses based on the behaviour of their peers.

Furthermore, reinforcement of a particular behaviour may occur (Bandura, 1986). In the case of bullying, a powerful model is presented (the bully) who is often rewarded for her behaviour through peer support or by achieving her goal

An investigation of the relationships between 51 (O'Connell et al, 1999). Reinforcement occurs when students either support the bullying behaviour (or do not do anything to stop the act) or support the victim (O'Connell et al, 1999). One study found the bully's behaviour to be modelled on parental behaviour and reinforced by their peers (O'Connell et al, 1999).

Self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) impacts directly on adolescent behaviour in that if an individual perceives that s/he has the ability to carry out an activity, then it is more likely that s/he would follow through with the action. Through socialisation and modelling of the behaviour of key role models, each gender group learns the norms for acting out a particular gendered role. In this instance, the 'female' way of acting in the world impacts on what girls deem to be important (relationships), and how they maintain or act within their peer groups (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

#### 2.6.2 Erikson's Psychosocial Theory

Adolescence, according to Erikson (1968), occurs between ages ten to twenty. It is during this time that individuals are negotiating new roles and pathways to identities within a social context, with social relationships playing a key role in informing identity development (Erikson, 1968). Within the context of bullying behaviour, individuals negotiate how to act in terms of their peer relationships. This is known as the

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stage of identity versus identity confusion, and occurs between approximately twelve to eighteen years of age (Erikson, 1968).

During this stage individuals are trying to build new identities for themselves (Erikson, 1968). They are confronted with and explore new social roles (such as being a bully), are forming new relationships and exploring gendered identity (this informs aggression as it is considered to be gender-patterned). When an individual is forced into a particular role (such as a victim), does not adequately explore a role, or does not find a positive future path, then identity confusion pertains. Thought patterns that include an increase in importance of how one is perceived by others, being afraid of ridicule and excluding others who are different from you highlight the influence of the social world on individuals during this time (Erikson, 1968).

During this period peers begin to influence the pathways that an individual may take. For instance, if your 'crowd' acts or thinks it is okay to act in a certain nasty manner towards another girl, then one is more inclined to act in a similar way in order to fit in. If identity confusion occurs, an individual may withdraw from others, or immerse herself in a crowd and effectively lose her own identity (Erikson, 1968). In terms of psychosocial theory, adolescence is a period of

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both opportunity and danger, where girls are particularly open to different perspectives and desire intimacy in the form of relationships that might include both friendship and love (Brown, 2003).

### 2.6.3 *Two Cultures Theory*

This theory compliments and adds explanatory power to the prior frameworks. This theory of understanding female aggression was proposed by Maltz and Booker (1982), and proposes that the ways in which the different sexes interact are determined by social patterns and the cultural context in which they are situated (Graves, 2007). Females "tend to focus on social encounters and emphasize relationships" (p.134) far more than pertains with males, such that relationships among female adolescents are characterised as being intimate and intense in comparison to male relationships (Graves, 2007). The early childhood socialisation of the different sexes into specific patterns of violent behaviour styles has resulted in female adolescents exhibiting aggressive tendencies in a particular way (Graves, 2007).

The style adopted by females' places emphasis on friendships as central to female identity, which leads to certain strategies of communication being invoked to maintain these relationships. This impacts on the form bullying behaviour is more likely to take i.e. girls are likely to enact aggressive

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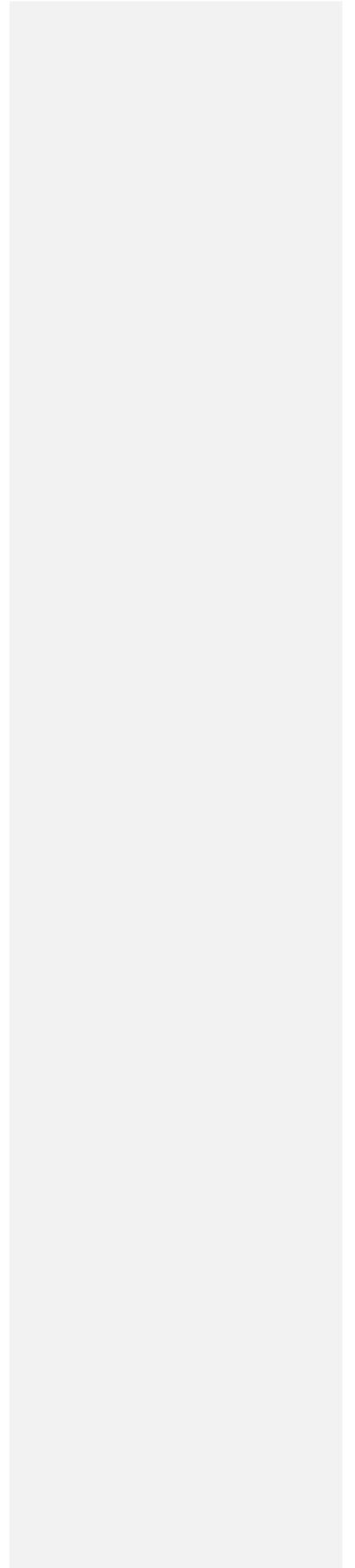
behaviour in groups (relational aggression) and are more inclined to use covert methods of aggression due to the fact that physical violence is more discouraged in girls than in boys (Crick et al, 1996; Graves, 2007).

Adolescent females resort to a pattern of violence as a consequence of not being taught to negotiate conflict or deal with negative feelings (Graves, 2007). During adolescence females are exposed to male interactions which are characterised by more dominating strategies as opposed to the pro-social, empathetic strategies employed by girls (Graves, 2007). This may result in an individual rethinking the best strategy to achieve her social goals which may lead to an adoption of more cultural 'male' styles of interaction (Graves, 2007) or an increasing frustration with sticking to the patterned female way of interaction (Graves, 2007).

### *2.7 Concluding Remarks*

Given the endemic levels of violence that pertains in South African schools, including bullying (Reddy et al, 2003), and the gap in knowledge and information around female bullying due to a domination of data researching male bullying (Olweus, 1993), this study of bullying among adolescent female students in a KwaZulu-Natal school is undoubtedly timely. Further, the focus on social influences (peer relations), self efficacy and conflict resolution styles is justified by the theoretical and

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empirical literature and will enhance our understanding of the  
socio-psychological dynamics of bullying behaviour in this  
learner population, thereby informing science-driven  
interventions to redress this vexing problem.



Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 *Aims and Objectives*

The broad aim of this research project was to develop a contextual understanding of the relationship between bullying behaviour and the constructs of social influences, self efficacy and conflict resolution styles in a sample of female school-going students. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the prevalence and forms of female bullying behaviour
2. Investigate the type of peer relationship attachment as evidence by each category of actor i.e. the bully, the victim, the bully-victim, the bystander
3. Investigate the level of self-efficacy present in each category of actor
4. Investigate the dominant personal style of conflict resolution evidenced by each category of actor

3.2 *Research Design*

A quantitative approach was taken in data collection and analysis, which enabled me to utilise the records of all participants' experiences and opinions. By using quantitative methodology, I was able to conduct the data collection in a more convenient and shorter time period than if qualitative

An investigation of the relationships between 57 methodology was employed. This suited the school and was in keeping with the resource limitations applicable to this short dissertation study.

This study utilised a cross-sectional survey design, employing four objective measures that were used to gather quantitative data which was subsequently subjected to inferential statistical analysis. There are a number of advantages to using a survey method. Firstly, one is able to use a smaller representative sample to identify attributes pertaining to a larger population (Myers & Hansen, 2006). Thus, the survey method enables inferences to be made about a specific population, in terms of opinions, attitudes and perceptions (Myers & Hansen, 2006), which was in keeping with the objectives of this study. This cross-sectional survey design facilitated exploration of associations between the constructs investigated i.e. self-efficacy related to bullying behaviour; relationships among peers and bullying behaviour; and conflict resolution styles related to bullying behaviour.

A further advantage was the rapid turnaround in data collection, which is in keeping with the resource and time constraints for this short dissertation. Further, objective self-report measures ensures that participants' views and opinions are accurately expressed (Cozby, 2004). The

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participants are more likely to be truthful as there is an assurance of anonymity (Cozby, 2004) in this method in comparison to qualitative interviews or focus groups.

### 3.3 *Population and Sample Frame*

Given the non-probability sampling strategy adopted for this relatively small-scale study, a single Government high school in KwaZulu-Natal was targeted. Inclusion criteria for the selection of this school included:

- a single sex female school (because of the focus on female bullying behaviour);
- a secondary school (because of an increase of non-fatal violence in mid-adolescence (Reddy et al, 2003) and a reported 14.8% of students being threatened at school (Burton, 2008);
- a public school whose racial profile is broadly in keeping with that of the province (so that research outcomes are contextually relevant and thereby lend themselves to further enquiry and intervention);
- a school in the KwaZulu-Natal province (because of statistics indicating that KwaZulu-Natal schools experience a high level of violence and bullying, with 15.8 percent of students having been threatened with violence while at school in 2007) (Burton, 2008);
- a school that was willing not only to participate in this study but one which was prepared to act on the findings by

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developing and implementing interventions to ameliorate  
bullying behaviour.

Based on the above criteria, a purposive sampling strategy was used to select a single school as the target for this study. Purposive sampling is particularly suitable in instances where the researcher intends to discover, understand, and gain insight into a cohort sharing a specific set of characteristics (Merriam, 1998), as pertained in this study.

The student population of the selected school comprised only girls, ranging from Grades Eight to Twelve. For the purposes of this study, only Grade Eight and Nine students (satisfying an age range of 12 to 16) comprised the study population, as this is an important developmental period and is considered a transition phase from primary school to high school (Millstein, Petersen & Nightingale, 1993). These students are forming new friendships, engaging in the process of finding and negotiating peer relationships and learning the rules of their new school (Millstein, Petersen & Nightingale, 1993). The empirical literature accordingly suggests that this age range comprises a critical period for the manifestation of bullying behaviour (Beaty & Alexeyev, 2008; Coloroso, 2005; Frisen et al, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002).

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Further, the race groups within this school, and within both grades specifically, were reflective of those found in the KwaZulu-Natal province, namely, the majority of school pupils are African, then Indian, Coloured and White. This ensured that the population reflected the local community and provincial demographics appropriately.

A saturation sampling strategy (Cozby, 2004) was subsequently employed, where all 385 Grade Eight and Nine students in the study population, distributed in thirteen classes, and ranging in age from 12 to 16 years, was selected for inclusion. This decision was informed by a scientific consideration, in that a probability sample would ensure that findings were generalisable to both grades, and by the practical consideration of ensuring that no students would feel excluded during the Life Orientation module, which was the session during which data was collected.

#### *3.4 Data Collection Procedures*

Subsequent to securing ethical approval for the study, permission for conducting the study was obtained from the Principal of the high school concerned. The study was negotiated with both the principal as well as specific teachers concerned with the Life Orientation module, as this module was concerned with dealing with bullying in schools.

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In addition to its broader scientific and empirical implications, both parties accepted that this study would add direct value to the school as it would provide teachers with critical information that would assist them in creating a successful anti-bullying intervention aimed at transforming the school culture positively. It was agreed that this research will precede the learning intervention, and will be used to kick-start discussion in subsequent lessons.

The students and parents were informed of the nature of the study, procedures and right to non-consent. This was achieved through Informed Consent forms and briefings by teachers (see section 3.9 on ethical procedures on page 72).

The four measures were administered in a group format during the Life Orientation lesson period (see Appendix 1 for the full school questionnaire). At the beginning of each lesson I was introduced to the class by the Life Orientation teacher. She exited the room before the research began. As the researcher, I was present in the classroom to introduce the study and instruct the students on how to go about answering the questionnaire. This allowed me to address any relevant concerns and secure an appropriate study environment. Those students who had queries were free to ask questions.

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Among the instructions was a comprehensive overview of what would be expected of the class during this period. The students were instructed to complete the questionnaire as honestly as possible and were assured of their anonymity. During the completing of the questionnaire, an exam-like setting prevailed - one was not allowed to talk or glance at another's work.

Each completed questionnaire was placed in an envelope and sealed by the student. All the questionnaires were collected and placed in a box (in front of the students) to ensure confidentiality. The completed questionnaires were then removed immediately from the premises by me. This assured the students of the confidentiality agreement - this stated that no teacher or member of the school would have access to the data.

The measures took 45 minutes to administer per session. As the period comprised only 50 minutes in length, a discussion was lead by the Life Orientation teacher at the beginning of the following allocated lesson for each class. This discussion centred on the student's thoughts about this study and their potential solutions for redressing bullying in their school. I was not present during this discussion, which fell outside the purview of this study.

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During the collection of data in the thirteen classes, every attempt was made to control for extraneous variables (Myers & Hansen, 2006), such as the physical setting in which the data collection takes place. Each class completed the questionnaire in their allocated Life Orientation period and corresponding classroom. The same instructions and reassurances were given by the same researcher to each group of students. During each session, individuals sealed their own questionnaire into an envelope and no teachers were present during the filling-in of the questionnaires. Data collection occurred in the mornings, thereby countering possible fatigue effects.

### *3.5 Measurement Instruments*

#### *3.5.1 The Prevalence and Forms of Bullying*

The Revised Olweus Bully/Victim Questionnaire (OBVQ), developed in 1978 and recently updated by the author, was utilised to assess the prevalence and forms of bullying behaviour in this school (Olweus, 1996; Solberg & Olweus, 2003).

This measure comprises a self-report questionnaire that contains 40 questions exploring bullying in schools. The themes investigated include attitudes towards school (including safety and cohesion), peer and teacher relations, different forms of bullying, bullying of others, being

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bullied by others, witnessing of bullying, the location of incidences, involvement of teachers/adults/peers in counteracting bullying, and reporting of incidences.

This instrument is divided into two main parts. The first consists of nineteen items which explore bullying from the perspective of a student who has experienced bullying. An example of a typical question pertaining to this section can be observed in Appendix 1.

An assessment of the bullying of other students (with the use of 15 questions) forms the basis of the second part of this questionnaire.

The complete instrument allowed for the categorisation of 5 independent variables referring to the status of the student. The 5 categories included: Victim/Bullied (a student who had been a victim of bullying); Bystander (those students who had witnessed another student being bullied but had not been bullied themselves); Bully (a student who is or had bullied another student); Bully-Victim (a student who has both bullied another and has been bullied by a fellow student); Not Bullied (a student who has not been a victim of bullying nor witnessed another student being bullied).

The Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency of items has yielded no less than a minimum of 0.80 (Solberg & Olweus,

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2003). A reliability analysis was conducted for this study. A  
moderately high Cronbach's alpha of .785 was obtained.  
Construct validity has been demonstrated by Olweus (2006)  
with regards to the two dimensions of 'bullying others' and  
'being victimised'. Construct validity has been demonstrated  
by Solberg and Olweus (2003) with regards to the two  
dimensions of 'bullying others' and 'being victimised'.

While Kyriakides, Kaloyirou, and Lindsay (2006) question  
the emphasis on verbal bullying as the dominant field of  
enquiry in the questionnaire, they concede that previous  
international research has identified this form of bullying  
as the most common in schools. Likewise, they note that while  
the instrument pays more attention to investigating the  
characteristics of the bully as opposed to those of the  
victim, research has demonstrated that this is a primary  
issue confronting schools. A further criticism made is that  
more attention is placed on the role played by the teacher  
than on the other significant persons in the student's life.  
Methodologically, these authors note that the questionnaire  
provides primarily ordinal data, and is highly subjective  
given its reliance on opinions and attitudes (Kyriakides et  
al, 2006).

This questionnaire is suitable for international use  
because of the wide range of variables investigated

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(Kyriakides et al, 2006). Further, globally, more than five thousand students have taken part in a number of studies which has provided satisfactory internal consistency and test-retest reliability results due to the size and representativeness of these studies (Kyriakides et al, 2006).

It is believed that only "a few studies have investigated validity and these have been mainly concerned with the concurrent validity of the earlier versions of the OBVQ" (Kyriakides et al, 2006, p.784). They note that Olweus has provided evidence for construct validity by reporting strong linear relationships between variables such as depression, poor self-esteem and peer rejection and the degree of victimization (Kyriakides et al, 2006); as well as even stronger relationships between antisocial behaviour and degrees of bullying others. Notwithstanding their criticisms, therefore, Kyriakides et al. (2006) conclude that this measure provides an important source for gathering data on bullying.

### 3.5.2 *Peer Relations*

The construct of relationships among peers has been measured using the Adolescent Friendship Attachment Scale (WAFAS), which was developed by Wilkinson (2006). Wilkinson (2006) explains that the majority of adolescents have at least one best friend, with other close friends often

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changing over periods of time, and these friendships  
characterise intimacy in girls. These peer relationships  
influence the behaviour of these young school girls  
(Wilkinson, 2006).

This instrument comprises a 30-item scale that was tested  
firstly with 490 adolescents and then retested amongst 787  
adolescents (Wilkinson, 2006). Examples of items in the scale  
are: 'I would find it distressing if this friendship ended';  
'I can talk things through with my friend'; 'I am concerned  
that my friend will find another friend that he/she prefers'.

The response format is a 5 point Likert scale ranging from  
'extremely disagree' to 'extremely agree'. The underlying  
hypothesis of this measure is that the style of friendship  
adopted by respondents' impacts on their behaviour within a  
social context. The scale accordingly renders three  
friendship styles, viz.: Secure, Anxious/Ambivalent,  
Avoidant.

The initial development of this scale provided an alpha  
coefficient of 0.882 (Wilkinson, 2006). The developed scale  
"is internally consistent and stable over time and displayed  
appropriate convergent and discriminant validity with regards  
to attachment style classification and specific measures of  
parental and peer attachment" (Wilkinson, 2006, p.13).

A reliability analysis was conducted on this scale. Reliability of this instrument in this study was moderately high ( $r=.691$ ). This reliability score however is lower than found in previous studies (Wilkinson, 2006).

By exploring the types of friendships and the quality of bondedness amongst the four different categories (bully, bully-victim, victim and bystander), one is able to achieve an idea of how social groups operate in girls of this age and how these relations impact on bullying behaviour. Notwithstanding the fact that this scale has not been used previously in a South African study, it has been successfully utilised for this purpose in a comparable Australian context (Wilkinson, 2006) and presents as a unique opportunity to add to the body of such knowledge in local contexts.

### 3.5.3 *Self-Efficacy*

The measure chosen to examine the self-efficacy of each individual is the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995). This scale measures personal competence and strength of self-beliefs e.g. the belief to perform a task or cope with a given situation (Leganger & Kraft, 2003; Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). This scale consists of ten items.

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The ten items of this scale range from statements such as 'I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough'; to 'I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events'. These items are arranged in a Likert scale formation. There are four response categories from which the participant can choose: not at all true; hardly true; moderately true; exactly true. The respondent is required to indicate which response is applicable to one's self. The higher the score, the higher the level of perceived general self-efficacy (Scherbaum, Cohen-Charash & Kern, 2006). These items are added together to achieve a sum score (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

This measure has been translated into 28 languages, and the psychometric properties have been tested in over 14 countries for both adult and adolescent populations (Scholz, Guitierrez-Dona, Sud & Schwarzer, 2002; Schwarzer and Scholz, 2000). This construct of self-efficacy has been proven to be equivalent across cultures (Scholz et al, 2002). Using item response theory, Scherbaum et al. (2006), conducted a comprehensive psychometric assessment of this scale and reported adequate validity and reliability indices, returning a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.85. Data from a number of studies concur, with internal consistency coefficients across a variety of samples and countries ranging from 0.75 to 0.91 (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). In terms of validity, an

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examination of the factor structure across 28 countries returned a single component factor underlying item responses (Scherbaum et al, 2006).

Due to the established psychometric properties and the relevance to an adolescent population, I chose to apply this measure in this study. This scale underwent analysis to establish a reliability score for this study. A high Cronbach's alpha was obtained ( $r=.808$ ), suggesting a high degree of internal consistency.

#### 3.5.4 *Conflict Resolution Strategies*

This construct was measured using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI) designed for schools (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Thomas & Kilmann, 2001). This scale allows the construct of conflict resolution behaviour to be measured across the four categories created (i.e. bully, victim, bully-victim, bystander, thus allowing an assessment of how an individual acts within a specific interpersonal or group situation (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

The scale comprises 30 items, presenting a range of situations to which respondents choose either 'A' or 'B' responses, which reflect their conflict behaviour style. This instrument is premised along two basic dimensions: assertiveness (an attempt to satisfy one's own goals) and

An investigation of the relationships between 71 cooperativeness (an attempt to satisfy another's goals) (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

Five styles or modes of responding to conflict are identified: Competing, Accommodating, Avoiding, Collaborating and Compromising. Each of the five conflict styles obtain scores ranging from 0 to 12. The dominant or preferential style is the one with the highest score (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001).

This measure has been used for over thirty years and its reliability and validity has been assessed and accepted in a number of studies (Kilmann, 2007). Reliability analysis for this study resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of .823. Thus a high reliability score was achieved.

### *3.6 Reliability of the Study*

Consistency and dependability of this study has been ensured in a number of ways. There was only one rater or scorer so consistency across scoring was assured (Myers & Hansen, 2006). Clearly defined procedural steps have been recorded in this research report so that this study would be easily replicable by other researchers, noting that the same results would only be produced amongst this sample of students in the same school environment (Myers & Hansen, 2006). The same measurement instruments have been used across

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all thirteen Grade Eight and Nine classes to ensure reliability, and the same conditions pertained in each classroom (Myers & Hansen, 2006).

### 3.7 *Validity of the Study*

To ensure that this study is investigating the intended variables, each construct has been identified and a corresponding measure was carefully selected to ensure construct validity (Myers & Hansen, 2006).

### 3.8 *Analysis of Data*

Data has been pre-coded and a template was developed for data-input into the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15). A file audit has been conducted post data-entry to assure accuracy of input. In addition to basic descriptive analyses (e.g. means, standard deviations, percentages), the Pearson Correlation Coefficient has been used to measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables of interest (Howell, 1995). Inferential statistics in the form of multiple regression analysis has been utilised to determine the degree of shared variance among constructs measured.

### 3.9 *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Higher Degrees Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal before

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this study began in the school (Appendix 2). On this basis,  
permission for conducting the study was negotiated and  
obtained from the Principal of the High School concerned  
(Appendix 3).

Each student received an Informed Consent Form (Appendix  
4), which provided an explanation of the procedures,  
assurance of anonymity and informed participants of their  
right to withdraw from the study at any stage. Every parent  
received an Informed Consent Letter (Appendix 5), which  
detailed the nature of this research study and asked for  
their consent in allowing their daughter to participate.

Every precaution was taken to ensure that the  
questionnaires completed by the students were anonymous. This  
was achieved through silence in the classroom, a policy of no  
names recorded and the sealing of envelopes by the student.  
Students were also forbidden to look at one another's work.  
Data and analysis arising from this study will be stored in  
the School of Psychology in electronic format, without any  
record of the name of the school and/or its teachers.

A follow-up session during the next Life Orientation class  
was allocated for discussion of their participation and any  
concerns or issues that students might want to raise. This  
was facilitated by the Life Orientation teacher.

The resultant data was analysed and presented to the school on a group level. All information referred to the Grade levels that were investigated only, with no mention being made of the school name or individual students. This assured anonymity of both students and their school. This protocol has been adhered to in the write-up of this dissertation, and will be honoured in any subsequent research reports or publications arising from this study.

### 3.10 *Concluding Remarks*

A quantitative, cross sectional design has been used to frame this research. Four published measurement instruments were used to gather data and investigate the relationships between bullying behaviour, self-efficacy, peer relations and conflict resolution strategies. A self-report questionnaire was administered to 385 students. SPSS 15 was utilised to analyse the resultant data.

## Chapter Four

### Results

#### 4.1 *Introduction*

This chapter presents the results of statistical analysis utilising SPSS 15. Descriptive analysis was used to examine the following variables: the demographic profile of the sample; roles; bullying environment; peer relations; self-efficacy; and conflict resolution strategies.

Three separate intensity scales, which are based on the three published instruments that were used, are detailed. The first two scales relate to victimisation and perpetrator intensity respectively. These were computed using items from the OBVQ (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). The third scale, the Positive Peer Attachment Style scale, was based on the items from the WAFAS (Wilkinson, 2006).

The second half of this chapter documents relationships and predictions amongst key variables (age, school cohesion, self-efficacy, peer attachment styles, and conflict resolution strategies). Correlational analysis was used to examine relationships between these variables. Standard multiple regression was utilised to evaluate the variance predicted by the above mentioned variables.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 Demographic Profile of Study Population (n=385)

| Category                | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) <sup>a</sup> |
|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Age</b>              |               |                             |
| 12                      | 2             | 0.5                         |
| 13                      | 40            | 10.5                        |
| 14                      | 209           | 54.0                        |
| 15                      | 119           | 31.1                        |
| 16                      | 15            | 3.9                         |
| <b>Grade</b>            |               |                             |
| 8                       | 225           | 58.4                        |
| 9                       | 160           | 41.6                        |
| <b>Race<sup>b</sup></b> |               |                             |
| Black                   | 307           | 80.0                        |
| Indian                  | 41            | 10.8                        |
| Coloured                | 30            | 7.9                         |
| Caucasian               | 5             | 1.3                         |
| <b>Total</b>            | <b>385</b>    | <b>100</b>                  |

a. Adjustments have been made to cater for rounding error

b. Two participants did not indicate their race group

4.2.1 Prevalence and Nature of Bullying Context (OBVQ)

(Solberg & Olweus, 2003)

Table 2 *Descriptive Statistics on the Bullying Questionnaire - Themes 1 & 2 (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

| Themes                          | Response Scale <sup>a</sup> | Mean | Std Dev | Descriptive Comments                            |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|---------|---|
| <b>Theme 1: School Cohesion</b> |                             |      |         |   |
| School feeling                  | 1-5                         | 3.56 | .958    | Majority liked school; 4.2% strong dislike      |
| No. of friends                  | 1-5                         | 3.65 | 1.24    | Most had large group (+6); 6.8% had none        |
| Feeling un/safe                 | 1-6                         | 2.69 | 1.70    | 38.3% afraid of being bullied at school         |
| <b>Theme 2: Bullying Forms</b>  |                             |      |         |   |
| Verbal                          | 1-5                         | 1.73 | 1.01    | 49.8% called names/made fun of/teased hurtfully |
| Exclusion                       | 1-5                         | 1.57 | 1.03    | 33% left out/excluded/ignored                   |
| Rumours                         | 1-5                         | 1.70 | 1.04    | 31.8% subjected to rumours/lies/dislike tactics |
| Physical                        | 1-5                         | 1.10 | .417    | 7.9% were hit/kicked/pushed/shoved/locked in    |
| Property damage                 | 1-5                         | 1.16 | .492    | 12.7% had possession/money taken/damaged        |
| Threatened/forced               | 1-5                         | 1.20 | .615    | 13.9% were threatened/forced                    |
| Racial                          | 1-5                         | 1.45 | .914    | 28.5% were called mean names/racial comments    |
| Sexual                          | 1-5                         | 1.35 | .833    | 22.4% called sexual names/comments/gestures     |
| Hi-tech                         | 1-2                         | 1.18 | .584    | 12.6% bullied via mobile (majority)/ internet   |

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<sup>a</sup>. 1= Low attribute

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Table 3 *Descriptive Statistics on the Bullying Questionnaire - Themes 3 & 4 (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

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| Themes                         | Response Scale <sup>a</sup> | Mean | Std Dev | Descriptive Comments  |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|------|---------|---|
| <b>Theme 3: Bully</b>          |                             |      |         |   |
| <b>Details</b>                 |                             |      |         |   |
| No. of bullies                 | 1-6                         | 1.94 | 1.26    | Most (18.8%) bullied by 2-3; 16.7% have 1 bully   |
| Class where bully resides      | 1-6                         | 2.07 | 1.57    | Most bullies in same class (16.6%); next frequent: older bully (10.8%)                        |
| <b>Theme 4: Reporting</b>      |                             |      |         |   |
| <b>Bullying</b>                |                             |      |         |   |
| Reported incidents             | 1-3                         | 1.77 | .892    | 31.1% reported; 15.5% not reported. 1 <sup>st</sup> =Friend                                   |
| Staff try stop                 | 1-5                         | 2.60 | 1.34    | 11.2% said almost never; 28.5% almost always  |
| Students try stop              | 1-5                         | 3.94 | 1.11    | Majority (42.6%): almost never  |
| Parent/guardian contact school | 1-4                         | 1.50 | .747    | Majority said parents had not contacted school. 3.2% reported parents contacted several times |

<sup>a</sup>. 1= Low attribute

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With regard to school cohesion, the majority of students evidenced positive feelings about their school; while a small percentage (38.3) were afraid of being bullied at school. Many different forms of bullying were evident in this sample, with verbal bullying being the most pervasive form (49.8%). Group bullying was experienced by 18.8% of students. A lack of confidence was evident regarding teachers ability to deal with bullying incidences (11.2% expressed no confidence in teachers). Close to a third of the victims (31.1%) reported experiencing incidences of bullying.

Table 4 Comparison using 'Location' Item (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) between Current Study and Sapouna Study (2008)

| Location                                 | Current study <sup>a</sup> | Sapouna study <sup>a</sup> |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | (n=385)                    | (2008) (n=654)             |
|  | Frequency (%)              | Frequency (%)              |
| On the field during break                | 48.1                       | 76.8                       |
| In class when a teacher is not present   | 13.8                       | 44.00                      |
| On stairways/in hallways                 | 12.5                       | 48.7                       |
| In class when there is a teacher present | 12.2                       | 23.5                       |

a. Students could check more than one response

Both studies highlight the break field as the place where most bullying occurs. The sample population used by Sapouna (2008) differed from the sample in this study (N=654; Grades 5-8; both sexes included).

4.2.2 *Bullying Roles of Students (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

Table 5 *Roles of Students Regarding Bullying Behaviour (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

| <b>Bully Roles</b>       | <b>Frequency (n)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Victim                   | 66                   | 17.1                  |
| Bully                    | 21                   | 5.5                   |
| Bystander                | 212                  | 55.1                  |
| Bully-Victim             | 7                    | 1.8                   |
| Not Bullied <sup>a</sup> | 79                   | 20.5                  |
| <b>Total</b>             | <b>385</b>           | <b>100</b>            |

a. Not bullied & have not witnessed bullying

Notably, 79.5% of students have identified themselves as being involved in bullying behaviour [Victim + Bully + Bystander + Bully-Victim].

In order to further examine the type of role implicated in bullying behaviour, two separate scales were computed based on items from the OBVQ. An intensity scale measuring

An investigation of the relationships between 81 victimisation was created utilising item numbers 4 through to 22 (including item 12a) (see Table 5). The sum of the 20 items were then divided to create a representative mean score.

A second scale was created to measure the dimension of perpetrator intensity. The Perpetrator Intensity Scale was based on items 23 through to 36 (including items 31a and 31b) (see Table 5). The scores on these 16 items were then added together and divided by the number of items to achieve an intensity score.

Table 6 *Descriptive Statistics on the Victimization Intensity Scale and the Perpetrator Intensity Scale (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

| <b>Name of Instrument</b>     | <b>No. of items</b> | <b>Intensity Dimension</b>                          | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std Dev</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Victimization Intensity Scale | 20                  | High score=<br>high levels of<br>victimisation      | 1.68        | .492           | .858                    |
| Perpetrator Intensity Scale   | 16                  | High score=<br>intense levels<br>of<br>perpetration | 1.51        | .362           | .693                    |

4.2.3 Peer Relations (WAFAS) (Wilkinson, 2006)

Table 7 Descriptive Statistics on Peer Attachment Styles (WAFAS) (Wilkinson, 2006) (n=376)

| Category | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std Dev |
|----------|---------|---------|------|---------|
| Secure   | 1.31    | 5.00    | 3.92 | .685    |
| Avoidant | 1.25    | 4.88    | 3.32 | .660    |
| Anxious  | 1.56    | 4.89    | 3.09 | .602    |

A new Positive Peer Attachment Style scale was computed using the 30 item WAFAS (2006) as a basis (see Table 7 below). The sum of the items was divided by the number of items to obtain an intensity dimension. This scale measures the level of secure, healthy attachment styles of individuals.

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Table 8 *Descriptive Statistics on the Positive Peer Attachment Style scale (WAFAS) (Wilkinson, 2006)*

| <b>Name of Instrument</b>      | <b>No. of items</b> | <b>Intensity Dimension</b>       | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std Dev</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| Positive Peer Attachment Style | 30                  | High score=<br>Most secure style | 3.51        | .551           | .880                    |

#### 4.2.4 *General Self-efficacy (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)*

The GSE (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) was utilised to measure the general self-efficacy of students. All the items were summed to produce a GSE score. The median value of these 10 items is used to distinguish between high and low levels of an individual's self-efficacy.

Table 9 *Descriptive Statistics of General Self-efficacy (GSE)*  
(Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)

| <b>Instrument</b>               | <b>No. of items</b> | <b>Minimum Score</b> | <b>Maximum Score</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std Dev</b> |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| General Self-<br>efficacy Scale | 10                  | 1                    | 4                    | 3.06        | .524           |

4.2.5 *Conflict Resolution Strategies (TKI)* (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974)

Table 10 *Descriptive Statistics on Subscales of the TKI*  
(Thomas & Kilmann, 1974)

| <b>Subscales</b> | <b>N<sup>a</sup></b> | <b>Minimum</b> | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Std Dev</b> |
|------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Competing        | 50                   | .00            | 12.00          | 5.70        | 2.54           |
| Collaborating    | 50                   | 2.00           | 10.00          | 5.16        | 1.76           |
| Compromising     | 50                   | 2.00           | 9.00           | 5.68        | 1.69           |
| Avoiding         | 50                   | 3.00           | 10.00          | 6.68        | 1.84           |
| Accommodating    | 50                   | 2.00           | 10.00          | 6.02        | 1.83           |

a. Only those with every item answered were analysed

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A cross tabulation and chi-square analyses was run on the variables of bully roles and conflict resolution strategies [n=50]. A non-significant result was obtained [.644]. However, descriptive results (% within bullying role, % within conflict resolution strategy, % of Total) indicated that particular roles in bullying behaviour were associated with a preferential, dominant inter-personal conflict resolution strategy, as detailed in Table 10 below.

Table 11 *Bullying Roles (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003) and Associated Dominant Conflict Resolution Strategy (TKI) (Thomas & Kilman, 1974)*

| <b>Bully Roles</b> | <b>Strategy</b>    | <b>Percentage of Total (%)</b> |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Victim             | Accommodating      | 12                             |
| Bully              | Competing/Avoiding | 10                             |
| Bully-Victim       | Competing/Avoiding | 4                              |
| Bystander          | Collaborating      | 2                              |
| Not bullied        | Avoiding           | 6                              |

Of the five conflict resolution strategies, the role of bully achieved equal percentage for both Competing and Avoiding (10% each was the largest percentage in all 5 styles). The strategy of Accommodating received the largest

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percentage (12%) out of all five strategies for status of victim. The strategies associated with bully-victim received equal percentages of 10% each and these are: Competing and Avoiding. The largest percentage of all five styles for the role of bystander is Collaborating (2%). Compared with the other strategies, the largest percentage for Avoiding (6%) occurred within the role of not bullied.

#### 4.3 Inferential Statistics

Table 12 *Correlations between Self-efficacy, Peer Relations, Bullying Roles, Age, School Feeling, and Number of Friends*

| Measures <sup>ab1</sup> | GSE    | Peer    | Vic | Perp  | Age | SchlF  | Friends |
|-------------------------|--------|---------|-----|-------|-----|--------|---------|
| GSE <sup>c</sup>        |        |         |     |       |     | .143** |         |
| Peer <sup>d</sup>       | .257** |         |     |       |     |        | .288**  |
| Vic <sup>e</sup>        |        | -.203** |     |       |     |        | -.216** |
| Perp <sup>f</sup>       |        |         |     |       |     |        |         |
| Age                     |        |         |     | .355* |     |        |         |
| SchlF <sup>g</sup>      |        | .151**  |     |       |     |        |         |
| Friends <sup>h</sup>    |        |         |     |       |     |        |         |

Note: Post-hoc t-tests for GSE and Bully & Victim resulted in  $t=-1.01$   $\alpha.313$

a. Pearson Product-Moment Coefficients used. b.  $n=385$ . c. Self-efficacy

d. Peer=Positive Peer Attachment Style. e. Vic=Victimisation intensity

f. Perp=Perpetrator intensity. g. SchlF=School feeling

h. Friends= Number of friends. i. \* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$

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Variables distinguishing participants' roles in bullying behaviour (Victimisation intensity and Perpetrator intensity) were examined for their potential relationships with self-efficacy, peer attachment style, age, number of friends, and feelings about school (see Table 12).

Table 13 *Multiple Regression Predicting Peer Attachment Styles (WAFAS) (Wilkinson, 2006)*

|                            | Standardised |         |        | Adjusted R |          | Model        |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------|--------|------------|----------|--------------|
|                            | Beta         | t value | Sig.   | Square     | R Square | significance |
|                            | Coefficients |         |        |            |          | (p)          |
| <b>Model 1<sup>a</sup></b> |              |         |        | .137       | .153     | .000         |
| Predictor                  |              |         |        |            |          |              |
| Variables:                 |              |         |        |            |          |              |
| GSE                        | .191         | 3.40    | .001*  |            |          |              |
| Victimisation              | -.135        | -2.37   | .018*  |            |          |              |
| Age                        | .011         | .194    | .846   |            |          |              |
| School cohesion            | .104         | 1.83    | .067   |            |          |              |
| No. of friends             | .222         | 3.88    | .000** |            |          |              |

a. \* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .001$

The Enter method of Multiple Regression was used in order to examine which variable best predicts peer attachment style. The following variables in this model explained 15.3% ( $R^2=.153$ ) of the variance in peer attachment style: number of friends, age, general self-efficacy, school cohesion, and victimisation. This regression model was statistically significant ( $f$  value=10.04  $p<.0005$ ).

#### 4.3.1 *General Self-efficacy (GSE) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995)*

High levels of self-efficacy, as measured by the GSE (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), was significantly correlated with a more Secure style of peer attachment [ $r=.257$ ,  $n=353$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. Multiple regression analysis confirmed a significant predictive relationship between general self-efficacy and peer attachment style ( $\alpha=.001$   $p<.005$ ). No significant correlations were found between victimisation and self-efficacy, nor between self-efficacy and perpetrator status. Positive feelings about one's school was significantly and directly correlated with self-efficacy [ $r=.143$ ,  $n=364$ ,  $p<.143$ ].

#### 4.3.2 *Peer Relations (WAFAS) (Wilkinson, 2006)*

A Secure peer attachment style, as measured by WAFAS (Wilkinson, 2006), was significantly correlated with positive feelings about one's school environment [ $r=.151$ ,  $n=369$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. A Secure peer attachment style was also significantly

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correlated with a large number of friendships [ $r=.288$ ,  $n=369$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. A multiple regression analysis revealed that number of friends accounted for the strongest unique contribution to peer attachment styles (Beta=.222). Number of friends was statistically significant in predicting peer attachment style (Beta=.000  $p<.0005$ ).

#### 4.3.3 *Bullying Behaviour (OBVQ) (Solberg & Olweus, 2003)*

High scores on victimisation, as measured by the OBVQ (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), were significantly correlated with a less secure style of friendship attachment [ $r=-.203$ ,  $n=289$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. A significant correlation between high levels of victimisation and having few to no friends was found [ $r=-.216$ ,  $n=297$ ,  $p<.01$ ]. Multiple regression analysis revealed that the variable of victimisation was a significant predictor of peer attachment style (Beta=.018  $p<.05$ ) - with level of victimisation impacting on the style of peer attachment adopted by the student e.g. those students who experienced frequent, intense levels of being bullied have a less secure attachment style. Higher levels of perpetrator intensity, as measured by the OBVQ (Solberg & Olweus, 2003), was significantly correlated with older bullies [ $r=.355$ ,  $n=36$ ,  $p<.05$ ].

#### 4.4 *Concluding Remarks*

Statistical treatment of the data collected for this study has been presented in this chapter. Analyses have revealed a number of significant relationships between bullying roles, self-efficacy, age, school cohesion and peer relations. A discussion of these findings, against the backdrop of theory and empirical evidence, follows in chapter five.

## Chapter Five

### Discussion

#### 5.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, the results obtained in this study are discussed in light of the theoretical framework and review of empirical literature presented in chapter two. Insight may be gained through the discussion of findings related to the prevalence and nature of bullying in this school context, and the relationship between bullying behaviour and self-efficacy, peer relations and conflict resolution styles.

#### 5.2 *Prevalence of Bullying*

The prevalence rate of bullying in this KwaZulu-Natal school is of considerable concern i.e. 79% of students have been directly involved in bullying behaviour (including witnessing, taking part, or being the target of bullying). This is substantially higher than reported in previous South African studies, which have indicated that 36-61 percent of South African school students, and 36.3% of students in the Durban region specifically, were involved in bullying (Townsend et al, 2008).

However, the number of students who identified themselves as victims (17%) is substantially lower than the two in five reported previously in the South African Youth Risk Behaviour

Survey (Reddy et al, 2003). This discrepancy could possibly be explained by the fact that included in the YRBS was male bullying which is easier to identify (as it is more readily observable in contrast to the more covert forms of female bullying) and is easier for students (and teachers) to recognise because of outward, physical acts.

This South African school has a higher incidence of bullying (79%) than the 15% reported in Norway (Olweus, 1993). The extensive attention paid to bullying and the institutionalisation of anti-bullying campaigns in Norway, in comparison to the South African context, could be responsible for the lower incidence rate in that country.

### 5.3 *School Cohesion*

In light of the findings regarding the prevalence of bullying, it is easy to appreciate why a significant proportion of students expressed concern for their safety and their risk for being bullied (38.3%). This relatively high level of insecurity on the school premises is echoed in previous research conducted in KwaZulu-Natal (Reddy et al, 2003) and does not augur well for social and peer cohesion at school.

#### 5.4 *Location of Bullying*

Consistent with previous empirical research (e.g. Nesor et al, 2004) the most popular location for bullying behaviour was during breaks on the school field (48.1%). It has been suggested in previous studies that this is because of a lack of monitoring by teaching staff during these times (Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Peterson & Rigby, 1999). My experience of this school is that the large number of students present during breaks over a relatively vast school ground presents an enormous challenge in terms of consistent monitoring.

The second most popular location for bullying identified by victims was the classroom, with (12.2%) or without (13.8%) a teacher present. This could be attributed, at least in part, to the high volumes of students that teachers at this school have to contend with in one class. The occurrence of bullying in class could also be indicative of the presence of covert forms of aggression that is common in girls and not easily observable by teachers.

#### 5.5 *Forms of Bullying Behaviour*

Due to their socialisation (through mechanisms such as modelling and reward) female adolescents are inclined to express aggression in particular patterned ways (Brown, 2003; Graves, 2007). As previously discussed, one such method is covert, subtle aggression. The forms of bullying behaviour

uncovered in this school are indeed representative of female patterned bullying i.e. namely indirect and direct verbal mechanisms (81.6% experienced both forms). Due to the nature of this period in psychological development i.e. the valuing of friendships and peer interaction, females utilise these strategies to manipulate or control their social encounters (Brown, 2003; Erikson, 1968; Graves, 2007).

The most frequent form of bullying reported by learners in this school was direct verbal bullying (49.8%) i.e. calling others names, teasing others in a harmful way, and making fun of others. Previous research has identified this form of bullying as a popular choice amongst female students (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Kanetsuna et al, 2006; Peterson & Rigby, 1999). Girls characteristically learn social skills that will benefit them in controlling and managing their relationships in accordance with the emphasis placed on being 'nice' (Field, 2007). By utilising direct verbal means instead of physical force, the girl-bully is able to stay within the norms of socially acceptable behaviour. This form of bullying may also be first choice as it affords the bully with instant gratification i.e. the reaction of the target can be observed directly.

The second most frequently engaged form of bullying in this sample was exclusionary tactics (33%), which is an indirect

method. This mechanism of aggression emphasises the value that is given to friendships during adolescent development, in that girls use subtle and covert means to achieve their friendship goals and manipulate situations during social encounters (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Garandeanu & Cillessen, 2006). Peers can influence an individual's behaviour towards others, especially by highlighting who is to be accepted and who is to be socially excluded (Bandura, 1986; Simmons, 2002).

The third most popular form uncovered was that of indirect verbal bullying i.e. telling lies and spreading rumours (31.8%). In keeping with her gender role socialisation, this method allows the girl-bully to deny responsibility (a student can pass on a rumour without fear of disruption to her reputation i.e. by saying that she heard the information from someone else, even if she had started it) and deflect any possible defamation of her own character. It may also be frequently used due to the speed and effectiveness of this mechanism i.e. little effort is needed to reach many ears in a short period of time.

The least favoured type of bullying reported by the sample was direct physical bullying (7.9%). This finding is corroborated by previous research, which suggests that girls do not generally engage in physical forms of violence, as the latter is considered to be the prerogative of male students

(Crick et al, 1996). Notwithstanding this relatively low prevalence of direct physical bullying, one possible reason for the apparent willingness of bullies in this school to utilise physical force derives from the Two Cultures Theory of Maltz and Booker (1982). That is to say, students exposed to male aggression patterns may have rethought previous ways of obtaining social goals, and abandoned them in favour of predominantly male ways.

Another form of bullying present in this school was bullying through the use of the peer group via relational bullying. This is illustrated in the finding that a significant proportion of victims were bullied by 2 or 3 students (18.8%). This trend towards relational bullying has been previously noted by Olweus (1993) and Rigby (2004). In terms of adolescent psycho-social development, one of the ultimate goals is finding and fitting into a peer group (Brown, 2003; Graves, 2007). At this age, girls are forming new friendships which are central to their school life, and accordingly learn to place high value on peer relations and the negotiation of belonging (Brown, 2003; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Chessler, 2003; Simmons, 2002). This sets the scene for relational forms of bullying. Further, group bullying facilitates the diffusion of responsibility amongst the social circle, the benefit being a shared sense of responsibility for negative action/s (Simmons, 2002).

Hi-tech or technological bullying was experienced by 12.6% of students. Girls reported having been bullied, or bullied others, via cell phones and the internet. Cell phones were the most popular mechanism used as the internet was not readily available at the school. Hi-tech bullying amongst school students has been documented in media articles in South Africa (Rueters, 2008; Russell, 2008) as well as in Japanese studies (Li, 2007). Perhaps this method is a popular choice because once again it is indirect and provides distance between the target and the bully, as well as affording the bully anonymity. This form can also reach a broader audience in an easier, shorter time than more traditional forms of bullying.

Close to one in three students (28.5%) reported experiencing racial bullying, which is in keeping with findings from other South African studies e.g. Reddy et al (2003) found that more White and Coloured students were bullied than Black students. A similar trend has emerged in the international literature, with previous studies noting the possibility of ethnic differences in bullying behaviour (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007). It is often minority ethnic groups who are targeted and in this way race can influence who the perpetrators and victims of bullying are (Carlyle & Steinman, 2007).

A common theme that emerges from the literature is the targeting of students because of their physical appearance or because they are somehow different from the bully (Coloroso, 2005; Field, 2007). This could take the form of physical stature or a physical deformity, or the fact that the target represents a different cultural background from the bully. As a developmental period, adolescence is also a time for excluding those who are different from one, which may explain why bullying the 'other' (Erikson, 1968) takes on a racial or ethnic dimension internationally.

Notwithstanding the fact that this was a girls-only school, almost as many students reported being sexually bullied (22.4%) as those who reported being racially bullied (28.5%). While conducting fieldwork at the school, I was witness to notes being passed around concerning a student who had tried to kiss another unwilling student during the lunch break. A possible reason for the occurrence of such behaviours is that adolescence is a developmental period where identities are being explored and informed, (including sexual identity and boundary formation (Erikson, 1968)). Perhaps girls are experimenting with their sexual preferences and/or using this type of behaviour as a mechanism for asserting power. What we might be witnessing, therefore, is the blending of aggressive intent and action into the fabric of socially-negotiated adolescent identity development.

### 5.6 Age and Bullying Behaviour

As has been corroborated by previous research (Olweus, 1993; Tattum, 1993), a significant minority of victims in this study were reportedly bullied by older peers (10.8%). The majority of victims, however, reported that their bullies were in the same class as them (16.6%). It is logical that these bullies would have more frequent contact and therefore easier access to their targets if they were in the same class. Older bullies from other classes would have more restricted access (e.g. during break times), thereby affording fewer opportunities for exerting significant authority over their younger victims.

Statistical analysis of the results confirm a significant relationship between age and perpetration ( $\alpha = .355$   $p < .05$ ). It is possible that as an individual get older, she explores and learns new ways of social interaction, has more practice reading social cues, has a better understanding of what is acceptable female aggression, and is more knowledgeable about which actions work for her (Brown, 1998; Chessler, 2003; Simmons, 2002). During the period of adolescence one becomes more concerned with how others perceive one (Erikson, 1968), thereby affording the older bully increased experience and competence in controlling and manipulating others to create or maintain her social standing.

### 5.7 Reporting of Bullying Behaviour

In keeping with previous research which shows that most incidents of bullying go unreported (Bradshaw et al, 2007; Rigby, 2002), only 31.1% of students who had experienced bullying reported the incident. This is perhaps because students are scared of possible repercussions, are not aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour, think that reporting may escalate the problem or are not confident that anything can be done to stop the bullying (Alexander, 2006; Rigby, 2002). It is also possible that victims of bullying could be in denial, or feel resigned to their fate and therefore do not report bullying incidents (Coloroso, 2005; Tattum, 1993).

Research shows that the majority of students believe that teachers do nothing to stop bullying even though they are aware of it (Olweus, 1993). This was corroborated by the finding that only 28.5% of students in this study said they felt teachers always put a stop to bullying. Thus, students may not report bullying incidents due to a lack of confidence in the staff's ability to stop bullying. This issue is compounded by a lack of confidence in fellow students' ability and/or willingness to stop bullying incidents, in that over two in four students reported that their peers almost never did anything to stop bullying (42.6%). Perhaps bystanders do not know how to handle such a situation and are therefore not equipped with the necessary skills/tools to intervene.

According to Kanetsuna et al (2006), adolescents are more likely than children to report bullying behaviour. Of those students in this study who reported bullying (31.1%), the majority told their peers first, then their parent(s), then their sibling/s, and only then a member of school staff. This finding is corroborated by local studies reporting that peers and parents were the first and only people told (Neser et al, 2004). Australian research has also identified the friend or peer as the first person told (Peterson & Rigby, 1999). It is possible that peers are more desirable confidants than parents because research shows that students think adults would not believe them (Alexander, 2006). This has interesting implications for interventions and has been utilised in peer volunteer anti-bully interventions (e.g. Peterson & Rigby, 1999).

#### 5.8 *The Relationship between Bullying Behaviour and Peer Relations*

Statistical analysis reveals a significant negative relationship between victimisation and peer attachment style ( $\alpha = -.203$   $p < .01$ ), with victimisation predicting peer attachment style ( $\alpha = .018$   $p < .05$ ). Those students who experience high levels of victimisation appear to have less secure (and consequently unhealthier) styles of peer attachment. This is keeping with the literature which suggests that being insecure, withdrawn,

lacking self-worth and self-esteem, and being an introvert in one's friendship style are associated with being bullied (Leff, 2007; Nesor et al, 2004; Roxborough & Stephenson, 2007).

Less secure styles of peer attachment would make a student more susceptible to being a target. Thus students who have anxious or ambivalent styles might be more likely to targets for bullying because their friendships are less established and bonded i.e. they lack support systems and there is less chance of peers blocking the attention of the bully (Eisenbraun, 2007). Students who are socially isolated (and consequently have fewer friends) have an increased chance of being picked on by a bully because there is less challenge for the bully in the immediate social environment (Bollmer et al, 2005; Coloroso, 2005). This finding echoes the key role that peer relations play in shaping identity at this stage of development and thereby perhaps shaping relationships to come.

Level of victimisation was directly related to the development of secure friendships, in that being a victim was associated with having few to no friends ( $\alpha = .216$   $p < .01$ ). This supports the findings of previous research which has shown that victims of bullying have few to no friends (Coloroso, 2005; Field, 2007). Further, victims characteristically, as a consequence of being bullied, lack social and communication

skills which would facilitate the making of new friends (Coloroso, 2005). Given the emphasis placed on social relations and the sensitive period of identity formation during adolescence (Erikson, 1968), this situation leaves the victim in a particularly marginal and vulnerable state.

A significant statistical relationship emerged between the number of friends one has and peer attachment style ( $\alpha.288$   $p<.01$ ), with quantity of friends predicting style of peer attachment ( $\alpha.000$   $p<.001$ ). Secure attachment styles appear to be associated with a larger number of friends. In understanding female identity development, a strong emphasis is placed on peer group friendships (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). There is a need to identify with a group (have group membership), have a support system and satisfy the desire for intimacy. In order to fit in many girls will conform to the norms of the group (Chessler, 2003), which makes them vulnerable to bullying others for social gain and being bullied for someone else's social gain. In general, an individual who is more open to relationships, and who is friendly in order to achieve this end, may be successful in sustaining a number of friendships and thus would have a more secure style of making and sustaining friendships.

No statistically significant relationship was found between the bully and number of friends or style of friendship

attachment. Perhaps this is reflective of the controversy in the literature concerning the character of the bully, as explored in chapter two. On the one hand there is the possibility that the bully is rejected by peers and does not fit in (Ando et al, 2005) and therefore exhibits an insecure friendship style (if friends are present). Conversely, some authors suggest the bully is a master manipulator with high level social skills (Garandean & Cillessen, 2006) which suggests a mixture of friendship styles.

A statistically significant association between peer attachment styles and school cohesion was found ( $\alpha = .151$   $p < .01$ ). More secure attachment styles are associated with positive feelings about school, suggesting that students who experience a sense of belonging and group membership are more likely to be comfortable and secure in their school environment.

### 5.9 *The Relationship between Bullying Behaviour and Self-efficacy*

General self-efficacy was found to correlate significantly with peer attachment styles ( $\alpha = .257$   $p < .01$ ), with self-efficacy predicting style of attachment ( $\alpha = .001$   $p < .01$ ). Students with a high sense of self-efficacy were more likely to exhibit more secure friendship styles. A possible explanation for this finding is that students who perceived they had the ability to engage comfortably in peer interactions and be liked by other

girls, cultivated friendships that were more secure. Girls who have a good sense of self-efficacy may feel they can deal with potential conflicts or disagreements that may result in the jostle for group membership and status (Brown, 1993). Similarly, students who have secure relationships may already be confident in their ability to establish and maintain friendships. Thus students with a low sense of self-efficacy may be less confident in their ability to maintain friendships and thus exhibit anxious or avoidant attachment styles.

A statistically significant direct relationship was found between general self-efficacy and school cohesion ( $\alpha = .143$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Students with a high sense of self-efficacy felt more positive about their school life i.e. felt safe within their school environment and worried less about being bullied. Perhaps these students have confidence in their ability to avoid or stop another student from bullying them. This is in keeping with the idea that the threat of bullying, as well as the act of being bullied, can lead to a fear of school and feelings of being unsafe (Townsend et al, 2008).

This study did not find a significant relationship between victim status and self-efficacy. In their study Nation et al. (2008) found that self-efficacy was not significantly related to victimisation. Previous literature has documented self-efficacy linked to one's sense of self-worth and social

intelligence, where victims were associated with a low sense of self-worth and poor social skills (Andreou et al, 2005).

#### 5.10 *The Relationship between Bullying Behaviour and Conflict Resolution Strategies*

During this developmental age females are still trying to negotiate how best to deal with conflict amongst their peer groups (Simmons, 2002). It is possible that many have not yet adopted a style that fits with their personality or their primary group and enables them to achieve their social goals.

Certain strategies were associated with particular roles. For instance, a Collaborating strategy was found to be the most dominant strategy in the role of bystander. This style is associated with the ability to resolve conflict through problem-solving (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001). Literature has identified that bystanders often support the bully - either actively (by joining in with the bully) or passively (by doing nothing to stop the bullying) (Coloroso, 2005). Bystanders, as suggested by the previous literature, often feel helpless, which is usually due to the fear of becoming the next target (Field, 2007). Bystanders may also lack the strategies to help the victim (Coloroso, 2005). Thus the results suggest bystanders adopt a Collaborating position when dealing with conflict amongst their peers.

Being a bully was associated equally with two conflict resolution strategies, in that the Competing and Avoiding strategies were both dominant. This reflects the debate around the characteristics of the bully presented in previous literature. Bullies are known for having aggressive reactions or behaviours toward others, low levels of tolerance, and being oppositional (Field, 2007; Leff, 2007; Olweus, 1993; Rigby, 2002). Females are taught to use pro-social, empathetic strategies when dealing with conflict (Chessler, 2003). Exposure to how males deal with conflict may lead some girls to rethink their strategy and adopt a more male patterned style of conflict resolution (Maltz & Booker, 1982). This may explain the dual presence of "Avoiding" - seeing conflict as a hopeless situation which one withdraws from, as well as "Competing" - where persuasion and force are accepted (a style learnt from observing male-dominated ways of achieving one's goals).

Victims displayed a dominant style of Accommodating. Perhaps it is this style of valuing relationships and self-sacrifice, and prizing group membership, which allows the bully to carry on bullying the victim. This style is associated with avoiding open combat by succumbing to the desires of the other (Thomas & Kilmann, 2001). This may facilitate and reinforce bullying behaviour as the bully would fear no opposition.

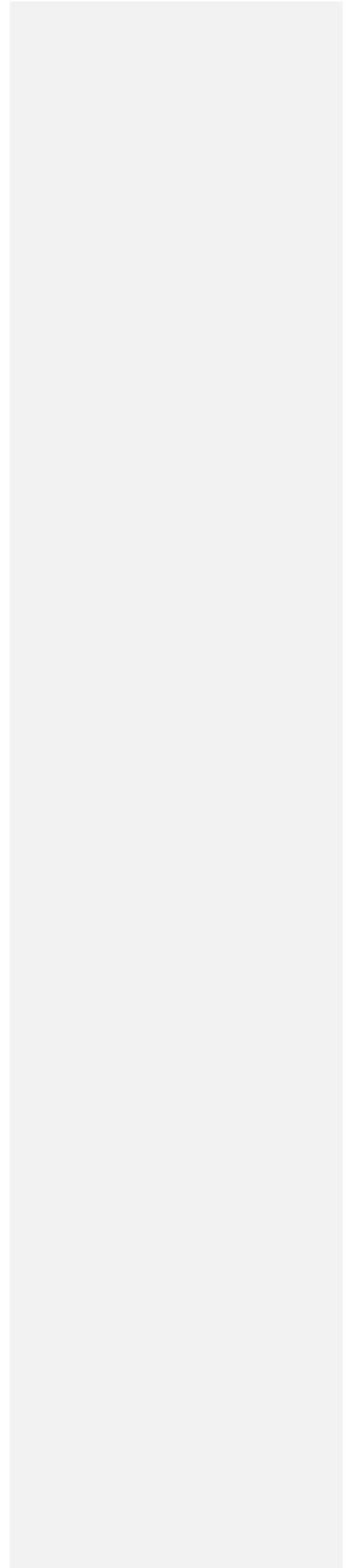
As with the bully, the bully-victims shared the two styles of Competing and Avoiding. It is possible that as the victim they act and react aggressively (reminiscent of Competing), and in so doing become bullies as well. In addition, it is perhaps the internalisation of problems that has been found in bully-victims (Marini et al, 2006) that has promoted an Avoiding style of conflict resolution. As mentioned before, there is a gap in the literature surrounding the character and role of bully-victim and further research is indicated on this important issue.

#### 5.11 *Concluding Remarks*

A significant majority of the sample (79%) had been involved in bullying behaviour with both indirect and direct forms of bullying being evident in this environment. Reporting of bullying incidents appeared to have been hampered by a relatively low confidence in teachers and peers to intervene constructively. Both self-efficacy and peer relations were significantly implicated in bullying behaviour. This may largely be due to the girls' socialisation into gender patterned forms of group interaction and aggression and the sensitive stage of psychosocial development in which these students find themselves. The roles implicated in bullying behaviour were associated with specific dominant strategies of conflict resolution. For instance, the role of Bystander was associated with a dominant style of Collaborating. The main

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outcomes of this study are summarised and delimited in the following chapter.



## Chapter Six

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### 6.1 *Conclusions*

This examination of the relationship between bullying behaviour and the variables of peer relations, self efficacy and conflict resolution strategies have produced a number of significant insights.

In the first instance, it is apparent that to conceive of the female adolescent bully, and indeed the bully-victim relationship, outside of social context is quite misleading. Deriving from their socialisation influences during this stage of psychosocial development, adolescent girls appear to operate in social circles which form the basis for predominantly relational forms of bullying. It is apparent that the bully derives power from the group, which in turn implies that to imbue the 'bystander' with a cloak of innocence is equally misleading.

In banding together and targeting a fellow 'friend', bullying becomes insidiously normative, such that the victim faces not merely the brutality of one, but the pervasive wrath of many. This must surely place the victim in a much more difficult position, where rationalising the behaviour of a single bully is subordinated to coping with the diffuse

motives of a sometimes shifting group of erstwhile friends. This presents a significant challenge in terms of developing successful anti-bullying programmes, as our emphasis must shift from promoting individual competencies to intervening in the interwoven fabric of multiple and fluid individual and group identities and interactions.

A related finding from this study is the powerful proximal role that the peer plays relative to parents and teachers. As evidenced in this study, the peer is the first person who the majority of victims turns to and thus plays an instrumental role in determining the outcomes of bullying for the victim. The peers reactions, for example whether she is sympathetic, empowering, hopeful, supportive, or echoes the victims' feelings of humiliation and powerlessness, will determine to varying degrees the short and long term social consequences of such bullying behaviour for the victim. Acknowledging and acting on this influential role through the equipping of peers with interpersonal skills, and the promotion of social bonding and cohesion, must surely be a vital component of primary prevention programmes to arrest bullying behaviour in schools.

It is evident from this study that the defining characteristics of a victim are very different from that of a bully. Victims have less secure friendship attachment styles, which are indicative of being introverted, shy and withdrawn,

leaving them more susceptible to becoming a target of the bully and her support group, and consequently eroding further their ability to form and secure friendships going forward. In contrast, those students with more secure friendship styles have more friends, which allow them more experience of interpersonal relationships and thereby afford them more opportunities to experiment with and learn how to manage conflict.

In terms of the ongoing debate in the literature concerning the characteristics of the bully, the findings of this study were equivocal but significant. No significant relationships were found between the bully-role and friendship attachment styles, self-efficacy, as well as quantity of friends. This affirms the reported ambiguity regarding the make-up of the bully (Ando et al, 2005; Berthold & Hoover; Garandean & Cillesen, 2006; Gini et al, 2007; Slee & Rigby, 1993) and suggests that we might in fact be dealing with two archetypical bullies, viz. one who is insecure, socially isolated, and lacking in the capacity to engage in healthy interpersonal relationships, and another who is socially adept and very popular and influential (Field, 2007; Olweus, 1993).

This notion is further supported by the finding that bullies exhibited two dominant conflict management styles i.e. Competing and Avoiding. These are polar opposite styles,

suggesting that the umbrella term 'bully' might be a misnomer, in that it actually subsumes at least two distinct typologies existing across a single spectrum. This proposition is consistent with the finding that the bully-victim exhibited the same dominant duality of conflict resolution strategies as the bully, suggesting that those victims who fight back and try to defend themselves from attack inadvertently become a bully themselves.

Further research is required to unravel the archetypes or typologies embedded in the notions of 'bully' and 'bully-victim' in order that anti-bullying programmes are tailored rather than diffuse, thereby increasing the prospects of successful intervention. Such programmes must also include interventions aimed at shifting the Accommodating conflict management style of the 'victim' that were evident in this study, not only in an attempt to buffer them from a continuous cycle of victimology, but also in order to help them develop enduring skills to manage inter-personal conflict into adulthood.

## 6.2 *Recommendations*

### 6.2.1 *Recommendations for Further Research*

International authors have acknowledged the lack of research into female bullying behaviour in schools (e.g. Olweus, 1993). This study has divulged several pertinent issues warranting

further investigation, not only to advance the empirical literature, but also as a means of informing and refining current primary prevention options.

Of the few research studies undertaken in South Africa pertaining to school bullying, most have concentrated on the prevalence and nature of bullying (Neser et al, 2004) to the exclusion of such vital psycho-social factors as peer relations, self efficacy and conflict resolution strategies.

- Future research utilising triangulated research designs, incorporating both in-depth qualitative and quantitative methods, should explore the complex nexus of psychological concepts that are implicated in female bullying behaviour. In particular, the careful differentiation of bully, bully-victim, victim and bystander roles and their relationship to social relations, self-efficacy, identity development, conflict resolution styles and psychosocial development is strongly indicated.

While this study foregrounded students' perspectives on bullying, the voices of various other stakeholders undoubtedly need to be heard.

- In the spirit of a whole school approach, therefore, the perspectives of the educators, parents and community would deepen our understanding of female adolescent bullying, ideally located within an ecological systems approach.

#### 6.2.2 *Practical Recommendations for the School*

- The school concerned will be given the required feedback in the form of a report. When it is convenient for the Life Orientation and Counselling department, a meeting will be undertaken with educators, the researcher and the principal of the school to discuss the findings and implications of this study.
- As peer relations have been directly implicated in female bullying behaviour, it would be beneficial for this school to explore ways to create a sense of social cohesion and bonding amongst students and indeed all school stakeholders.
- Educators should explore instituting exercises in Life Orientation lessons which would facilitate group membership and a sense of community. Of course, whole-school interventions involving educators and parents

joining with students in creating a sense of community though shared activities would be ideal in this regard.

Exploring ways of improving self-efficacy among students would impact on the bullying situation in the school, as general self-efficacy has been implicated in bullying behaviour. This would involve an examination of the role of parent/child relationships at a primary prevention level and teacher/child relationships at a more proximal level.

- In terms of the curriculum, interventions that include problem-solving exercises in Life Orientation lessons, aimed at enhancing individual capabilities and competencies, should be considered.

Associated with the development of self-efficacy is the treatment of students by educators within the school environment. Perhaps more egalitarian modes of teaching and learning and a more reflexively informed pedagogy where children are enabled, embraced and empowered, would facilitate the building of self-efficacy among adolescents.

- In this regard a review of the epistemological basis of the school pedagogy is recommended.

- Given that conflict is an unavoidable and inevitable part of everyday life, and recognising that young adolescents are constantly experimenting with managing conflict, an important curriculum recommendation would be to include a problem-based approach to teaching students how deal with and resolve conflict in enabling ways. This study has shown that conflict resolution strategies differ among the students sampled and is directly implicated in bullying behaviour, suggesting that better ways of managing conflict might act as a preventative buffer which would militate against the escalation of inter-personal conflict into bullying behaviour.

#### 6.2.3 *Policy Recommendations*

- At the school level, it is necessary to create a zero-tolerance policy outlining clear and transparent protocols for the regulation of bullying behaviour.
- This would include procedures for educators to follow when dealing with a bullying incident: how to identify and handle a student who is either a victim, bystander or bully; how to best stop a bullying incident; what protocol to follow in recording the incident and dealing with broader repercussions (such as informing parents).

- Students, teachers and parents need to be made aware of specific guidelines, rules and consequences pertaining to bullying behaviour within the school environment, and importantly, need to buy-in to the policy as actors rather than recipients.
- At a national level, the Department of Education should explore the creation of a task team to prevent and combat bullying behaviour in schools. By creating a national bullying policy framework, all schools would be able to access these policies as guidelines for tailoring their own specific policies and anti-bullying programmes.

International researchers have developed and evaluated a number of anti-bullying programmes which have had moderate to impressive success (Kanetsuna et al. 2006; O'Connell et al, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Peterson & Rigby, 1999; Salmivalli, 1999; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000). In exploring the beneficial elements of these programmes, the task team could commission specific research projects aimed at adapting, evaluating and diffusing such programmes across South African schools.

### 6.3 *Limitations of this Study*

Notwithstanding the fact that widely used measures with established psychometric properties were used in this study, concerns around the bias inherent in self-report and social desirability responses are factors which must be borne in mind when interpreting the findings presented in this report.

I recognize that follow-up qualitative interviews and/or focus groups, targeting specific issues that have emerged in this study, would be extremely beneficial in rendering a deeper more nuanced understanding of female bullying in this school, given adequate time and resources.

While a cross sectional design affords a useful snap-shot of reality at a particular point in time, this design is notoriously susceptible to confounding effects, including developmental maturation and temporal occurrences (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). To this end longitudinal experimental or quasi-experimental designs would be the ideal next step in researching female bullying in South African schools.

Notwithstanding the saturation sampling strategy adopted in this study, some cell sizes were too small to return significant statistical relationships (e.g. there were only seven bully-victims out of a total sample of 385 students).

Perhaps with a much larger sample, as had previously been utilised with the OBVQ (Sapouna, 2008; Olweus, 1993), significant statistical relationships between some of the bullying roles and the psycho-social constructs might have emerged. It is recommended that future studies target far larger populations than used in this study, thereby limiting the prospects of Type 1 error.

#### 6.4 *Personal Reflections*

On a personal note, some of the challenges and knowledge I incurred as a Masters student in conducting this study are worth recording. Firstly, the application of theory to making explanatory sense of data presented a significant challenge to me as a novice researcher. In this regard I have grown immeasurably through writing up this research report.

Second, at the outset of this study I lacked the necessary experience and authority in negotiating entry and logistics with institutional stakeholders. The varied experiences of gaining access to the school, organising times to meet and conduct fieldwork, giving sufficient and meaningful assurance with regard to ethical issues, instructing intimidating students and liaising with management has afforded me an invaluable set of organisational skills for the future.

Finally, one of the most significant and ongoing frustrations that I encountered was the insufficient time, lack of resources and practical limitations to planning, conducting and writing-up my research as I had originally envisaged. However, in hindsight I have realised that 'adequate' resources are rarely readily available and that practicalities in the field are rarely in keeping with the researcher's ideas and plan. It is evident to me that the researcher has to tailor her research design, research questions and methodology to accommodate practical realities and one needs to have a sense what to target and how to make the best of the situation given. These are important learning's that I take away and which I believe will make me a better researcher going forward.

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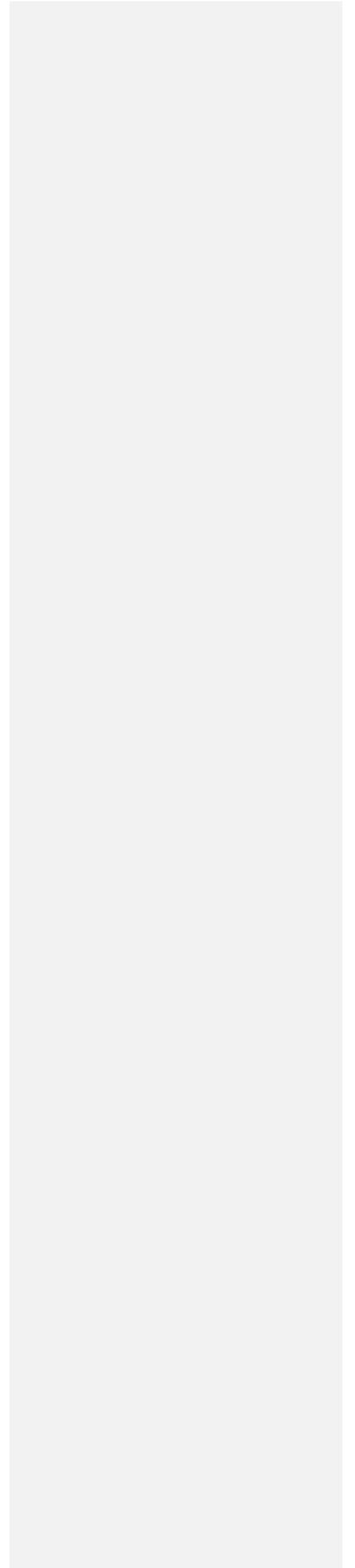
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Appendices



Appendix One: School Questionnaire

Please note:

- The Questionnaire you are about to fill in is **anonymous**. Please do not write your name anywhere.
- This form is **confidential**. None of the teachers or students at your school will have access to this form.
- This Questionnaire will be **sealed** in an envelope by you and given directly to the researcher who will remove it from your school.
- If you do not feel comfortable with participating in this study then you may withdraw at any point.
- There are no wrong or right answers; we are interested in **your** opinions/views/experiences.

**Please place an X in the box that tells us about you...**

1. Age

- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16

2. Race/ Ethnicity

- Black
- Indian
- Coloured
- White
- Asian
- Other



**Please turn over**

## Questionnaire on bullying for students

Name of school: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade and classroom: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

You will find questions in this booklet about your life in school. There are several answers next to each question. Answer the question by marking an **X** in the box next to the answer that best describes how you feel about school. If you really dislike school, mark an **X** in the box next to "I dislike school very much". If you really like school, mark an **X** in the box next to "I like school very much", and so on. Only mark **one of the boxes**. Try to keep the mark inside of the box.

**Now put an X in the box next to the answer that best describes how you feel about school.**

1. How do you like school?

- I dislike school very much
- I dislike school
- I neither like nor dislike school
- I like school
- I like school very much

If you **mark the wrong box**, you can change your answer like this: Make the wrong box completely black: ■ . Then put an **X** in the box where you want your answer to be ☒ .

Don't put your name on this booklet. No one will know how you have answered these questions. But it is important that you answer carefully and share how you really feel. Sometimes it is hard to decide what to answer; in this case mark the answer that comes closest to your view. If you have questions, raise your hand.

Most of the questions are about **your life in school this year, that is, the period from the start of school this year until now**. So when you answer, you should think of how it has been at school during this year and **not only how it is just now**.

2. How many good friends do you have in your class(es) ?

- None
- I have 1 good friend in my class(es)
- I have 2 or 3 good friends
- I have 4 or 5 good friends
- I have 6 or more good friends in my class(es)

## About being bullied by other students

Here are some questions about being bullied by other students. First we define or explain the word bullying. We say **a student is being bullied when another student, or several other students**

- say mean and hurtful things or make fun of her or call her mean and hurtful names
- completely ignore or exclude her from their group of friends or leave her out of things on purpose
- hit, kick, push, shove around, or lock her inside a room
- tell lies or spread false rumours about her or send mean notes and try to make other students dislike her
- and do other hurtful things like as described above.

When we talk about bullying, these things happen **repeatedly**, and it is **difficult for the student being bullied to defend herself**. We also call it bullying, when a student is teased repeatedly in a mean and hurtful way.

But we **don't call it bullying** when teasing is done in a friendly and playful way. Also, it is **not bullying** when two students of about equal strength or power argue or fight.

3. How often have you **been bullied at school in the past couple of months?**

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

**Have you been bullied at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways? Please answer all questions.**

4. I was called mean names, was made fun of, or teased in a hurtful way
- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
  - Only once or twice
  - 2 or 3 times a month
  - About once a week
  - Several times a week

5. Other students left me out of things on purpose, excluded me from their group of friends, or completely ignored me
- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
  - Only once or twice
  - 2 or 3 times a month
  - About once a week
  - Several times a week

6. I was hit, kicked, pushed, shoved around, or locked indoors
- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
  - Only once or twice
  - 2 or 3 times a month
  - About once a week
  - Several times a week

7. Other students told lies or spread false rumours about me and tried to make others dislike me
- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
  - Only once or twice
  - 2 or 3 times a month
  - About once a week
  - Several times a week

8. I had money or other things taken away from me or damaged
- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
  - Only once or twice
  - 2 or 3 times a month
  - About once a week
  - Several times a week

9. I was threatened or forced to do things I didn't want to do

- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- Only once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

10. I was bullied with mean names or comments about my race or colour

- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- Only once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a week
- About once a week
- Several times a week

11. I was bullied with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning

- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- Only once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

11.a. I was bullied with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet. (Please remember that it is not bullying when it is done in a friendly and playful way.)

- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- Only once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

11.b. In case you were bullied on your cell phone or over the Internet, how was it done?

- Only on the cell phone
- Only over the Internet
- In both ways

Please describe in what way \_\_\_\_\_

12. I was bullied in another way

- It hasn't happened to me in the past couple of months
- Only once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

Please describe in what way

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13. **In which class(es)** is the student or students who bully you?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- In my class
- In a different class but same grade (year)
- In a higher grade
- In a lower grade
- In different grades

14. **By how many students** have you usually been bullied?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- Mainly by 1 student
- By a group of 2-3 students
- By a group of 4-9 students
- By a group of more than 9 students
- By several different students or groups of students

15. How long has the bullying lasted?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- It lasted one or two weeks
- It lasted about a month
- It lasted about 6 months
- It lasted about a year
- It has gone on for several years

16. **Where** have you been bullied?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- I have been **bullied in one or more of the following places** in the past couple of months (**continue below**)

**Please put an X if you have been bullied:**

16a on the playground/athletic field (during break times)

16b. in the hallways/stairwells

16c. in class (when the teacher was in the room)

16d. in class (when the teacher was **not** in the room)

16e. in the bathroom

16f. in P.E. class or the change-room

16g. on the way to and from school

16h. at the bus stop/taxi rank

16i. on the bus or taxi

16j. somewhere else in school  In this case, please write where:

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17. Have you **told anyone** that you have been bullied in the past couple of months?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- I have been bullied, **but I have not told anyone**
- I have been bullied and **I have told somebody about it (continue)**

**Please put an X if you have told:**

17a. your class teacher

17b. another adult at school (a different teacher, the principal/headmistress, a Life Orientation teacher/Guidance Counsellor, etc)

17c. your parent(s)/guardian(s)

17d. your brother(s) or sister(s)

17e. your friend(s)

17f. a health professional (e.g. nurse, psychologist, social worker, doctor)

17g. somebody else

In this case, please write who:

---

18. How often do the **teachers or other adults at school** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost always

19. How often do **other students** try to put a stop to it when a student is being bullied at school?

- Almost never
- Once in a while
- Sometimes
- Often
- Almost always

20. Has **any adult at home** contacted the school to try stop your being bullied at school in the past couple of months?

- I haven't been bullied at school in the past couple of months
- No, they haven't contacted the school
- Yes, they have contacted the school once
- Yes, they have contacted the school several times

21. When you see a student your age being bullied at school, what do you **feel or think**?

- That is probably what she deserves
- I don't feel much
- I feel a bit sorry for her
- I feel sorry for her and want to help her

### About bullying other students

22. How often have you **taken part in bullying another student(s)** at school in the past couple of months?

- I haven't bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

Have you bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months in one or more of the following ways? Please answer all questions.

23. I called another student(s) mean names, made fun of or teased in a hurtful way

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

24. I kept her out of things on purpose, excluded her from my group of friends or completely ignored her

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

25. I hit, kicked, pushed and shoved her around or locked her indoors

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

26. I spread false rumours about her and tried to make others dislike her

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

27. I took money or other things from her or damaged her belongings

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

28. I threatened or forced her to do things she didn't want to do

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

29. I bullied her with mean names or comments about her race or colour

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

30. I bullied her with mean names, comments, or gestures with a sexual meaning

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

30a. I bullied her with mean or hurtful messages, calls or pictures, or in other ways on my cell phone or over the Internet

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

30b. In case you bullied another student(s) on your cell phone or over the Internet, how was it done?

- Only on the cell phone
- Only over the Internet
- In both ways

Please describe in what way:

-

---

31. I bullied her in another way

- It hasn't happened in the past couple of months
- It has only happened once or twice
- 2 or 3 times a month
- About once a week
- Several times a week

32. Has your **class teacher or any other teacher** talked with you about your bullying other students at school in the past couple of months?

- I haven't bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- No, they haven't talked with me about it
- Yes, they have talked with me about it once
- Yes, they have talked with me about it several times

33. Has **any adult at home** talked with you about your bullying other student(s) at school in the past couple of months?

- I haven't bullied another student(s) at school in the past couple of months
- No, they haven't talked with me about it
- Yes, they have talked with me about it once
- Yes, they have talked with me about it several times

34. Do you think it likely that you could join in bullying a student whom you didn't like?

- Yes
- Yes, maybe
- I don't know
- No, I don't think so
- No
- Definitely no

35. How do you **usually react** if you see or understand that a student your age is being bullied by other students?

- I have never noticed that students my age have been bullied
- I take part in the bullying
- I don't do anything, but I think the bullying is OK
- I just watch what goes on
- I don't do anything, but I think I ought to help the bullied student
- I try to help the bullied student in one way or another

36. How often are you afraid of being bullied by other students in your school?

- Never
- Seldom
- Sometimes
- Fairly often
- Often
- Very often

37. Overall, how much do you think **your class teacher** has done to counteract bullying in the past couple of months?

- Little or nothing
- Fairly little
- Somewhat
- A good deal
- Much

## Questionnaire about friendship and peer relations

Think about your friend(s) when answering this next section. Read the statements below and choose the box which most applies to you. Place an X in it.

1. When I have had a bad day my friend cheers me up.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
2. I think it would be difficult to replace my friend.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
3. It bothers me when my friend is not available when I'm stressed.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
4. I can trust my friend.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
  
5. I become angry with my friend when she does not understand me.
  - Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

6. I don't like depending on my friend.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
7. I worry my friend doesn't really like me.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
8. I would find it distressing if this friendship ended.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
9. I know that my friend is loyal.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
10. I like the closeness I share with my friend.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree
11. I am not sure I can always depend on my friend.
- Strongly Disagree
  - Disagree
  - No opinion
  - Agree
  - Strongly Agree

12. I would like my friend to be more understanding.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

13. I let my friend know about things that trouble me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

14. I avoid discussing personal things with my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

15. I can talk things through with my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

16. I worry about becoming too close to my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

17. I don't turn to my friend for support when things are difficult.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

18. I get angry at my friend when I can't get in contact with her.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

19. I don't feel as close to my friend as I would like.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

20. I seek out my friend when things go wrong.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

21. I enjoy spending time with my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

22. I know my friend likes me.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

23. I feel close to my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

24. I don't need to rely on my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

25. Without this friendship, it would be very hard to cope when things are difficult.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

26. I am confident my friendship will last.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

27. Outings are more enjoyable when I'm with my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

28. I am concerned that my friend will find another friend that she prefers.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

29. I am often angry with my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

30. I know I can rely on my friend.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- No opinion
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

---

## Questionnaire on Self-Efficacy

**Please read the following questions and choose the response that best suits your opinion. Please mark your choice with an X in the right box.**

These questions are just asking for your opinion. There are no wrong or right answers.

1. I always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.

- Exactly true
- Moderately true
- Hardly true
- Not at all true

2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.

- Exactly true
- Moderately true
- Hardly true
- Not at all true

3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.

- Exactly true
- Moderately true
- Hardly true
- Not at all true

4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.

- Exactly true
- Moderately true
- Hardly true
- Not at all true

5. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true
6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true
7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true
8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true
9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true
10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.
- Exactly true
  - Moderately true
  - Hardly true
  - Not at all true

---

## Questionnaire on dealing with conflict

Consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of another person. How do you usually respond to such situations? **For each statement, place an X in either "A" or "B",** the option that is most characteristic of your own behaviour. In some cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior; but please select the response which you would be more likely to use.

1. [A] There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.  
[B] Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.
2. [A] I try to find a compromise solution.  
[B] I attempt to deal with all of her and my concerns.
3. [A] I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
[B] I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
4. [A] I try to find a compromise solution.  
[B] I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
5. [A] I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution.  
[B] I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
6. [A] I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.  
[B] I try to win my position.
7. [A] I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.  
[B] I give up some points in exchange for others.
8. [A] I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
[B] I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9. [A] I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.  
[B] I make some effort to get my way.
10. [A] I am firm in pursuing my goals.  
[B] I try to find a compromise solution.

11. [A] I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
[B] I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
12. [A] I sometimes avoid taking positions, which would create controversy.  
[B] I will let the other person have some of her positions if she lets me have some of mine.
13. [A] I propose a middle ground.  
[B] I press to get my points made.
14. [A] I tell the other person my ideas and ask for hers.  
[B] I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.
15. [A] I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.  
[B] I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.
16. [A] I try **not** to hurt the other's feelings.  
[B] I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.
17. [A] I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
[B] I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
18. [A] If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views.  
[B] I will let other people have some of their positions if they let me have some of mine.
19. [A] I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.  
[B] I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
20. [A] I attempt to immediately work through our differences.  
[B] I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.
21. [A] In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.  
[B] I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.
22. [A] I try to find a position that is intermediate between hers and mine.  
[B] I assert my wishes.

23. [A] I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.  
[B] There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24. [A] If the other's position seems very important to her, I would try to meet her wishes.  
[B] I try to get the other person to settle for a compromise.
25. [A] I try to show the other person the logic and benefits of my position.  
[B] In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
26. [A] I propose a middle ground.  
[B] I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
27. [A] I sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.  
[B] If it makes other people happy, I might let them maintain their views.
28. [A] I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.  
[B] I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution.
29. [A] I propose a middle ground.  
[B] I feel that differences are **not** always worth worrying about.
30. [A] I try **not** to hurt the other's feelings.  
[B] I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.

**THANK YOU!**

An investigation of the relationships between163

Appendix Two: Letter of Ethical Clearance



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

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30 JUNE 2008

MS. S GUY (203513939)  
PSYCHOLOGY

Dear Ms. Guy

**ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0281/08M**

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

**"An investigation of the relationships between self-efficacy, peer relations, and conflict resolution styles in female adolescent bullying behaviour in a KwaZulu-Natal High School"**

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

Yours faithfully

  
.....  
**MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA**

cc. Supervisor (Mr. A Bhagwanjee)  
cc. Post-Graduate Studies

Appendix Three: Permission from the School

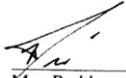


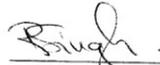
## Ridge Park College

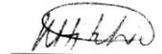
399 Ridge Road  
Durban  
4067  
Telephone : 031-2073337

Private Bag X003  
Overport  
E-mail: [rpcadmin@mweb.co.za](mailto:rpcadmin@mweb.co.za)  
Fax : 031-2086947

This letter serves to confirm that permission has been granted for the following research study to take place in our school: "An investigation of the relationship between self-efficacy, peer relations and conflict resolution styles in female adolescent bullying behaviour".

  
Mrs. Reddy  
School Principal

  
Mrs. R. Singh  
School Counsellor

  
Ms. Hitchins  
Educator

August 2008

Appendix Four: Student Letter of Informed Consent

Dear Participant



My name is Stacey Guy and I am a Masters student in Health Promotion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. As part of my degree requirements, I am conducting research concerning bullying among school girls, specifically personal and social influences on bullying and how conflict is managed.

**How this research will be conducted**

- ▶ A questionnaire will be handed to you during this Life Orientation lesson
- ▶ After completing the questionnaire, please seal it the envelope provided
- ▶ All envelopes will be collected and removed by me and will not be seen by any of your teachers

**Anonymity and Confidentiality**

- ▶ The questionnaire that you are being asked to complete is anonymous. Please do not write your name anywhere on this questionnaire.
- ▶ Your questionnaire will only be seen by myself and my supervisor
- ▶ The findings of the study will be reported to Ridge Park College to enable the school to improve their Life Orientation education interventions.
- ▶ These findings will be reported on a group basis only, meaning that all information contained in the study will be treated with absolute confidentiality, and that all participants' privacy will be guaranteed.

**Consent**

- ▶ If you consent to filling in this questionnaire, please sign the section at the bottom of the page
- ▶ If you do not to fill out this questionnaire, you may remain in your seat and continue with other work
- ▶ You are under no obligation to participate, and your decision to participate or decline will not be used against you in any way whatsoever.

**Contact Information**

- ▶ If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please raise them now
- ▶ If you have any questions or concerns later, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor

**Thank You!**

---

If you agree to participate, please complete this next section for me:

**I hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.**

**I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.**

**SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

**DATE**

---

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Appendix Five: Parental Letter of Informed Consent



*An investigation of the relationship between self-efficacy, peer relations and conflict resolution styles in female adolescent bullying behaviour.*

18 August 2008

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Stacey Guy and I am a Masters student in Health Promotion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research dissertation involves understanding **bullying** in all-girls schools. It would be much appreciated if your daughter was able to participate. Kindly read the following information about this research study.

The **objectives** of this study are:

- To investigate the nature and form of bullying among adolescent girls.
- To gain insight into how children's self-efficacy, and the influence of their peers, affects their bullying behaviours, and what strategies they use to resolve conflict.

**Permission to conduct the study**

Ethical Clearance for this study has been granted by the University of KwaZulu-Natal's Higher Degrees Committee. On this basis, Ridge Park College has granted us permission to conduct this research study with all learners in Grade Eight classes, subject to your personal consent.

**How this research will be conducted**

Questionnaires will be handed out during one of your daughter's Life Orientation periods. After completing the questionnaire, it will be sealed in an envelope by your daughter. These

forms will be removed by me at the end of the session and will not be seen by any of the teachers. The collected data will be stored in the School of Psychology and will not be seen by anyone but myself and my supervisor. The findings of the study will be reported to Ridge Park College to enable the school to improve their Life Orientation education interventions. These findings will be reported on a group basis only, with no identification of individual children.

### **Anonymity and Confidentiality**

The questionnaire is completely anonymous in that no names are written or recorded on any of the documents collected. There is thus no way to link the name of a child to a completed questionnaire and the name of the school will not be mentioned in the dissertation or any other research reports arising from this study. Therefore please be assured that all information contained in the study will be treated with absolute confidentiality, and that all participants' privacy will be guaranteed.

### **Consent**

If you do not feel comfortable giving your daughter permission to participate in this study then please call Stacey Guy on 083 764 6959 or Anil Bhagwanjee on 031 260 7973 by no later than 22 August 2008. In no way will this choice impact on your child's school career. Not responding will be taken to mean that you are willing to allow your child to participate in this study. On the day of the study, your child will still be given the option to participate or decline.

### **Contact Information**

My details, should you have any questions or concerns, are:

Researcher: Stacey Guy      083 764 6959 (email: 203513939@ukzn.ac.za)

Supervisor: Anil Bhagwanjee   031 – 260 7973 (bhagwanjeea@ukzn.ac.za)

Thank you

Stacey Guy

Master in Health Promotion Post Graduate student

University of KwaZulu-Natal