Scared at School? A Child-Centred Perspective on Fears and Anxieties Experienced by Adolescents in South African Schools

By

Debbie Jameson

Student number: 213572432

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Supervisor: Prof. Steve Collings (PhD)

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to my children Skye, Courtney and Jordan, who are the source of my inspiration. Your unconditional love and support gives me the courage to achieve.

ABSTRACT

South African children have been exposed to chronic adversity which has resulted in psychological distress and high levels of fear. Violence against children is ubiquitous and injury is common. Children have been found to be 'scared everywhere', not only at school but also in their homes and communities. Yet no systematic attempt has been made to explore this. The aim of this study therefore is to conduct a systematic investigation of how children conceptualize and understand their own fears and anxieties. It is an exploratory study designed to gain baseline information from a child's perspective. Although this study focused on the school context, it was part of a broader research project that also included the family and community contexts, guided by Ecological Systems theory to gain an integrative perspective. A quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey research design was employed. This study utilized stratified random sampling in terms of the quintile system, involving random selection of schools proportional to the size of each quintile. The sample consisted of 312 children ranging between the ages of 13 – 18 years from seven schools in the North West Province. The research instrument consisted of open-ended questions to explore the content of children's fears and possible solutions, and a rating scale to survey their level of fear. A coding strategy was developed to establish the scariest events based on Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theory, which states that "fear results when valued resources are threatened or lost". Three categories of fears were identified: Primary (threats to survival and physical integrity); Secondary (threats to financial and interpersonal resources); and Tertiary (threats to competence and social standing). Krippendorf's Content Analysis was used for the open-ended questions. The findings indicated that fears associated with the primary resource domain were experienced the most frequently and rated the highest in terms of levels of fear. Although some dominant fears were found to be universal, variations were found in the manifestations of specific fears which were related to the school context, including 'problems with peer relationships' and fears related to 'gang activities'; 'violence or threat of violence from a teacher' and 'failure and underachievement at school'. Females were found to experience significantly higher levels of fear than males as a result of 'interpersonal disputes'. Based on the findings, Conservation of Resources theory would appear to have significant implications for future research investigating normative childhood fears, as it can be successfully applied in predicting fear outcomes as a result of adversity across different childhood developmental levels and in a variety of contexts.

Recommendations are made for intervention, including looking beyond the child's immediate school environment to how the interrelation of multiple levels will influence the developing child.

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CHAPTER ONE

1.1   Introduction

Schools are supposed to be a safe, supportive environment which encourages children to focus on the primary aim of learning, so that they have the opportunity to attain a wide range of skills and thrive in accordance with their academic potential. A positive environment is one that values the rights of children which instils tolerance and respect, thereby enabling them to grow with confidence and dignity (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). As children spend approximately half of their time at school, it is important that these rights are respected so they can learn in a safe space that is conducive to learning without feeling threatened or scared (UNICEF, 2012a). Article 29, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, specifies that the goal of education is to "develop each child's personality, talents and abilities to the fullest. It should encourage children to respect others, human rights, and their own and other cultures. It should also help them learn to live peacefully and protect the environment" (UNICEF, 2013). Rights applicable to a safe school environment are also contained in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) the Bill of Rights and The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996), which requires education to be transformed and democratised in accordance with the values of human dignity, equality, basic human rights, freedom, tolerance, non-racism and non-sexism.

1.2   Background to the study

Despite advanced legislative frameworks which safeguard the rights of learners in South Africa, the lack of safety and increased levels of fear and anxiety in schools results in a violation of children's basic rights and creates a negative school environment (UNICEF, 2012a). Findings indicate that South African learners "are often terrified to attend school" (De Wet, 2003, p.4). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also reported that fear is common in South African Schools. If a child's sense of safety is reduced due to high levels of fear and anxiety, this will not only have a detrimental impact on academic performance, but the whole school experience may be seen as a hindrance to all aspects of the child's development rather than an opportunity (Burton & Leoschut, 2013; De Wet, 2003; Papalia, 2006). As education in South Africa is a priority, it is important to understand the adverse factors which interfere with the

optimal development of South African school children. Therefore, it seemed appropriate for the researcher to explore what children are most afraid of in the school context, and what they believe could happen or what anyone could do to make them feel safer.

1.3   Rationale and significance of the study

A number of studies show that South African children have been exposed to chronic adversity which has resulted in persistent fear and anxiety (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin, Richter, & De Wet, 2001; Cluver, Bowes, & Gardner, 2010; Jewkes, Dunkle, Maduna, Jama, & Puren, 2010; Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilingum, & Stein, 2004; Shields, Nadasen, & Pierce, 2009). Children have been found to be 'scared everywhere', not only at school but also in their homes and communities (Gopal & Collings, 2013). However, as yet no systematic attempts have been made to explain this. Therefore, the present study is an attempt to provide a systematic approach to conceptualizing childhood fears in order to gain a more accurate reflection of adolescent children's fears and anxieties within the South African context.

Although exposure to childhood adversity is widespread, to date the majority of South African studies have focused on the assumption that interpersonal violence in schools is what children fear most and what places them most at risk (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). This study challenged these normative assumptions, by considering a more holistic perspective towards understanding adolescent children's experience of fear in the South African school context. Burton (2008) explains the whole school approach whereby the child's perceptions are shaped by a complex interaction of the broader contextual factors of the home, community and society. The boundaries between these different contexts are "a lot more permeable than is generally assumed" with the one impacting on the other (Gopal and Collings, 2013, p. 9). There is a growing emphasis in contemporary research towards recognizing a wider range of experiences across the different domains that may interact to put children at risk (Burton, 2008). Consequently, although the researcher of the present study focused on the context of the school, it was part of a broader research project that included collaboration with two other masters students who explored adolescent children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the family and in community contexts.

Previous investigations into childhood adversity in South Africa have tended to utilize highly structured assessment instruments, for example complex questionnaires and Fear Survey schedules to collect data. Many of these measuring instruments are difficult for children to understand so they are unable to meaningfully participate (Greene and Hill, 2005). While these studies have provided valuable insight into children at risk, they failed to provide a complete understanding of the experiences, feelings and perceptions of children's fear. Surprisingly, the child's perspective has received little attention as most available research on children's experiences is designed and carried out by adults, with children merely as objects of research rather than as subjects with their own perspective and voice (Greene and Hill, 2005). The voices of the children themselves have been largely ignored, which indicates that not much emphasis is placed on the child-centred approach. In view of this, the questionnaire used in the current research consisted of open-ended questions, allowing the respondents to communicate their experiences "in their own words without restrictions" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006, p.486). As a result the neglected perspective of the child was considered, and the necessity of giving children a voice was highlighted, to gain a better understanding of the fears and anxieties they experience at school. Therefore, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Children's Act (Act 38 of 2005), this study not only attempted to respect children's right to actively participate and take part in matters that concern their wellbeing, but also took children's best interests into account (UNICEF, 2013).

The significance of the present study is that it contributes to the advancement of the body of knowledge related to children's perceptions of fear and anxiety in the context of the school, family, and community. By looking beyond the school context to consider how children actively respond to the multiple interacting influences in their environment, the present study provides a deeper understanding of the nature and intensity of children's fears in a contemporary South African context. Findings not only contribute to existing knowledge, but hopefully increase awareness of children at risk. This may encourage further research and possibly lead to early intervention strategies, so that children's fears and anxieties can be addressed in order to limit the negative effects. Schools in particular can play a vital role in promoting a safe, supporting environment for the optimal development of children, which in turn will have a positive impact on the broader South African society.

1.4   Research aim

The aim of the present study is to gain a better understanding of how South African children conceptualize and understand their own fears and anxieties in the school context. The study is exploratory in nature, designed to obtain baseline information from a child's perspective.

1.5   Key concepts

A definition of the following key concepts will be provided: child; adolescence; fear; anxiety; child-centred perspective; South African schools.

1.5.1   Child

A "child" means a person under the age of 18 years (Section 28, South African Bill of Rights, Chapter 2, Constitution, 1996).

1.5.2   Adolescence

"The term 'adolescence' derives from the Latin verb adolescere, meaning 'to grow up' or 'to grow to adulthood', thus referring to a development phase in the human life cycle that is situated between childhood and adulthood" (Burger, Gouws, & Kruger, 2000, p.2). The adolescent phase generally lasts about a decade, ranging from 10 or 11 years until the late teens or early 20s. "Adolescence is generally considered to begin with puberty, the process that leads to sexual maturity, or fertility – the ability to reproduce" (Papalia, 2006, p.412).

1.5.3   Fear

Fear is an intense emotional alarm reaction, triggered by an actual threat or consciously recognized dangerous situation. It is an adaptive response to perceived threats to survival that helps us prepare for current danger (Barlow & Durand, 2009). "When there is a fear response, cortisol is released. It is a major stress hormone that prepares the body for "fight or flight" by raising blood pressure, blood sugar level, and heart rate" (Sue, Sue, & Sue, 2010, p.178).

1.5.4   Anxiety

Although anxiety is also a basic human emotion that has an adaptive function similar to fear, anxiety is the anticipation of a threat that has not yet occurred (Sue et al., 2010). "Anxiety is a future-orientated mood state, characterized by apprehension because we cannot predict or control upcoming events" (Barlow & Durand, 2009, p.122).

1.5.5   A Child-centred perspective

A child-centred research approach acknowledges the importance of children's rights to communicate, have their views respected, and actively participate in all matters regarding their future (Article 12, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, 2013). As a result, recent research has moved away from seeing children as mere objects of study to recognizing that giving children a "voice" to express themselves will help provide valuable insights when generating knowledge (Greene & Hill, 2005).

1.5.6   South African schools

School can be defined as "an institution for educating children" (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). According to the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) "school" means "a public school or an independent school which enrols learners in one or more grades between grade zero and grade twelve".

School is supposed to be a safe environment so that children can learn in order to reach optimal educational potential (Burton, 2008). According to Burton (2008), school is not only a space where children gain knowledge and learn about themselves, but also a place where they learn how to interact socially with others. Secondary School should be a place where children learn new skills, hone old ones, and have opportunities to broaden their intellectual and social horizons so that they are prepared for their role in society (Burton, 2008; Papalia, 2006). Secondary school children are learners attending school in South Africa from grade eight to grade twelve (South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996), with the age range usually being between 12 to 18 years of age.

1.6   Outline of the study

Chapter 1 comprises the introduction to the present study. A background to the lack of safety and increased levels of fear and anxiety in South African schools is provided. Included in this chapter is the rationale, significance, aims, definition of key concepts and an outline of the present study.

Chapter 2 reviews available literature relevant to a child-centred perspective on fears and anxieties experienced by adolescents in South African schools. A contextual approach using the Ecological Systems theoretical framework is discussed. Available literature relating to a child-centred perspective; childhood fears; interpersonal violence in South Africa; interpersonal violence specifically related to the South African school context; and other forms of childhood adversity is presented in this chapter.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the methodology utilized in the present study including: the objectives of the research; research questions; research design; location of the study; sampling and sampling methods; instrument for data collection; preliminary study; development of content categories; coding of the pilot study data; preparing a coding schedule; data collection procedures and data analysis. Measures the researcher took to ensure reliability and validity will also be discussed.

Chapter 4 presents the main findings of the present study that emerged from the analysis of the data. The findings will be discussed and presented in tables in terms of frequency and rating of fear responses, how they relate to the demographic variables, and what the proposed solutions were.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results by linking the observed trends found in the present study to available literature on the topic. Included is the conceptualization of children's fears utilizing Conservation of Resources theory, Ecological Systems theory's contextual understanding of children's fears and a child-centred perspective. Limitations and implications of the present study will also be discussed.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Introduction

A review of the literature relevant to the topic of the present study "a child-centred perspective on fears and anxieties experienced by adolescents in South African schools" will address the following: a contextual approach using an Ecological Systems theory framework; the importance of a child-centred perspective; childhood fears; interpersonal violence in South Africa; interpersonal violence specifically related to the South African school context; and other forms of childhood adversity.

2.2   The Ecological Systems Theory

To understand the complexity of childhood adversity in South Africa, it is necessary to look beyond the school context itself to how the broader socio-political context influences the developing child. As a result the present study utilized the Ecological Systems Theory as conceptualized by Bronfenbrenner (1979), which views childhood development from a contextual perspective, in order to provide a more comprehensive understanding on how South African adolescent school children perceive their own experiences of fear and anxiety.

In recent years studies have moved away from focussing solely on the individual's characteristics towards how multiple factors have an influence on child development (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008). A shift towards a holistic approach takes into account how the individual responds to the dynamic multiple interacting influences in their environment (Papalia, 2006). Bronfenbrenners's Ecological Systems Theory describes how the complex interaction of different levels or systems of experience between the individual's development (which includes biological development, inter- and intra-psychological development, and behaviour) and the integrated, multiple social contexts or systems influences the developing child (Bronfenfenbrenner, 1979; Papalia, 2006).
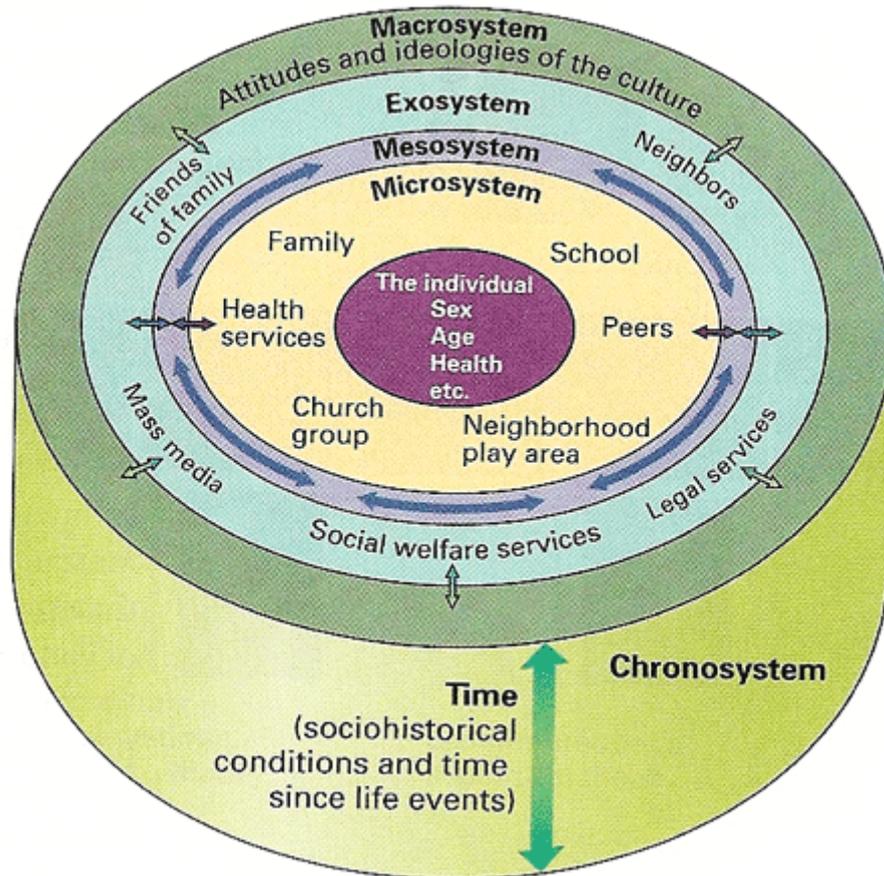
Figure 1: Summary of Bronfenbrenner's five interlocking contextual systems that influence the developing child namely: the Microsystem; Mesosystem; Exosystem; Macrosystem and Chronosystem (image taken from Bronfenbrenner GIF image, 2013; Papalia, 2006, p.38).

1. **The microsystem:** a pattern of activities and daily interactions within the child's immediate setting such as the home, school and neighbourhood
2. **The mesosystem:** the interaction between two or more microsystems
3. **The exosystem:** the interaction between two or more settings which does not contain the child
4. **The macrosystem:** the broader societal cultural patterns
5. **The chronosystem:** the dimension of time that affects the developing child

Bronfenbrenner (1979) identifies five levels of dynamic interacting environmental systems that influence the developing child, namely the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystem which will be discussed in more detail below.

2.2.1   The Microsystem

The Microsystem refers to the immediate environment of the child and "is a pattern of activities, roles, and relationships within a setting, such as the home, school or neighbourhood" in which the individual developing child interacts with others on an everyday basis (Paplia, 2006, p.36). The parent-child relationship, peer-child relationship, and teacher-child relationship are examples of familiar people that the individual child interacts with on a day to day basis that have a strong influence on their development (Ward, 2007).

2.2.1.1   Individual factors

The first level relates to individual child characteristics such as age, race, gender, temperament and health that influence how the child interacts with the other contexts, and how those contexts interact with the child, thereby creating a complex bidirectional interaction (Papalia, 2006; Ward, 2007). Bidirectional interaction, also referred to as reciprocal determinism, is where children learn behaviours from the environment but their behaviour is also likely to elicit reactions from the environment (Ward, 2007). For instance Ward (2007) explains that some children may have active traits and some passive traits that will influence their social interactions. Some active children may be taught self-calming techniques from their parents to manage their high activity in acceptable ways, whereas other children may not be taught these techniques and could be at risk for the development of maladaptive behaviours. Without the tools to self-soothe and cope alone, children may have longer lasting and more intense fears. Therefore, social support from parents "plays an extremely important role in coping processes associated with fear" (Guillemette, 2012, p.27).

The adolescent developmental stage

Adolescence involves the transition from childhood to adulthood which is fraught with physical, cognitive, psychological, social changes that can be particularly stressful. Accelerated physical growth brings about many changes. Puberty begins with the increase in

hormones which leads to sexual maturity. These major changes can also have an impact on the adolescent's mood which may lead to heightened emotionality (Burger et al., 2000). Being an early or late developer can result in the adolescent feeling self-conscious. This may impact negatively on their self-esteem and be a source of stress (Paplia, 2006). Profound changes in cognitive development occur with the ability of children in this stage of development to think abstractly and reason scientifically. However due to the underdeveloped frontal cortical systems, immature thinking still persists. Problem solving and coping skills are also under-developed which may lead to an increase in risky behaviour (Papalia, 2006). A major psychosocial developmental task in the adolescent phase is the search for their own identity, which includes sexual, career and gender identity. If unresolved this can lead to increased risk for stress (Burger et al., 2000). During the adolescent stage of development there appears to be an increase in fears associated with social evaluation and achievement. Burkhardt (2007) explains this may be as a result of socio-cognitive maturation which results in heightened self-consciousness and self-awareness. It is important that each area of development should not be seen in isolation and the same applies to risk factors. "For example, an unwanted pregnancy (physical) can cause scholastic problems for a girl (cognitive), which may lead to serious social and emotional problems" (Burger et al., 2000, p.5). Coping with major developmental changes can be overwhelming for the adolescent, making children at this stage of development particularly vulnerable to anxiety (Paplia, 2006). Burkhardt (2007) also noted the contribution of environmental demands from parents, teachers, and the broader society that place added pressure on the adolescent.

Gender dynamics

Research shows that fear related experiences and their responses may be influenced by gender dynamics (SACE, 2011). In general girls have been found to have a greater number and greater intensity of fears than boys (Burkhardt, 2007; Guillemette, 2012; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Papalia, 2006). These findings may be associated with the differences in the socialisation process. For example gender-role stereotyping may affect the nature and quality of how emotions are expressed (Burkhardt, 2007). "In the South African society, for instance, it is often not acceptable when boys cry or show fear and girls are often criticised for being aggressive" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.84). Clowes, Lazarus and Ratele (2010) suggest that in the South African culture, males are often taught to be dominant, not cry or express fear. As males dread being regarded as 'soft', they may instil fear in others in order to gain respect. A study by Foster, Kuperminc

and Price (2004) found significant differences in the expression of stress related symptoms between male and female adolescents after exposure to violence. Further research shows that the types of adverse conditions that male and female adolescent learners are exposed to may differ, which possibly explains the differences in the expression of fear, "for example where girls tend to be victims of sexual harassment, rape and sexual assault; boys tend to be physically assaulted and bullied" (SACE, 2011, p.13). Therefore, when looking at gender differences and the expressions of fear in adolescent school children, it is important to look at how the individual is influenced by cultural norms and specific experiences related to the South African context.

2.2.1.2   Peer-child relationships

As children start to move away from the influence of their parents, the relationship with peers also has a significant socialising influence on the developing child, particularly during adolescence. "The peer group helps children learn how to get along with society – how to adjust their needs and desires to those of others, when to yield, and when to stand firm. The peer group offers emotional security" (Papalia, 2006, p.392). However 'peer pressure' which is the influence of peers, can be positive or negative. Acceptance from the peer group is important, therefore the motivation to conform to group behaviours in order to 'fit in' is particularly strong at this developmental stage and may influence negative behaviours. For example, there may be pressure on male learners to be brave and have a girlfriend, whilst female learners may be under pressure to be sexually active in order to 'fit in' with the peer group (SACE, 2011). Though the degree to which these behaviours are dysfunctional or conflict with parental values will depend on the peer group's behaviour patterns (Papalia, 2006). Furthermore, rejection from the peer group can be a source of considerable stress in the adolescent and parental interest is important to provide support when necessary (Burger et al., 2000).

2.2.1.3   Teacher-child relationships

As children spend approximately half of their time at school, it is important that they can learn in a safe space that is conducive to learning without feeling threatened or scared (Burton, 2008). Teachers have a duty to protect the basic rights of learners and need to act *in loco parentis* and assume the role of a responsible parent so that an environment is created where children can grow and reach their full potential. The teacher-child relationship thus

plays a vital role in the child's life in ensuring a safe, supportive environment so that they focus on the primary aim of learning (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). However, in many South African schools, the teachers have been found to be anything but supportive. Studies indicate that perpetrators of violence in schools are often the child's teacher, as corporal punishment is still widely used and sexual abuse by educators is disturbingly high (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Shields et al., 2009).

2.2.2   The Mesosystem

The Mesosystem is the interconnection between two or more Microsystems that contain the child, for example the family and school or the family and peer group (Bronfenfenbrenner, 1979).

2.2.2.1   Family factors

The family is considered to be one of the most influential socialising environments in childhood development (SACE, 2011). In particular, parents play a pivotal role within the family context in contributing towards either the positive or negative development of the child (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). If the behaviour modelled within the family context is dysfunctional, this may have an adverse effect on how children deal with their world, leading to serious consequences (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). For example, children who are exposed to violence in their family of origin, including intimate partner violence and child abuse, are likely to learn that violent behaviour is normative and constitute an effective way to solve problems regardless of the differing contexts (Abraham & Jewkes, 2005; Ward, 2007). Another example would be if the parent constantly expresses fear at home. Modelling and receiving continuous negative information may then influence the child's view of their world as an unsafe place (Burkhardt, 2007).

2.2.3   The Exosystem

The Exosystem is Brofenbrenner's (1979) term for the interaction between two or more social settings which do not contain the child, nonetheless affects the child indirectly in their immediate context. The everyday social contexts of the child including the community and neighbourhood play a vital role in their social development. "The longer a child spends in a

neighbourhood, the more likely she is to be influenced by it" (Ward, 2007, p. 27). Therefore if children grow up in an environment where they learn violent behaviour, the experience of violence may become normalised (Ward, 2007).

2.2.3.1 Community factors

"It is widely accepted that schools are microcosms of the broader communities in which they are located. For this reason, the social ills prevalent in communities are known to permeate the school environment to varying degrees" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.54). Burton (2008) reports contributing factors that may increase the likelihood of violence in the school context. He explains that if children have easy access to drugs and weapons in the community, this will contribute to the high percentage of the availability of drugs and weapons in schools. This view is supported by Le Roux and Mokhele (2011) who suggest that if learners fear being targeted and feel unsafe, they may also resort to carrying weapons for self-protection, which in turn will increase the risk of school violence as they may feel the need to use them.

2.2.4 The Macrosystem

The Macrosystem consists of the outer layer of the child's environment comprising of the "dominant values, beliefs, customs, and economic and social systems of a culture or subculture, which filter down in countless ways to individual's daily lives" (Papalia, 2006, p.37). A critical aspect of Bronfenbrenners's Ecological Systems Theory is that the different layers are all interconnected and cannot be seen in isolation.

2.2.4.1 Cultural factors

The attitudes, beliefs, values, traditions, and whole way of life of a particular culture is "all learned behaviour passed on from parents to children" (Papalia, 2006, p.15). Language can be seen as the vehicle for transmitting culture and reflects children's understanding of their world (Burkhardt, 2007). Culture therefore has an important influence on how information is learnt and on the behavioural and emotional responses that result including the expression of fear. "Cultural factors play a role in the evolution and maintenance of fears, simply by considering the myths, traditions and stories told" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.54). Furthermore, levels of fear responses were found to be associated with cultural differences in the acceptance, reinforcement, and punishment of the disclosure of fear (Burkhardt, 2007).

Ethnicity (sub-cultures whereby members share a common cultural identity), will influence a child's perception of their world and affects how they experience fear and anxiety (Papalia, 2006). Burkardt's (2007) study made comparisons between the different ethnic groups in South Africa with regards the content and level of fear and found that black South African children reported the greatest number and intensity of fears.

Another important aspect to consider is that differences in cultural child rearing practices in South Africa may influence children's levels of fear and anxiety. For example "black and coloured youths perceived their parents to be more anxious, controlling and rejective than white youths, and it was also shown that precisely these rearing behaviours were positively linked to children's anxiety levels" (Muris, Du Plessis, & Loxton, 2008, p.1511).

2.2.4.2 Socio-economic status factors

Socio-economic status (SES) which includes the economic and social factors that describe an individual is an important factor to consider with regards to children's fear responses (Papalia, 2006). Studies indicate that "SES seems to play a role in the expression of fear with children from lower SES being more fearful than children from higher SES" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.62).

It is important however to consider that the different environmental experiences may influence the difference in the content of fear amongst the SES groups. For example children from a lower SES group may find their environment more threatening than children from a higher SES group. Ward (2007) explains that if widespread poverty has been influenced by socioeconomic conditions in the South African context, this in turn will influence the availability of health, education and social services and therefore will impact on the whole system. "Poor families may be less able to afford school fees and uniforms, for example, which may be a tremendous stressor for a child in relation to her peers and may increase the chance she will drop out of school" (Ward, 2007, p.14). Although the quality of education may also lead to differences of children's interpretation and understanding of fear content and should be considered as an alternate explanation (Burkhardt, 2007).

Consequently a lower SES is a threat to the physical, mental and psychosocial well-being of children which will "increase the chance of a negative developmental outcome" (Papalia,

2006, p.15). However, it is important to note that children from a higher SES may also be at risk. Often left alone without support because their parents are too busy or under extreme pressure to achieve, these children frequently have high levels of anxiety and depression (Papalia, 2006). Therefore, Burkhardt (2007) cautions that the specific context must be taken into consideration when interpreting results with regards to differences in SES and the levels of fear in children.

2.2.4.3   Socio-political factors

Another important factor to consider is South Africa's socio-political history and the impact of the apartheid regime. Included amongst these are the discriminatory policies which promoted high levels of poverty and a culture of violence as a result of the liberation struggle against the oppressive apartheid regime (Burton, 2008). "Poverty and inequality are crucial social dynamics that have contributed to South Africa's burden of violent injury" (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009, p.1014). Inequalities in the living conditions in South Africa often mean that children from poorer communities have barriers to resources which can lead to anger, frustration and violence. Furthermore, those children who are living in less than ideal conditions have frequently "been directly and indirectly exposed to negative events such as violence, crime, rape and health problems, etc." (Muris et al., 2008, p.1511). Children who continue to live in an environment that is stressful and threatening are more likely to have higher levels of fear and anxiety (Muris, et al., 2008). In addition, it has been argued that the apartheid regime lead to a generation of parents from a dysfunctional society and family structure, that lacked the necessary skills and resources for the optimal development of their children (SACE, 2011).

2.2.5   The Chronosystem

"The Chronosystem adds the dimension of time: the degree of stability or change in a child's world" (Papalia, 2006, p.38). This may be external such as a parent's death, or internal such as the developing child's physiological changes. As the child gets older he or she may interact differently with their environment, for example the child may spend more time in the community and less time in the family home (Ward, 2007). This may in turn influence changes in the child. Other chronosystem factors include changes in family structure such as "the decline in the extended-family household in developing countries" (Papalia, 2006, p.38).

2.2.6   Strengths of the Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's view of the complex interaction of the different levels or systems of experience and how it impacts on the development of children therefore provides a useful framework to explore how children respond to their school environment, specifically with relation to their vulnerability to fear and anxiety responses (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As a result, the current study was able to contextualise South African adolescent school children's experiences of fear and anxiety. An important strength of the Ecological Systems theory is that children are not merely acted upon by the environment but that they are both active and reactive in that their responses also shape the environment. Another significant aspect of this approach is that it is not only the environment that is considered, but also the child's perception of their environment, thus providing a vital key to understanding children's responses (Papalia, 2006).

2.3   A Child-centred perspective

The historical perspective dictated that children should be 'seen but not heard'. This viewpoint was reflected in the early traditional approaches to the scientific study on childhood development which focussed on "children as objects of research rather than subjects" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.1). However, there has been a dramatic shift in contemporary research which has reconceptualized children as persons of value with rights who have something of interest to say about their lives. Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, makes provision for the rights of children to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views respected (UNICEF, 2013). "Children must not be simply objects of concern, but treated as individual people with rights and views of their own. Children must invariably be listened to and taken seriously" (Pinheiro, 2006, p.xix).

The increased interest in the importance of listening to children's views has led to more recent research taking into account a child-centred perspective when attempting to access the nature of children's experiences. Children's insights are recognized as significant when generating knowledge. Methods used in child-centred research should therefore be easy for children to understand so that they can meaningfully participate. If children are given the freedom to think, ask questions and search for answers in their world, their rights to

communicate and make choices will not only be respected but valued. By giving children a voice and a right to actively participate in all aspects regarding their future they can also contribute towards being part of the solutions instead of being treated like passive recipients (Greene & Hill, 2005). Future research into children's experiences should therefore highlight the necessity of providing children with the opportunity to be heard in order to gain a better understanding of how they actually feel in their daily lives.

2.4 Childhood fears

2.4.1 Overview of fear and anxiety

"Fear is an unpleasant emotion that occurs in response to a consciously recognized source of danger – real or imaginary" (Schachter & McCauley, 1988, p.23). When faced with fear the responses include hormonal, physiological and mental changes which can range from moderate to the extreme. These fear responses will affect the individual's adjustment to the specific situation where fear is experienced (Guillemette, 2012). Perry (2013) points out that the brain is in a state of 'fear-related activation' during a threatening event which activates adaptive changes in emotional, behavioural and cognitive functioning for survival mode. "Without fear, the human race would be without self-protective instincts that drive our fight for survival and protection, for humans are a species of animal that follow Darwinian Theory, enabling those that are the fittest to survive and reproduce" (Guillemette, 2012, p.25).

Both fear and anxiety are basic human emotions which every individual experiences across the lifespan. They are adaptive responses to perceived threats to survival that protect us from ignoring danger, and help us prepare for negative events that disrupt the flow of everyday life. Although the terms of anxiety and fear are often used interchangeably, fear is triggered by an actual threat or consciously recognized dangerous situation, whereas anxiety is anticipation of a threat that has not yet occurred. Negative effects are usually only temporary. However overwhelming fear and anxiety will significantly impair general functioning and can lead to many emotional problems including anxiety disorders, depression, and difficulties with interpersonal relationships (Sue et al., 2010). Although fear is a fundamental human emotion that is universal and occurs across cultures, "what we fear is strongly influenced by our social environment" (Barlow & Durand, 2009).

2.4.2   Fear responses and the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory

Survival is the primary concern of all people. The concept of survival is considered to be biological rather than individualistic. "Sacrifice of the self for the family or tribe is as much a part of survival as survival of the individual, and is perhaps more integral to what Darwin meant by "survival of the fittest" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.26). Hobfoll (1998) explains that even though stress has a biological basis, it is also shaped by culture, as culture progresses when people create resources as a way of successfully coping with threats to survival. The central tenet of Conservation of Resources theory is that people have both an innate and socially learned drive to acquire and protect their resources. "Resources include the objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies that are either themselves valued for survival, directly or indirectly, or that serve as a means of achieving these ends" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.54). Fear responses, according to the Conservation of Resources theory, occurs in individuals when stress is experienced as a result of a threat of loss or actual loss of resources that are necessary to sustain the individual (Hobfoll, 1998). Conservation of Resources theory also states that stress develops in individuals when "there is a failure to adequately gain resources following significant resource investment" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.55). Individuals who lack resources are more vulnerable to further loss of resources, which may result in inadequate resources to invest in active coping strategies (Hobfoll, 1998).

Conservation of Resources theory is hierarchical in nature as resources are classified in terms of the proximity of the resource to survival, and predict that the closer the individual is to the loss, or threat of loss, of resources directly required for survival and physical integrity, the higher the level of fear. Primary Resources are those which relate directly to survival and include adequate food, clothing, and shelter as well as resources that ensure safety. Secondary Resources contribute indirectly to primary resources and include social support, attachment and financial security. Tertiary Resources include competence, social status and social standing and allow greater access to secondary resources (Hobfoll, 1998).

A classification that is based on proximity to survival may be useful as the hierarchical nature provides useful insight into how certain resources are valued, and also the related fear responses as a result of a threat to those valued resources. Hobfoll (1998) points out that culture plays an important role in the value of resources.

Through personal experience, modelling, and other forms of learning, people come to recognize what is important. As a matter of course, they also acquire knowledge of what they need in order to assure the acquisition and possession of what is important directly, indirectly, and symbolically for success within their culture and sheer survival. (Hobfoll, 1998, p.55)

Hobfoll (1998) suggests that young children across cultures are strongly embedded in social relationships and are therefore dependent on such relationships for the provision of primary resources. However, as children develop their needs also change, therefore "the relative value of these resources could be placed in a more developmental framework" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.60).

Major life stressors can also have a significant impact on the attainment and protection of resources, and the individual's emotional response, for example anxiety and fear, is largely as an outcome of social norms that places fear experiences in a broader cultural context (Hobfoll, 1998). "When appraisals are made regarding threats to the self, they are contextualised within social standards and markers, and people look to their social environment for feedback about the threat, preferred responses and solace" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.52). This is particularly relevant in the South African school context where studies indicate that the increased levels of fear associated with the high prevalence of interpersonal violence (classified under the primary resource domain), is a reflection of what is happening in the broader South African society (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009; Shields et al., 2009).

Although Hobfoll (1998) emphasises that individual responses to stressors, such as fear and anxiety, are influenced by their social context, he does acknowledge that because of the common basis of resources directly related to human survival, they may be valued across different cultures. Threat of loss or actual loss of these resources may be a socially shared reality that evokes similar fear responses in all individuals, although the predominant culture that the individual is nested in must always be considered (Hobfoll, 1998). Conservation of Resources theory therefore "makes specific predictions that can be placed in either a larger cultural context or more personally defined individual space" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.86).

2.4.3   Childhood development and the 'Experience of Fear'

Individuals experience different types of fear beginning from infancy and continuing throughout their lifespan. Children's fears and the expression of fear are influenced by the interrelation of age, socioeconomic status, culture, socio-political history and individual experiences (Burkhardt, 2007). "The nature of fear may change in response to one's developmental level and temperamental characteristics, as well as the variety of external stressors experienced" (Guillemette, 2012, p.1).   Thus the experience of fear is a constantly evolving process that is related to the complex interaction of the developing child and their everyday environment (Papalia, 2006).

A child's world is full of fears, real and imaginary, which are normal aspects of childhood development and are usually temporary in nature (Burkhardt, 2007). According to developmental theorists, children's experience of fear follows a similar pattern from infancy to the adolescent developmental stage, which can be seen as a gradual transition from dependence to independence based on survival instincts (Guillemette, 2012).   Furthermore, "as maturation takes place, the structure of fear changes as well, from formless and imaginary to specific and realistic" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.18).   The change in the structure of fears may be as a result of children's increased cognitive capacity for understanding of what is potentially harmful or dangerous. Therefore childhood fears appear to be adaptive and related to survival (Burkhardt, 2007).

A considerable number of studies have been conducted in order to understand what fears are normal and adaptive fears and what fears are problematic (causing psychological distress and impaired functioning) (Burkhardt, 2007). However, one of the challenges in researching children's experiences of fear and anxiety is that not every child can be considered the same as "not all children go through the same kind of experience simply because they have reached a particular age" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.9).

To gain a more comprehensive understanding it is therefore necessary to consider not only what childhood fears may be developmentally appropriate, but also to take into account the multiple interacting factors that influence the developing child's own understanding of the world in which they live in (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Table 1: Normative Data on Childhood Fears

Age	Childhood Fear
0-6 months	Loss of support, fear of falling, loud noises, excessive or unexpected stimuli.
7-12 months	Fear of strangers, novel stimuli (e.g. masks, heights), fear of sudden and or unexpected objects as well as of looming objects.
1 years	Separation from parents, toilet, injury and strangers.
2 years	Various loud noises (e.g. vacuum cleaners, alarms and thunder), animals, dark rooms, separation from parents, monsters and imaginary creatures.
3 years	Masks, darkness, being alone, separation from parents and large animals.
4 years	Separation from parents, animals, darkness and noises.
5 years	Animals, injury, separation from parents, and "bad" people.
6 years	Supernatural creatures, injuries, natural phenomena, darkness, being alone and separation from parents.
7-8 years	Supernatural creatures, darkness, being alone, injuries and global events (e.g. events in the media such as wars, kidnappings and terrorist attacks).
9-12 years	Fears related to school, injuries, social fears, phenomena and darkness.
13-18 years	Injuries, fears associated with social-evaluation, achievement, sexual anxiety and more global fears including concerns over their own future and future of the world.
19+ years	Death, danger, injuries, natural phenomena and global fears.

(adjusted from Burkhardt, 2007, p.39; Papalia, 2006).

2.4.4 Common childhood fears

Research on childhood fears at each developmental stage is important as it provides information on the content, frequency and intensity of fears in order to determine whether fears are normal and adaptive or excessive and maladaptive that may result in psychological distress (Burkhardt, 2007, Burkhardt, Loxton, Kagee, & Ollendick, 2012; Muris, et al., 2008).

Previous studies into normative childhood fears have predominantly focused on investigating the most common fears, with findings consistently indicating that common fears are associated with death and danger (Burkhardt, 2007; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983). The top 10 basic childhood fears according to the Encyclopaedia of Children's Fears (2013) have been found to be death, violence, kidnapping, physical injury, natural disasters for example floods, earthquakes and tornados, anxiety about academic achievement and other forms of school performance, social rejection, sexual anxieties, dating and sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS. The most highly rated fear common in all children, regardless of developmental stage was "someone in the family dying". An earlier study by Gullone and Lane (1999) into normative fears focussing on the adolescent stage of development found similar results to existing literature, as the 10 most common fears were also related to death and danger.

To assess common childhood fears a number of measurement instruments have been developed, with self-reports on psychometrically validated fear survey schedules being extensively used. Examples of self-report fear schedules are the Louisville Fear Survey for Childhood (LFSC); Spence Children's Anxiety Scale (SCAS); Screen for Child Anxiety Related Emotional Disorders (SCARED); Revised Children's Manifest Anxiety Scale (RCMAS) and the Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC) (Burkhardt, 2007). However, Burkhardt's (2007) criticism is that none of these instruments have been standardised in the South African context, nor do they address contemporary fears.

An investigation into childhood and late adolescent fears by Guillemette, (2012) utilized the Louisville Fear Survey for Childhood (LFSC) to compare the 10 most common fears between the childhood (5-13 years) and adolescent (18-25 years) age groups in the United States. The results of this study indicated that different types of fears existed between the two groups.

The most common fears as rated by children was 'someone in the family dying'; 'spiders'; 'darkness'; 'nightmares'; 'dying'; 'being alone'; 'drowning'; 'being the victim of crime'; 'getting lost' and 'seeing faces at the window'. In contrast the most common fears as rated by the late adolescent age group was 'someone in the family dying'; 'having someone ill in the family'; 'dying'; 'getting cancer'; 'being the victim of crime'; 'public speaking'; 'spiders'; 'becoming ill'; 'war' and 'drowning'. Guillemette (2012) however acknowledged that the sample group in the study lacked diversity, therefore generalisability was limited.

"The Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC) is one of the oldest and most widely used behavioural self-report measures of fears of objects and situations" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.10). Originally developed by Scherer and Nakamura in 1968, this fear scale has had a number of revisions (Scherer & Nakamura, 1968).

A version adapted by Ollendick (1983), known as the Fear Survey Schedule for Children Revised (FSSC-R) is the most commonly used instrument to assess childhood fears (Burkhardt, 2007; Muris, Merkelbach, Meesters, & Van Lier, 2002; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983). Ollendick (1983) administered the revised schedule to a sample group of 8 to 11 year olds in the United States of America to determine the reliability and the validity of the instrument. The findings from the study indicated that the FSSC-R was not only a useful instrument in the identification of normal childhood fears, but was also cross-culturally appropriate (Burkhardt, 2007).

Although the item content of the FSSC-R has not changed since the original version which was developed by Scherer and Nakamura (1968), this was addressed by Gullone and King (1992) by adapting the FSSC-R in order to give a more accurate reflection of children's fears. The second revision, known as the FSSC-11 deleted some content items and added new items including "more recently occurring and socially significant events such as nuclear war and AIDS, which could be likely foci of children's fears" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.71).

Muris and Ollendick (2002) used a modified version of the FSSC-R, the FSSC Hawaii (FSSC-HI), in their study to assess contemporary fears in a group of adolescents between the ages of 12 to 18 years old. The 10 most common fears reported contained 8 "new items such as 'AIDS', 'being killed or murdered', 'family member dying', being raped', 'nuclear war', 'being kidnapped', and 'myself dying'. This highlights the significance of adding

contemporary, potentially threatening stimuli and situations to childhood fear measures" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.22).

A study by Burnham (2009) addressed how contemporary fears of children and adolescents affect coping and resiliency in the 21st century. "This study was prompted by the continual exposure of youth to disasters (e.g. 9/11, Iraq War, Hurricane Katrina, school violence) and the call for revisions in fear assessments to reflect contemporary fears" (Burnham, 2009, p.28). Burnham's (2009) study used the American version of the Australian Fear Survey Schedule for Children-11, the FSSC-AM (Gullone & King, 1992) as an assessment instrument. The findings of Burnham's study suggested that many of the contemporary fears have emerged over time as a result of children and adolescents' continual exposure to certain experiences including "(a) global events (e.g., trauma, disasters, war, diseases), (b) television, media exposure, and (c) societal changes" (Burnham, 2009, p.28). "This study, similar to previous fear studies, shows that the fears of youth are undeniably challenging, real, disturbing, and drastically similar to what society faces as a whole" (Burnam, 2009, p.31).

Burkhardt (2007) explains that the FSSC-R has measured the content of fears consistently across age, gender and culture and it "appears to be a valid measure of childhood fears with sound psychometric properties" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.21). However, Burkhardt's (2007) study also noted that there were exceptions to the most common childhood fears which provide vital information about cultural differences in the content of fear. For example, Australian, Hellenic and various American groups reported being afraid of burglars which may have been related to the recent increase of burglaries highlighted in the media in those countries. On the other hand, Chinese, Nigerian, African-Americans and Hellenic children were more afraid of being shocked by electricity, with this fear possibly relating to some countries not having 'child-proof' electric sockets, so parents need to constantly remind children of the threat of accidental shock. Burkhardt (2007) explained that these examples provide valuable insight into cultural differences in relation to the content of fear and were particularly relevant to the South African context where "children grow up in a country which faces many challenges such as multi-lingualism, poverty, violence and a struggling health system" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.22).

 As a result, Burkhardt (2007) felt it was necessary to develop an instrument that specifically addressed contemporary South African fears. Additional items were thus added to the

existing Fear Survey Schedule for Children-Revised (FSSC-R) that were considered more relevant to assessing the manifestation of South African children's fears including:

> watching scary movies, to walk alone at night, the possibility of being in an accident, getting HIV, being alone in the dark, crocodiles, to be alone, having bad dreams, chameleons, tigers, lions, shots being fired in the neighbourhood, mommy and daddy fighting, baboons, elephants, gorillas and sharks. (Burkhardt, 2007, p.113)

Burkhardt (2007) developed her scale following consultation with a panel of experts in the field of childhood fears and in the construction and validation of measurement scales. She explained that her aim had been to develop "a measuring instrument that is scientifically and socially relevant to the South African context" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.198). However, criticism of the adapted measurement scale is that certain items may not have been specific to the South African context, including adding items such as tigers and gorillas as well as items such as bears and wolves. The results of Burkhardt's (2007) study using the adapted version of measurement scale known as the South African Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC-SA) indicated that the top 10 most common fears in rank order for all South African children were getting HIV, not being able to breathe, sharks, being hit by a car or truck, lions, falling from high places, bombing attacks, being invaded, bears or wolves, getting a shock from electricity, and tigers. These top 10 fears were considered universal to an extent, though some of the fears did suggest they were specifically related to the South African context. The findings also indicated that there were differences in the number and levels of fear. For example black South Africans showed a higher number and higher levels of fear, and girls, regardless of ethnicity, expressed more fears than boys. Burkhardt's (2007) study highlights the importance of considering the interaction of the individual's characteristics and multiple social contexts when looking at South African children's fear responses.

A study conducted by Muris et al., (2008) explored the origin of common fears of children living in the South African context. They investigated the prevalence of childhood fears among different cultural groups of South African children using a list from the top 10 fears common to the South African context according to Burkhardt's 2002 unpublished research. The list included items such as 'death', 'snakes', 'crime', 'crocodiles', 'predators', 'spiders', 'gangs', 'weapons', 'dogs' and 'rape'. The results of their study indicated that there were important differences between the three cultural groups in terms of the content of fears. More

specifically, fears of crocodiles, predators and snakes were higher among black children; fears related to crime, gangs, and rape were more predominant among white children; with coloured children being in between although their fear of weapons was higher than among black and white children. The authors suggest that, variations in the content of fear and anxiety experienced by South African children could be partly due to the inequalities as a result of South Africa's political and socio-economic past and the legacy of Apartheid. As a result many black and coloured children continue to live in a stressful environment which evokes high levels of fear responses (Muris, et al., 2008). The contextual perspective thus sees the child "not as a separate entity interacting with the environment, but as an inseparable part of it" (Papalia, 2006, p.36).

The above findings indicate that although some childhood fears would appear to be universal and occur in children worldwide, particularly those fears relating to survival, there may also be notable differences with regard to specific fears. Therefore, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration when making comparative studies. These include not only the child's developmental level and the influence of multiple interacting factors, but also the fact that different methods in assessment may yield variations in the set of results in terms of fear responses.

2.4.5   Persistent fear and anxiety

Although fears are a normal part of child development "excessive fears may interfere with daily functioning and may reflect serious anxiety problems" (Burkhardt, p.18). Perry (2013) explains that "persisting or chronic activation of the adaptive fear response can result in the maladaptive persistence of a fear state". Herman (1997) also stated that children who are in a climate of persistent fear remain in a constant state of autonomous hyperarousal. Herman further explains that there are a wide array of fears that take place in a climate of pervasive terror including constant fear of death, fear of violence, fear of serious harm, fear of abandonment and fear of the future. These fears may evoke a number of emotional states such as intense feelings of rage, an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and helplessness, and serious long term maladaptive fear responses.

Children who are constantly in an environment that elicits fear and anxiety face an increased risk for long-term negative outcomes. Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, domestic

violence, and the constant threat of violence at home, school, and in the community are factors that may pose a threat in the child's environment (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Garrido, Culhane, Raviv, & Taussig, 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Experiences such as exposure to abuse and violence may result in chronic fear and anxiety in children which triggers prolonged activation of the body's stress system. Persistent fear leads to short- and long-term physical and psychological distress which significantly interferes with the child's development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010). Studies have shown that, unfortunately, childhood exposure to chronic adversity is common in South Africa which makes these children particularly vulnerable to being in a state of persistent fear and anxiety (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Burkardt et al. (2012) suggest that in general, South African children display higher numbers and intensity of fears when compared to children from other countries. It is therefore vital that research continually addresses the adverse factors that have such a negative impact on childhood development in the South African context.

2.5   Interpersonal violence in South Africa

Following the inherited legacy of violence within the greater social and political South African context, most available literature focuses on exposure to interpersonal violence as an apparent threat to children (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Burton and Leoschut (2013) indicate that as South Africa is perceived to be one of the most violent countries in the world, with extremely high levels of violence against children, exposure to violence is considered to be one of the most critical factors that negatively affect children. Studies report that "South Africa has one of the highest incidences of rape worldwide and an analysis of South African police statistics indicates that over 40% of all reported rapes, and half of all other sexual assaults, have been perpetrated against children" (Du Plessis, Hardy, & Kaminer, 2013, p.114). Furthermore, a disturbing finding indicates that in "84 per cent of cases involving violent acts against children, the perpetrator is known or trusted by the victim" (UNICEF, 2012a, p.5). South Africa now has a daunting task of addressing how these high levels of violence impact on children (UNICEF, 2012a). Other research shows that alarmingly high mortality rates are due to injury primarily caused by interpersonal and gender-based violence which places our youth at extreme risk. Although prevention

programmes have become a national concern, they remain a considerable challenge as violence against children is everywhere including 'beatings', sexual abuse, emotional violence, and neglect (Seedat et al., 2009).

2.5.1 Childhood adversity

Early studies show that growing up in an environment characterized by chronic violence can have detrimental consequences on child development (Perrin, Smith and Yule, 2000). Herman (1997) describes that in the 'aftermath of violence' survivors of chronic child abuse have a wide array of fears evoked by terror. An investigation by Jewkes et al. (2010) concluded that childhood experiences of adversity in South Africa can be seen as having a detrimental effect on all health outcomes and urgently needs to be addressed.

Various studies provide compelling evidence that childhood exposure to adversity is associated with psychological distress, poor psychosocial adjustment, and high levels of fear. Long-term psychopathological consequences may result, such as severe anxiety, depression, suicide attempts, repetitive self-injury, aggression, dissociative defences, relationship difficulties, and vulnerability to repeat victimization later in life (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2004). A comparative study with regards to trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress symptoms found that South African adolescents had a much higher rate of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than Kenyan adolescents. These findings suggest that the differences in the rate of PTSD between the two countries may be due to the "much higher levels of exposure to violent crime in South African adolescents" (Seedat et al., 2004, p.173). Ongoing exposure to violence was found to increase "the likelihood of development of psychopathological disorders, including those that might be manifested initially in teenage delinquent peer associations such as gangs, which often provide the context for early antisocial behaviour and acts of violence" (Seedat et al., 2009, p.1015). Research has shown that exposure to abuse and neglect has a negative impact on the neurodevelopment of children which results in cognitive, psychological, and social impairment and may also lead to maladaptive fear related activation (Perry, 2013). Research also shows that "the experience of trauma and violence in childhood affects brain development and reduces the ability of children to subsequently form strong emotional relationships and to empathise" (Seedat et al., 2009, p.1015). Bullied children have also been found to be more vulnerable to developing

serious mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, suicide ideation, post-traumatic stress, and other clinical-level disorders (Cluver et al., 2010; Nansel, Craig, Overpeck, Saluja, & Ruan, 2004). Further, studies show that adverse conditions may inhibit children from reaching optimal social and academic potential (Gopal & Collings, 2013; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). A study by Jewkes et al. (2010) shows that adverse experiences including emotional, sexual, and physical abuse in children are associated not only with the risk of depression, suicide, and substance abuse, but also with HIV and HSV2 infections. Although emphasizing the need for intervention programmes to prevent further abuse and neglect in children, these findings did not take into account the many other adverse factors and the wide range of settings that may contribute to high levels of distress and fear (Jewkes et al., 2010). Thus, to understand the adolescent child's perceptions of fear and anxiety, it is necessary for future studies to consider the influences of the interrelation of the broader contextual factors including the home, school, community, and society (Burton, 2008).

2.5.2 Mode of exposure

The impact of children exposed to violence, regardless of mode of exposure (direct victimization or indirect vicarious) results in a wide range of adverse effects including sadness, loneliness, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, social withdrawal, concentration difficulties, aggression, anxiety, and fear (Barbarin et al., 2001). Similar results were found by Burton and Leoschut (2013) who suggested that both children who have been directly victimized and those who witnessed violence (indirectly victimized) within schools were found to be adversely affected as they developed feelings of fear and anxiety which inevitably leads to short- and long-term consequences, notably depression, fatigue, and aggression. Other research by Abrahams and Jewkes (2005) shows that childhood experiences of witnessing maternal violence, negatively effects future emotional and social functioning as violence may be considered normative. Their findings suggest that children who have been exposed to violence subsequently regard the use of violence as an acceptable means of resolving conflict which manifests in angry and aggressive behaviours.

A study by Shields et al. (2009) into community violence compared the negative psychological effects of direct (observing) and indirect (witnessing) violence at neighbourhood and school levels. Their findings showed differences in relative impact as "in the context of school, victimization has a somewhat stronger effect on distress than

witnessing violence. However, in the neighbourhood, the opposite was the case" (Shields et al., 2009, p.1192). Their study thus highlights the necessity of future research to take locus of exposure into account. Gopal and Collings (2013) also considered more than one locus of victimization by exploring exposure to violence, direct or vicarious, occurring at home, at school, and in the community and the relationship of violence to poor academic performance. The authors found evidence that exposure to violence in South Africa has led to children being "scared everywhere" including at school, home, and in the community.

2.5.3   Poly-victimization

A considerable amount of research on children has focussed on specific types of victimization and their resultant negative outcomes, for example bullying (Nansel et al., 2004), witnessing maternal violence (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005) exposure to school violence (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; De Wet, 2003) and exposure to community violence (Barbarin et al., 2001; Foster et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). However more recent studies indicate that there is an increasing need for victimization studies to explore and assess the role that multiple victimization exposure has on children across different domains, referred to as "poly-victimization" (Finkelhor, Ormrod, & Turner, 2007; Du Plessis et al., 2013). Victimization may include "both witnessing of violence and direct victimization and exposure to violence across different sites, including the home, neighbourhood, and school" (Du Plessis et al., 2013, p.113). For example, the results of the 2012 National School Violence Study show that many children have been exposed to violence either as victims or witnesses both in their homes and communities by the time they reach secondary school. This study emphasises how the family and community interconnect as regards levels of violence in the schools (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). Other research suggests that children who witness violence in the home are at greater risk for engaging in future violent behaviour in the community, which may place them at risk for further victimization (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). An international study by Finkelhor et al. (2007) found that children who have been exposed to one type of victimization (including abuse, physical assault, bullying, witnessing community and family level violence) is a strong predictor of exposure to other forms of violence (for example they are more likely to be victimized by their peers). Burton and Leoschut (2013) also provide evidence that certain types of victimization makes a child more vulnerable to other types of victimization. For example the bullied child has been found to be more susceptible to other more serious forms of victimization. Similarly Cluver et al. (2010)

found that "poly-victimized children" are at high risk for being bullied by their peers if they are also victimized at home or community level, indicating a "cycle of violence". Further supporting evidence shows that "exposure to trauma and violence during childhood can give rise to revictimization and intergenerational cycling of violence" (Seedat et al., 2009, p.1015). More recent research suggests that "poly-victimization is both highly prevalent among children and adolescents and particularly pathogenic with regard to mental health outcomes" (Du Plessis et al., 2013, p.113). These results emphasise the importance of future research investigating the experiences of South African children who have experienced multiple forms of victimization across different domains including the home, community and school.

2.5.4   School-based violence

2.5.4.1 Overview

Within the South African socio-political context, the use of violence as a normative and acceptable way to solve conflict has extended into the post-apartheid era and is possibly related to high levels of violence and the related feelings of fear in South African schools (Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Shields, Nadasen, & Pierce, 2009). Arguably, school violence is one of the most critical issues that face South African children at present. As a result there has been a considerable amount of literature that focuses on interpersonal violence as a perceived threat to children in the school context. "The prevalence of violence within South African schools indicates that the learning process of young people is compromised since the youth are compelled to be taught in environments where both learners and educators provoke feelings of threat" (Burton, Bonora, & Leoschut, 2009, p.103). The UNICEF Annual Report (2012) found that incidents of violence and sexual abuse were still highly prevalent in various schools in South Africa (UNICEF, 2012a). Burton (2008) states that there are few safe areas for learners as classrooms, toilets, open grounds, or playing fields have been identified where violence commonly occurs in schools and that evoke fear. Furthermore learners in South African schools are often victims of multiple and repeated forms of violence which results in increased levels of fear and anxiety (Burton, 2013). "Data shows that secondary schools reflect higher levels of violence that primary schools" (Burton, 2008, p.6). It therefore seemed appropriate for the present research to focus on the exploration of learners' fears in a secondary school context.

Despite various investigations indicating that school children in South Africa are at extremely high risk of experiencing violent crime there have been few solutions or changes. Thus, the persistence of school violence remains a grave national concern (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). As a result, children in South Africa are still expected to learn in an unsafe school environment, which increases their levels of fear and anxiety (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

2.5.4.2 The concept of school-based violence

A study in an international context suggested that school violence has many forms including the following harmful behaviours:

> Verbal, such as calling names, racial slurs, and cursing; Social, such as isolating a student or groups of students; Indirect violence, including media-related victimization (e.g. showing private pictures over the internet and spreading rumours through cell phones); Physical, both moderate physical violence such as serious beating; Property related, including vandalism, theft, and damages to students and staff property; Sexual, including verbal harassment and physical forms of unwanted sexual behaviours; Weapon-related, including the possession and use of a range of weapons, such as pocket knives and guns. (Astor & Benbenishty, 2008, p.72)

In essence, school violence can be seen as the physical or psychological harm or discomfort inflicted on learners attached to direct or indirect victimization (Burton, 2008). This includes not only violence within the schools physical border but "acts that are, on a daily basis, associated with the school, specifically travelling to and from school, or arriving at or waiting outside the school grounds" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.3).

2.5.4.3 Adverse effects of school-based violence

School-based violence is a violation of the basic rights of children, which may result in decreased academic performance, an increase in isolation, and put the mental and physical health of learners at risk (UNICEF, 2012a). Previous research on school-based violence in South Africa shows that growing up in an environment characterized by chronic violence can have detrimental consequences to child development including psychological distress, poor

academic performance, and fear amongst learners. Findings indicate that these adverse effects are not only short-term but extended to longer-term psychological distress such as posttraumatic stress, depression, anxiety, and aggression (Barbarin at al., 2001; Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Cluver et al., 2010; Perrin et al., 2000). These studies were supported by Seedat et al., (2004) who found that youth exposed to violence in urban African schools were more likely to develop negative psychological outcomes (eg., post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression). Furthermore school-based violence may result in secondary victimisation, instilling fear and negatively impacting on children who may not have directly experienced violence but who may have seen friends or peers affected (UNICEF, 2012a).

> Fear of violence at school can be as harmful as primary victimisation and personal experiences of violence, causing learners to drop out or avoid school, or to lose concentration in the classroom. Equally, fear of violence can be as harmful in developing healthy pro-social relationships as actual victimisation. (Burton and Leoschut, 2013, p.102)

2.5.4.4   The prevalence and nature of school-based violence

Although school violence is not a new concept, what is concerning is a shift towards more severe forms of violence in South Africa (Leoschut, 2008). The School-Based Violence Report (SACE, 2011) explores not only the impact school based violence has on South African children, but how the increase and more serious nature of violence is a threat to children's sense of safety, and contributes to the likelihood of them being scared. Blatantly violent acts in schools that gained media attention has lead to public perception that violence in schools is increasing at a disturbingly high rate and that "schools are a scary place to be these days" (Sunday Tribune, 2013, May 12). The results of the 2012 National School Violence Study in South Africa found that one in five children had experienced violent crime in school and that "22.2% of high school learners were found to have been threatened with violence or had been victim of an assault, robbery and/or sexual assault at school in the past year" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.xi). However when compared to a previous study done by Burton (2008), the marginal difference suggests that over the past four years the levels of violence in secondary schools were fairly constant, although remaining alarmingly high. High levels of violence in schools will reduce children's sense of safety in the world and creates a

climate of fear (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013). The summary of key findings of the 2012 National School Violence Study in South Africa showed that "fear is common at secondary schools, specifically among female learners" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.11).

2.5.4.5 Types of violence in South African schools

South African learners of both genders are exposed to various forms of violence that disrupt the safe school environment including physical assault, sexual assault, threats of violence, robbery, gangsterism and bullying which includes new types of violence such as cyber bullying (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Direct/indirect victimization

A report by Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that both children who have been directly victimized and those who witnessed violence (indirectly victimized) within schools were adversely affected as they developed feelings of fear and anxiety**.** A comparative study by Shields et al. (2009) investigated the differences in levels of fear resulting from witnessing violence versus direct victimization in the school or neighbourhood, thereby acknowledging the importance of differentiating context. Within the school context, direct exposure to violence included being "hit, kicked or shoved, badly beaten up, threatened with a knife or sharp weapon, attacked with a knife or sharp weapon, threatened with a gun, robbed or in a fight" (Shields et al., 2009, p.1196) Their findings showed that victimization in schools produced higher levels of psychological distress consistent with high levels of fear. The study suggested that if a child is being victimized in a place they feel fearful or are unable to avoid, this may result in increased levels of distress.

Corporal punishment

Teachers are often the perpetrators of violence as corporal punishment is still used as a common disciplinary measure in schools (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Shields et al., 2009). These findings are consistent with the findings of Seedat et al (2009) who stated that the perpetrators of violence can be family members, people within the community that the child knows, and even teachers within the child's school. Corporal punishment contravenes section 28 of the South African Bill of Rights in terms of which all children have the right to be free from any form of violence, including the right not be maltreated or punished in an inhumane or degrading way (Constitution, 1996) and The South African

Schools Act (84 of 1996) section 10 which states that "no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner". Despite legislation that protects learners from violence and the fact that corporal punishment was abolished in South African schools in 1996, the study by Burton and Leoschut (2013) suggest that physical punishment is continually used as a way of implementing discipline. Their survey showed that 49.8% of the learners maintained that they had been "caned or spanked by an educator or principal as punishment for wrongdoings" (Burton & Leoschut, 2013, p.29). These figures show that although educators may be aware of policy changes, this did not necessarily mean a change in behaviour towards corporal punishment. The use of corporal punishment by educators may lead to the perception that violence is an acceptable way of resolving conflict. It not only negates the basic human rights of learners, but contributes to a lack of safety in schools, which increases the chances of learners being scared (Burton, 2007, Burton et al., 2009).

Sexual and physical abuse

Sexual and physical abuse has been found to be widespread and disturbingly high in the African school context, which threatens the child's sense of safety (Jewkes et al., 2010). With regards sexual violence, girls are more likely to be victims of sexual harassment, rape, and sexual abuse, with perpetrators being both educators and male students (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Burton (2008) also found that in school, girls are more likely to be sexually assaulted than boys and that over 30% of girls were raped at school. There are few safe places for girls as they "were raped in school toilets, empty classrooms, hallways, hostels, and dormitories" (Burton, 2007, p.11). As a result girls not only have to endure the physical abuse, but this often leads to significant psychological distress as girls may also fear unwanted pregnancy and loss of self-respect (Human Rights Watch, 2001).

Other studies indicate the concern over the increase in learners being sexually abused by male educators who abuse their authority. Sexual abuse of female learners, often perpetrated by their teachers, is a common feature which jeopardizes the whole school experience (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Jewkes et al., 2010; Modisaotsile, 2012). "Girls acquiesce to sexual demands from educators for fear of punishment if they refuse" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325). Matric exam preparations in a Durban secondary school were disrupted when six teachers were suspended after it was disclosed that they had allegedly been running a 'sex for marks' scheme. Learners claimed that the teachers sexually abused them in return for promises being made that they would pass (Dzanibe, 2013). Findings also showed that some

educators were involved in 'love relationships' with learners in secondary school. Many learners do not disclose these relationships as they fear that this may result in negative repercussions such as being made to leave the class, stigmatisation, repetitive abuse, or even failing the term or year (Burton, 2011). The Department of Basic Education (2012) acknowledges that the increase in the incidence of alleged cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence of learners by teachers, is not only an obstacle to learning which deprives school children of their basic Constitutional rights to equality and dignity, but also leads to a climate of fear and aggression.

A grave concern is that girls who have experienced the trauma of sexual violence in South African schools are at high risk of being infected with HIV/AIDS, which brings added distress to these learners Burton (2008). An exploration into youths understanding of gender based violence and its contribution to the risk of HIV/AIDS infection in secondary schools, focussed on learners' idea of safe schools. Their findings indicated that girls in particular felt at risk for gender-based violence at unsafe schools, with one participant stating that "It's about being scared, because we have all been scared......" (De Lange & Geldenhuys, 2012, p. 494).

The following summary describes the negative consequences of gendered or sex based violence within schools:

> Gendered or sex based violence, in the broader context of discrimination, constrains freedom of movement, choices and activities of its victims. It frequently results in intimidation, poor levels of participation in learning activities, forced isolation, low self-esteem or self confidence, dropping out of education or from particular activities or subjects or other physical, sexual and/or psychological damage. It erodes the basis of equal opportunity realized through equal access to education.
> (Human Rights Watch, 2001)

However, it is important to note that not only girls are victims of sexual harassment and abuse. Recent reports indicate there has been an alarming increase in the number of gays, lesbians, bi-sexual, and transgendered learners being victims of 'corrective rape' in schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

Bullying in schools

Bullying is "aggression deliberately and persistently directed against a particular target: a victim who typically is weak, vulnerable, and defenceless" (Papalia, 2006, p.398). The aggressive behaviour can be verbal, physical or relational (Nansel et al., 2004). The NSVS indicated that 13% of school children reported bullying (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). Research shows that the prevalence of bullying in schools and the serious negative effects on learners is both a global and national concern. Numerous studies have found clear evidence that bullying in schools is a factor associated with greater health problems, psychosocial, and school adjustment difficulties (Nansel et al., 2004; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Furthermore, the 2012 National School Violence Study suggested that learners who are victimized are more vulnerable to being revictimized, as their findings showed that if learners had been bullied at school this significantly increased their chances of being the victim of a violent crime (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). An investigation by Cluver et al., (2010) into levels of bullying inside and outside the school focused on highly vulnerable children in South Africa. Their study found new evidence that bullying victimization significantly increases the risk for further psychological problems. These include "higher levels of anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as higher levels of clinical level-disorder", which impacts negatively on pre-existing psychological distress (Cluver et al., 2010, p. 793). Bullying is in essence a type of child abuse that not only leads to high levels of distress and anxiety, but also to school absenteeism, poor academic performance, aggressive behaviour, and drug abuse (Boqwana, 2009). Furthermore, in the event of ongoing abuse, victims of bullying may eventually retaliate with violence, which in turn contributes to the levels of violence in schools (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011) "Bystanders are also affected and are generally secretly fearful of being targeted" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325). Some forms of bullying are less obvious such as hazing or initiation, and are mainly evident in private schools (Burton, 2008). School initiation refers to any activity expected of new students that humiliates, degrades or risks physical and emotional harm, regardless of their willingness to participate. Harsh treatment is often rationalised into the explanation that it is "tradition" and supposedly builds character, loyalty to the school and promotes identification with other learners (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006). The 2012 National School Violence Study explored the prevalence and effects of cyber bullying as a new form of violence in schools. Their findings indicated that although not as prevalent as other types of violence, "one in five (20%) scholars had experienced some form of cyber bullying or violence in the past year"

(Burton & Leoschut, 2013). "Children cannot thrive when they are afraid – and intimidation and fear are prime consequences of bullying" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.324).

Gang related activities

Gangs that have infiltrated South African schools today contribute to learners being victim of gang-related violence. The adolescent is particularly vulnerable to the attraction of gangs as membership may provide a sense of identity, power and belonging, specifically with learners who may have feelings of inadequacy that arise as a result of compromised family, neighbourhood, and school environments (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). New gang members are often recruited from the learners at school and coerced into gang related activities which may include selling drugs, drug use, illegal use and sale of weapons, and gang rivalries which promote violence (Burton 2007, Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Examples include Umlulama Secondary School which is considered the most violent school in KwaZulu-Natal, where gang-related violence, including the murder of school children and the trading of drugs, has "plunged the school into a state of anarchy" (Savides & Zulu, 2013). At another secondary school in Athlone, Cape Flats on 15th April 2013, "two young men with hoodies pulled low over their faces rushed up behind Glenrico Martin and pumped two bullets into his head" (Eggington, 2013). School children watched in horror as they witnessed the cold-blooded execution of a fellow learner, which was the result of rival gang power struggles. Gangs may also abduct girls at school and then 'sell' them for rape (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). A study by Boqwana (2009) found that learners who were exposed to gang activities in township schools were likely to experience intimidation, stress, and high levels of fear which adversely affects their concentration and academic performance. Escalating gang-related violence in South Africa results in an insecure learning environment that has consequently led to many children being fearful of going to school (Boqwana, 2009).

Weapons

There is an alarmingly high percentage of learners who report having access to weapons at school (Burton, 2008, Burton et al., 2009). "3 in 10 learners at secondary school know fellow students/learners who have brought weapons to school; 3 in 10 report that it is easy to organise a knife, and 1 in 10 report that it is easy to organise a gun" (SBVR, 2011, p.10). Items related to school violence include being "threatened with a knife or sharp weapon,

attacked with a knife or sharp weapon, threatened with a gun" (Shields et al., 2009, p. 1196). "Weapons are potentially lethal and their mere presence in schools compromises the safety of learners, scares and intimidates them, and articulates into a disturbed environment inhibiting effective learning and socialisation" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.325).

Lack of security at schools

The lack of security in schools is a serious concern. Many schools reported burglaries where doors, windows and even ceilings were broken in an attempt to steal school resources (for example furniture, classroom equipment and books) (Modisaotsile, 2012). Some schools have even been victims of armed robberies as schools have become soft targets for criminals. "The lack of security at schools in KwaZulu-Natal has once again come under the spotlight after gunman opened fire on teachers and pupils at a primary school in Chatsworth" (Nair, 2013). It was reported that armed robbers had planned to steal the teachers' valuables and cars, however when the learners noticed what was happening and started screaming, the robbers opened fire. Although in this specific occurrence no one was injured or killed, the learners were left terrified by the incident. As many impoverished schools cannot afford to hire security, they are particularly vulnerable to criminals. According to the chairman of the KwaZulu-Natal Parents' Association, the problem of security at schools has been an ongoing debate for many years and needs to be addressed urgently by the department of Education (Nair, 2013).

2.6   Other forms of childhood adversity

Apart from the negative impact of interpersonal violence, there are a number of other adverse factors in the lives of children in today's world that compromise their development and deprive them of the fulfilment of their basic human rights. Included among these factors are the neglect of children; the child poverty rate which is likely to increase in 2013 due to the global economic crisis (UNICEF, 2012b); children who are left homeless or become orphans; children who are denied health care and education; the many children who die from diseases that may have been prevented with immunisation; and children affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, tuberculosis and malaria particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2008). These factors jeopardise children reaching their physical, mental and social developmental potential and are often a high risk to their lives.

2.6.1 HIV/AIDS

The enormous HIV and AIDS burden in South Africa has resulted in increased levels of orphaning and child-headed households. There are approximately 3.7 orphans in the country and an estimated 150,000 living in child-headed households, which makes these children particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect, exploitation, AIDS-related stigma, and poverty (UNICEF, 2012b). HIV/AIDS related stigma is often based on the attitude that immoral behaviour is associated with infection. Also, fears based on ignorance about transmission, can lead to discrimination and isolation of HIV/AIDS affected children (Deacon, 2006). Children who are affected by HIV and AIDS, such as orphans, often face multiple interrelated risk conditions that contribute to the susceptibility of undesirable developmental outcomes. For example, the trauma of losing a parent or caregiver is then exacerbated by the loss of adult guidance and protection, which may increase the likelihood of being abused and exploited. In addition, the risk of further poverty is higher once the breadwinner has gone. As a result these children may not have access to social grants, basic healthcare and education (UNICEF, 2012a). According to Burkhardt (2007), findings based on the results of the South African Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC-SA) show that 'getting HIV' is the most feared item for children living in South Africa.

The plight of orphans and children made vulnerable by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in South Africa, poses a serious threat to children attending school in a number of ways. Learners whose parents or relatives suffer frequently from HIV related illness or death may have to take care of them and their other siblings, assume overwhelming responsibilities at home, and also attend school. Orphans not only have the trauma of losing one or both parents, but may now have no one to take care of their educational needs, making them more vulnerable to deficits in education. Furthermore, AIDS affected children often have to face the negative attitudes and stigma attached to HIV/AIDS from other learners and teachers when they do attend school (Deacon, 2006). As a result, these added stressors are more likely to have a compounding negative effect on physical and psychological health, behaviour, and academic performance in AIDS affected children. Another factor to consider is that teachers who are affected by HIV/AIDS related ill-health may have lowered school attendance, which in turn hinders the quality of the learners' school experience (Modisaotsile, 2012; UNICEF, 2012a).

2.6.2   Poverty

Other studies point out that almost two thirds of South African children live in poverty, which has serious negative individual and social consequences (UNICEF, 2012b). Cluver et al., (2010) identified poverty and food insecurity as significant risk factors for the developing child living in South Africa. Burkhardt (2007) suggests that children who live in poverty are more likely to experience their environment as threatening, which makes them particularly vulnerable to fear and anxiety. Child poverty was reported to have a negative impact on physical and mental health development, including cognitive impairment, behavioural difficulties, underachievement at school, increased likelihood of teenage pregnancy, and increased probability of alcohol and drug abuse (UNICEF, 2012b). Ward (2007) found that poverty influences the availability of health, education and social services, and therefore will impact on the whole system. Foxcroft and Roodt (2005) suggest that poverty remains an important factor that prevents all South African children from accessing equal educational opportunities and reaching their academic potential. The socioeconomic difficulties in many South African schools are exacerbated by high levels of poverty and unemployment which means that many learners are malnourished and have poor health. This in turn has an adverse affect on learners' mental and physical development (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005; Timaeus, Simelane, & Letsoalo, 2011; UNICEF, 2012b).

2.6.3   Drug and alcohol abuse

Substance abuse is disturbingly high in the youth of South Africa. Many view taking drugs as a common and acceptable social practice (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Within the South African context drugs are a multimillion rand industry and, due to the many street suppliers, it is now becoming easy for the youth to buy illicit drugs (Anti Drug Alliance SA Annual Survey, 2012). Many young people initially experiment with substances they perceive to be low risk, such as cigarettes, alcohol and marijuana. However, apart from health risks, these substances expose users to additional risks, including recurrent social or interpersonal problems; traffic accidents as a result of driving when impaired; HIV/AIDS and STIs infection and pregnancy from unsafe sexual practices (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). "Under the influence of drugs, accidents, violence and other unplanned activities are more likely to happen" (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011, p.327). Experimenting with perceived low risk

substances leads to a concern that young people will be more vulnerable to experimenting with other drugs and become dependent at an early age (Sue et al., 2010).

The most common drugs used in South Africa are alcohol, cigarettes, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, ecstasy, cannabis mixed with mandrax (white pipe), inhalants, methamphetamine ('tik') and prescription drugs. In recent years, adolescents have been smoking HIV drugs mixed with other substances such as marijuana and heroin, commonly known as "whoonga," which is highly addictive (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Substance abuse endangers not only the physiological and psychological health of the individual but also compromises their emotional and social development, which affects the individual's sense of self and self-esteem (Sue et al., 2010). To compensate for feelings of inadequacy which may arise as a result of a negative self-perception, the individual may turn to further substance use (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

The use of drugs and alcohol is a significant risk factor facing children in schools, as studies indicate that they are easily available. A contributory factor is the unlicensed liquor outlets that contravene regulations and those that were found to operate near schools (Seedat et al., 2009). One in seven learners reported easy access to alcohol, one in ten reported they had easy access to drugs and almost a tenth knew someone at school who sold drugs (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). Anti Drug Alliance South Africa's 2012 annual survey also shows a growing trend in drug use among adolescent learners. A worrying concern is that 69% of adolescent respondents said that drugs were easily accessible at schools. The most readily available drugs at schools were marijuana, followed by cat, tik and then cocaine. Although for some children the use of drugs arose from curiosity, other influencing factors were emotional, physical and economic deprivation. The survey also indicated that 51% of respondents said peer pressure plays an important role in whether they use drugs or alcohol.

The adolescence stage is often fraught with issues of control versus autonomy, difficulties handling heightened emotions and the need to feel accepted, to be like others and to be part of a group (Burger et al., 2000). As a result, the influence of peer pressure and the desire to conform, plays an important role in the beginning of drug and alcohol abuse, which makes learners at this developmental stage particularly vulnerable (Papalia, 2006).

2.6.4   Unintentional injuries

Seedat et al. (2009) report that, apart from morbidity and mortality as a result of injury due to interpersonal violence, it should be noted that unintentional injury also contributes to the high death rate in South Africa. Unintentional injuries include traffic-related injuries, self-inflicted injuries and injuries arising from fires, falls and drowning.

2.6.5   Other school-based fears

2.6.5.1 Overview

Despite the South African government prioritising education and allocating a large amount of resources in this sector, the results do not correspond with the investment. Academic achievement of students remains poor, with consistently low scores in literacy, numeracy and reading (UNICEF 2012a). The Department of Basic Education Annual Report (2012) acknowledges that there remain a number of serious challenges that children face in South African schools that are not conducive to positive learning outcomes or their sense of wellbeing. School is often interrupted by irregular attendance, lack of resources, teenage pregnancy, ill-health, and absent teachers. As a result "many children experience a broken journey through school" (UNICEF, 2012a, p.6).

2.6.5.2 Lack of resources and unsafe infrastructure

The difference in the quality of education in South Africa means that many children are not exposed to equal opportunities in order to develop their optimal academic potential. Lack of resources and unsafe infrastructure makes education in some schools anything but equal. The vast majority of schools in rural areas are in conditions of extreme neglect, for example, collapsed roofs and no windows, lack sanitation, have no electricity and have either little or no learning materials. "Around 27 per cent of public schools do not have running water, 78 per cent are without libraries and 78 per cent do not have computers" (UNICEF, 2012a, p7). Furthermore, many classrooms are overcrowded, in some instances way over the national benchmark of 35 learners per teacher in secondary schools. One teacher of a rural school, who is also the principal, reported that he teaches over 80 learners and that the class is of mixed grades (Modisaotsile, 2012). As a result, these schools do not have the potential to

provide a safe and protected learning environment required for positive childhood development to occur.

2.6.5.3 Teachers

Apart from overcrowded and ill equipped classrooms, another challenge for learners is the lack of support from teachers, both academically and emotionally. A large number of the teachers in South African schools are under-qualified, have poor training so lack the professional skills necessary to perform quality work, have limited resources, have low morale, lack commitment and have little interest in supporting learners. Lack of resources in schools has an impact on the quality of teaching as the more qualified teachers tend to gravitate towards the schools that have access to better resources. On the other hand, the schools that lack facilities are less likely to attract skilled teachers (Modisaotsile, 2012). It has also been reported that teachers bring alcohol to school and in some instances "teachers are using children to get alcohol from the shebeens or missing classes to go and drink" (SACE, 2011, p.10).

2.6.5.4 Failure or underachievement

"Educators agree that the quality of school strongly influences student achievement" (Papalia, 2006, p.452). However, in South Africa the education system is anything but equal. Some of the consequences are high failure rate, and grade repetition is common with many over aged learners (Modisaotsile, 2012). Learners get discouraged, lack motivation and are less optimistic about their ability to succeed, which results in them developing a negative perception of themselves. Fear of academic failure or underachievement contributes towards a learners' low self-esteem and impacts on their ability to cope with other challenges in the school environment (Modisaotsile, 2012; UNICEF, 2012a).

2.6.5.5 Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy is prevalent in numerous South African schools and is one of the major disruptions to female learners particularly at secondary school (UNICEF, 2012a). Many girls, who become mothers before completing schooling, get very little support and have to endure misunderstandings, stigma and pressure. Even though the Bill of Rights contained in the

Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), Section 29 states that "everyone has the right to basic education", many pregnant teenagers are denied that right. Some of these girls are not allowed to attend school, as school committees and teachers are afraid they will influence other girls by encouraging them to also fall pregnant. Pregnant teenagers frequently have to withstand insensitivity from teachers and peers and have to face the fear of prejudice, intimidation, ridicule, exclusion and made to feel like the irresponsible 'bad' girl. Many schools do not make provision for professional counselling and, as adolescents are often too immature physically and emotionally when they fall pregnant, they are ill equipped to deal with the pressures. Without support from the school, teachers, and peers, many of these girls become overwhelmed by their situation and are unable to cope, which results in them dropping out of school (Chetty & Chigona, 2008; Modisaotsile, 2012; UNICEF, 2012a).

2.6.5.6 Children with disabilities

In South Africa, children with disabilities are at risk as they are often feared by others, because they appear different. Reports show that in South Africa, children with disabilities are especially vulnerable as they are 3 to 4 times more likely to be abused than able-bodied children. Educators may also have a negative attitude towards children who experience barriers to learning, as they may not be optimistic about their academic achievement. In the classroom context, it is therefore vitally important that learners with disabilities receive the most beneficial support. However, despite South African's progressive policies that focus on equality, safety, security and the right to education, many schools do not have the facilities to accommodate disabled children. Furthermore, the social stigma attached to disabled children often results in them not only being marginalized, but also vulnerable to abuse, exploitation, and neglect (UNICEF, 2012a).

2.7 Conclusion

Fear is common in South African Secondary Schools (Burton, 2013; De Wet, 2003). An unsafe school environment that violates the rights of children and elicits high levels of fear and anxiety was found to jeopardize their whole learning process. As education in South Africa is a priority, it therefore seemed appropriate for the researcher to explore what children are most afraid of in the school context and what they believe could happen, or what anyone could do to make them feel safer.

When applying Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory to children's perceptions of fears and anxieties, the researcher has looked beyond the school context towards how the interrelation of multiple social contexts influence the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A review of various studies have recognized that there are numerous interacting risk factors for children living in South Africa at individual, school, and community levels that result in a compromised school environment and a pervasive climate of fear (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). These studies suggest that "to be a child in South Africa is to walk a fragile path to adulthood" (UNICEF, 2008). Guided by Bronfenbrenner's approach, an important aspect that this study has considered when exploring children's fear across the different domains, is that the child's perception of their own environment is a critical component to understanding how children really feel in their everyday lives.

The experience of fear was emphasised as a dynamic evolving process related to the complex interrelation of the developing child and their environment (Papalia, 2006). The focus of the present study was the adolescent developmental level whereby profound physical, cognitive and psychological changes can be a particular source of vulnerability to fear and anxiety. Findings indicate that, although some childhood fears are universal and developmentally appropriate, a challenge for researchers is to consider that not all children have the same experiences of fear, therefore the context where the child lives is critical (Greene & Hill, 2005). Hobfoll (1998) also emphasised that individual responses to stressors, such as fear and anxiety, should not be seen as separate from the larger social context. Hobfoll's (1998) Conservation of Resources theory provided valuable information about fears in the South African context in terms of the heuristic nature of resources classified according to the proximity of the resource to survival. Conservation of Resources theory thus enables predictions about fear levels to be made depending on how close the individual is to the loss, or threat of loss of resources directly required for survival (Hobfoll, 1998).

The importance of research into normative childhood fears and the use of Fear Survey schedules to assess fear responses that could provide valuable information on adaptive or maladaptive fears in children were explored. Findings consistently indicated that some childhood fears are considered universal, in particular fears that relate to survival. Differences with regard to specific fears were noted depending on the child's developmental level, multiple interacting contexts and the methods used to assess these fears (Burkhardt,

2007). Furthermore, a study which explored the origin of common fears of children living in South Africa, noted that there are also important cultural differences in the content of fears, regardless of the children being in the same context, which cannot be overlooked in future research (Muris et., 2008).

Persistent fear and anxiety have been found to increase the risk for long term physical and psychological distress and interrupt the child's development (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2010). As many studies show childhood exposure to chronic adversity is common in South Africa, it is therefore important to emphasise that these children are significantly at risk of being in a state of persistent fear and anxiety (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Cluver et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2004: Shields et al., 2009). The present study therefore takes into account how the different experiences of exposure to adversity within the South African context may influence both the content and intensity of childhood fears.

Research provides strong evidence that childhood exposure to violence is associated with psychological distress, poor psychosocial adjustment, and high levels of fear (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Cluver et al., 2010; Nansel et al., 2004; Seedat et al., 2004). It is therefore not surprising that due to the high prevalence of violent crime in South Africa, the negative implications of interpersonal violence on childhood development has been well researched (Abraham & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Cluver et al., 2010; Jewkes et al., 2010; Shields et al., 2009). Many of these studies show that children who are exposed to violence, regardless of mode of exposure (direct victimization or vicarious exposure) will result in a wide array of adverse effects. However, a study by Shields et al. (2009) found that the intensity of the negative psychological effects may differ depending on the context the exposure to violence took place in, such as either the school or neighbourhood, thus highlighting the importance of further research to consider the locus of exposure. Recent studies also indicate the clear need to explore the role of multiple-victimization across different domains, referred to as "poly-victimization," whereby children who have been exposed to one type of victimization makes them more vulnerable to other types of victimization (Cluver et al., 2010; Du Plessis et al., 2013; Finkelhor et al., 2007). It has become evident that schools in particular are sites of ongoing violence which has become a serious national concern (Burton, 2008; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; De Wet, 2003; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Various studies do

acknowledge that "school-based violence does not take place in a vacuum but is rather influenced and shaped by contextual factors" (SACE, 2011; Burton 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013).

Despite many studies taking into account the multiple interacting contexts that influence violence in schools, research on childhood exposure to other forms of adversity has largley been ignored. Therefore, the present study takes into account other experiences in the South African context that have a detrimental effect on childhood development and that also violate their basic human rights and produce high levels of fear. Included in the study are the adverse effects of poverty, HIV/AIDS, drug and alchohol abuse, unintentional injuries, and more specifically in the school context, lack of resources and unsafe infrastructure, failure or underachievement at school, teachers attitudes, children with disabilities and teenage pregnancy were also considered.

Previous investigations into childhood adversity in South Africa were conducted mainly utilizing highly structured assessment instruments, for example complex questionnaires and Fear Survey schedules to collect data. Many of these measuring instruments are difficult for children to understand so they are unable to meaningfully participate (Greene and Hill, 2005). While these studies have provided valuable insight into children at risk, they failed to provide a complete understanding of the experiences, feelings and perceptions of children's fear. Surprisingly, the child's perspective has received little attention, as most available research on children's experiences is designed and carried out by adults, with children being regarded merely as objects of research rather than subjects with their own perspective and voice (Greene and Hill, 2005). The voices of the children themselves have been largely ignored, which indicates that not much emphasis has been placed on the child-centred approach. In view of this, the questionnaire used in the current research consisted of open-ended questions, allowing the respondents to communicate their experiences "in their own words without restrictions" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.486). As a result, the neglected perspective of the child was considered and the necessity of giving children a voice was highlighted to gain a better understanding into the fears and anxieties they experience at school. Therefore, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Children's Act (2005), this study not only respected children's right to actively participate and take part in matters that concern their wellbeing, but also their best interests were taken into account (UNICEF, 2013).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1   Introduction

The methodology utilized in the present study will be discussed and justified with regards to the research aims and the theoretical framework, by presenting a detailed description of all the elements of the research study and the procedures followed in the research process (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). An important element that impacts on how the study is undertaken is the research design which is "a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.34). A research design can be described as a "network of steps that a researcher takes to conduct a research project" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.81). These procedural steps will be reviewed in terms of the research questions, sampling, data collection methods, ethical considerations, and data analysis. Measures the researcher took to ensure validity and reliability will also be discussed.

3.2   Objectives of the study

The present study explored children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the school from a child's perspective, in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how children conceptualize their own fears and what their proposed solutions would be. The researcher specifically addressed the questions of what children in the adolescent phase of development are most afraid of or anxious about, what their level of fear is, and what children believe could happen, or what anyone could do to make them feel safer at school.

3.3   Research questions

1.   What are children most afraid of in the school context?

2.   How afraid do children feel at school?

3.   What do children believe could happen, or what anyone can do to make them feel safer at school?

3.4   Research design

The present study explored adolescent children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the school from a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey research design. A self-administered questionnaire was utilized that consisted of open-ended questions.

Ideals that quantitative research strives towards are generalisability of findings and objectivity of measurement (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). With regards to generalisability, a quantitative approach was therefore considered appropriate as the researcher was interested in systematically conceptualizing childhood fears and then quantifying their experiences so that the findings could be generalized to other similar situations within the broader South African context (Devi Prasad, 1994). The researcher made use of a self-administered questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions rather than a highly structured questionnaire with predetermined responses. This enabled the researcher to gain a better understanding of children's fears and anxieties in the context of the school from the perspective of the children themselves, rather than drawing conclusions from statistical procedures that focus only on "children as objects of research rather than subjects" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.1). Terre Blanche et al. (2006) place emphasis on the importance of understanding the individual's experiences within his or her context. Furthermore, as the study had resource constraints as regards time, a cross-sectional survey was chosen as the most appropriate research design as it allowed the researcher to collect information about the research participants' experiences at one point in time within a particular context (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.5   Research location

The adolescent children who participated in the present study were from seven different schools in the North West Province of South Africa. According to the national Census in 2011, the total population of the North West Province is 3,509 953, of which 90.8% are black (the majority are Tswana speaking), 7.2% are white (mainly Afrikaans speaking), 1.6% are coloured and 0.4% are Asian. English is spoken as a second language (Statistics South Africa, 2012).

3.6   Sampling and Sampling method

3.6.1   Research Participants

Research participants were 312 children in the age group range of 13 to 18 years, divided into subgroups of 13-14 years, 15-16 years and 17-18 years and selected mainly from secondary schools in the Northern Province, South Africa. The sample size of 312 was considered large enough to make inferences about the sample population (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). As the researcher was interested in exploring fears and anxieties in adolescent children, the age range of the research participants was appropriate as learners attending secondary school in South Africa from grade 8 to grade 12 (South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996) are usually between the age group of 12 to 18 years of age. However, the researcher considered the fact that, due to the differences in the quality of education in South Africa, chronological age does not necessarily correspond with attainment of grade (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

3.6.2   Sampling

Government schools in South Africa are ranked in terms of their socio-economic status using the Quintile system. There are five Quintiles grouped on the basis of the socio-economic status of the community that surrounds the school, ranging from Quintile 1 schools, the poorest, to Quintile 5 schools (former Model C schools), the wealthiest (Meny-Gibert & Russel, 2010).

The researcher utilized stratified random sampling in terms of the quintile system, as individual schools were drawn randomly from within each distinct strata according to quintile size to get proportional representation in terms of the different socio-economic groups (Krippendorff, 1980). This allowed the researcher to ensure that the sample fairly represented the major subgroups within the overall sampling frame, thereby enhancing generaliseability (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The research participants from the seven schools selected fell under quintiles 1 to 5 from the North West Province.

3.7   Instrument for data collection

The research study was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire that was designed and administered to the research participants, in order to gather information about children's fears and anxieties in the context of the family, school and community (see Appendix 1). A self-administered questionnaire was considered appropriate, as it enabled the researcher to collect information that may be sensitive and to limit socially desirable responses from participants (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). The questionnaire was presented in elementary English to take into account, not only the varying literacy levels of students, but also to consider that English may not be the participant's home language. However, the participants were afforded the opportunity to answer the questions in their mother tongue. The questions were formulated to ensure that they were easy for the respondents to understand with no ambiguities (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

The questionnaire relating to the school context consisted of 2 sections:

The first section consisted of items relating to socio-demographic information of the research participants in terms of age, gender, grade at school, name of school and race, which was then utilized to characterize the sample.

The second section of the questionnaire consisted of two open-ended questions and one scaled question using the 5-point Likert scale format, in order to explore the research participants' fears and anxieties and to address the research questions. The use of open-ended questions allowed the participants to communicate their experiences of fear and anxiety in their own words, without any restrictions and to avoid the limitations of predetermined response categories, so that the validity of the data was not impeded (Krippendorff, 1980; Terre Blanche et al. 2006). Studies suggest that closed questions should be used with caution, as children are more likely to respond with a 'no' in questions requiring a 'yes' or 'no' response if they do not understand the question, therefore, the researcher considered open-ended questions as the most appropriate format (Greene & Hill, 2005). The 5-point scale question was useful for measuring the perceived fear rating of the participants' responses (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

- The first open-ended question was: "What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you at school in the past year?"

- The 5- point scaled question was: "How scared or upset did it make you feel?" ranging from 'not at all', 'a little', 'quite a lot', 'very', to 'extremely scared'.

- The second open-ended question was: "What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do to make you feel safer at school?"

3.8   Preliminary study

A preliminary study was conducted in order to identify any possible threats to the validity and reliability of the research. The questionnaire was pilot tested in March 2013 on a sample of 162 Wentworth adolescent school children (who were not included in the final research study) to determine whether there were any problems in the research design so that it could be refined accordingly. The pilot study sample was chosen because their demographics were similar to the participants in the actual study. The participants in the pilot study were asked to place their completed questionnaires in an anonymous box in order to encourage honesty in answers and enhance validity. Although the responses from the pilot study participants showed that the questionnaire was clear and unambiguous, the demographic section of the questionnaire was adjusted to include race group. The refined questionnaire was then distributed to the final sample of research participants from the seven selected schools in the North West Province.

Data collected from the pilot study proved useful as it gave the researcher an indication of possible responses which helped the researcher to conceptualize coding categories before data analysis of the final study

3.9   Development of content categories

The present study made use of systematic Content Analysis to guide the conceptualization of the content categories of adolescent fear experiences (Devi Prasad, 1994). In the development phase, data were collected from the pilot study questionnaires, read through and then organized into categories which "define units by their membership in a class or category by their having something in common" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.105). In the case where

responses were in a different language, translation was done by a person whose home language was Tswana.

3.9.1 Conceptualizing the categorisation of adolescent fears

Categorical distinctions of specific content from the data collected "may result from a theory that has been adopted for analysis" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.105). Thus, in a systematic attempt to conceptualize adolescent fears in a South African context, the present study utilized the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which states that individuals may experience stress (anxiety or fear) "in circumstances that represent a threat of loss or actual loss of the resources required to sustain the individual" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.55). As stated by Hobfoll (1998), these resources are classified in terms of the proximity of the resource to survival including:

- **Primary Resources** which relate directly to survival and include adequate food, clothing and shelter as well as resources that ensure safety

- **Secondary Resources** which contribute indirectly to primary resources and include social support, attachment and financial security

- **Tertiary Resources** which include competence, social status and social standing and allow greater access to secondary resources

As the questionnaire in the present study also measured the perceived levels of fear responses of the research participants, "a classification made on the basis of proximity to survival might be helpful because it is hierarchical and may indicate how impactful a loss or gain would be at different levels of the hierarchy" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.60).

3.9.2 Coding the pilot data

Data collected from the preliminary exploration of children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the pilot study was coded using 2 independent coders. The content analysis revealed that the various fears described can be effectively categorized in terms of loss or threatened loss of either primary, secondary or tertiary resources as classified by the

Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1998).   Under each of these categories of resources a number of sub-categories were constructed (Table 2).

Table 2: Categorization of Adolescent Fears According to Experiences

Category	Sub-Category	Experience
Primary Resources	Interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity	Direct, vicarious or ambient exposure to interpersonal violence
	Non-interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity	Direct or vicarious exposure to non-interpersonal forms of trauma
	Threats to material resources	Theft or damage to material possessions
	Threats to safety and physical well-being	Perceived dangers (natural, imaginary or supernatural) as well as illness, pain and injury
Secondary Resources	Threats to financial resources	Poverty and unemployment
	Threats to interpersonal resources	Death, loss and separation and/or threats to the health of significant others
	Interpersonal problems	Family disputes, peer relationship problems and problems with authority figures
Tertiary Resources	Threat to the individuals sense of competence	Failure or under achievement
	Threats to the individuals social standing	Criticism, blame and punishment as well as challenges to the individuals sense of respect, dignity and social standing

The strength of Content Analysis is that, to be productive, categories should be formulated clearly, should be mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Krippendorff, 1980). With reference to the data collected from the pilot study, the above categories proved to be both exhaustive (as the data were able to represent all codes without exception) and mutually exclusive, as all the participants fear responses fitted into one or another distinct category without ambiguity (Krippendorff, 1980).

The researcher contacted 20 of the participants from the pilot study to test the suitability of the final category system and to ensure that the content would be adequately characterized before proceeding with the actual coding of data from the final study. Testing the initial coding on the pilot study sample was considered a crucial step before content analysis of the final study sample, as it helped to reveal any inconsistencies and inadequacies in the construction of the categories (Devi Prasad, 1994).

3.9.3   Finalizing the codes and preparing a coding schedule

A coding schedule was prepared and specific content (units of analysis) was finalized by assigning each unit to a particular code that represents a certain category, as shown in Table 3 (Krippendorff, 1980).

Data relating to question 9 on the questionnaire "What is the scariest or upsetting thing that has happened to you at school in the past year" was coded according to 19 specific fear experiences.

Not all of the participants' responses were readily codeable, hence the researcher added miscellaneous or residual categories. These were 'T' for translation problems, '99' for ambiguous responses and '0' for no-response.

As the current study utilized Content Analysis, inter-coder reliability was a critical component (Krippendorff, 1980). Therefore, the researcher made use of two independent raters to code the data, with their being a high degree of inter-rater reliability (Kappa = .967). In instances of a disagreement, the matter was discussed by the two raters, until agreement was reached.

Table 3: Coding Schedule of Specific Fear Experiences

Code	Resource	Description
	Primary Resources	
1	Interpersonal trauma (direct exposure)	Being a victim of violence or threat of violence
2	Interpersonal trauma (vicarious exposure)	Witnessing or being aware of a specific incident of violence
3	Interpersonal trauma (ambient exposure)	Awareness of violence (that does not involve a specific incident)
4	Non-interpersonal trauma	Non-interpersonal threats to the individual's survival
5	Natural dangers	Fear of animals, lightening, loud noises, etc
6	Imaginary/supernatural dangers	Fear of monsters, ghosts, spirit possession etc
7	Illness, pain and injury	Illness, painful or potentially painful experiences and accidents (including accidents that almost happened) to the participant
8	Theft	Taking of property that does not involve victim contact
9	Damage to material resources	Damage to property or home
	Secondary Resources	
10	Loss of financial resources	Poverty and unemployment
11	Death of significant others	Death of a family member or a known person
12	Loss and separation	Divorce of parents, separation from a significant other
13	The health of others	Illness or medical problems involving other
14	Family disputes	Fighting/disputes involving family members
15	Peer relationships	Problems involving the participants peers
16	Problems with authority figures	Interpersonal problems with teachers and authority figures
	Tertiary Resources	
17	Achievement	Failure and underperformance
18	Censure	Criticism, blame or punishment
19	Loss of social standing	Issue of respect and dignity

Data relating to the rating scaled question number 10 on the questionnaire "How scared or upset did it make you feel" was coded according ranking of level of fear response options including:

'1' Not at all; '2' A little; '3' Quite a lot; '4' Very; '5' Extremely (see Appendix 1).

Table 4 shows a separate coding category that was developed according to participants' proposed solutions for data relating to question 11 on the questionnaire "what do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do to make you feel safer at school?" These included agents that could assist and specific proposals. The researcher added categories including 'T' for translation problems, '99' for un-codeable and '0' for no-response.

3.10   Data collection procedures

Ethical clearance for the current study was obtained from the Humanities and Social Science research Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2013. Permission was obtained from the Department of Education and the relevant provincial department to conduct research in secondary schools in the North West province, South Africa. A range of schools were selected by utilizing the quintile system which ranks South African schools according to their socio-economic status.

The present study took place in April 2013 in seven schools from the North West Province, South Africa. Access was gained by the school principles (gatekeepers) of the participating schools. The research participants were contacted and selected based on their willingness to participate. An information sheet about the study was provided (see Appendix 2) and written informed assent was obtained from research participants with consent from their parents or guardians (see Appendix 3). The study was conducted on the participating schools' premises. Arrangements were made for the questionnaires to be administered by school counsellors or teachers in the classrooms at school as part of Life Orientation Skills. As the questionnaire was presented in English, the teacher or counsellor provided translation if it was considered necessary. Instructions were given to the teachers who administered the questionnaires (see Appendix 4). The research participants were made aware of the objectives of the study, assured of anonymity and confidentiality and that they were free to discontinue at any stage without prejudice from the researcher. In particular it was explained that the participants' names would not be used in the study (Terre Blanche et al. 2006).

Table 4: Agents and Specific Proposals: Coding Categories

Code	Description
0	Nothing
99	No sense
T	Translate

AGENTS:1 (person / agent / body)

Code	Description
1a	Community
1b	Police
1c	Family
1d	Government (ie social workers, counselors)
1e	Peer Support
1f	School Authority
1g	Religion
1h	Self
1i	Unspecified Other

SPECIFIC PROPOSALS: 2 (specific action required)

Code	Description
2a	Safety and security
2b	Health
2c	Policy (rules)
2d	Other(esp. in response to specific problems

The anonymous nature of the questionnaire allowed the participants to answer the open-ended questions that may be considered sensitive in an open and honest manner without fear of reprisal. In addition, an anonymous box was used for participants' questionnaires in order to further encourage honesty in answers and to decrease the risk of providing socially acceptable answers, thereby ensuring that validity was not threatened (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Ethical considerations were applied throughout the research process. Information was provided as to where the researcher can be contacted and also indicated that the data collected in the study would be useful in providing a better understanding of children's fear experiences in the school context. The questionnaire took research participants between 5 to 10 minutes to complete. Free counselling support was offered (from the school Life Orientation teachers) to all research participants. The completed questionnaires were collected and the data couriered in a sealed document to the researcher for analysis.

3.11   Data analysis

Data analysis of the present study was based on Contemporary Content Analysis, defined by Krippendorff (1980) as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context". As Contemporary Content Analysis is exploratory in process and an unobtrusive research technique used in the social sciences, it was considered appropriate for the study of a sensitive research topic such as exploring children's fears and anxieties (Krippendorff, 1980). In Content Analysis the "data results from the procedures the researcher has chosen to answer specific question concerning phenomenon" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.81). The complexity of the data material selected was then reduced by transforming it so that it could be statistically analysed in order to establish what South African adolescent children are most afraid of.

Studies using Content Analysis involve the following steps that the researcher needs to proceed from texts (raw data) to results:

1. Formulating a research question or objectives
2. Develop a sample plan
3. Developing content categories
4. Finalizing units of analysis
5. Preparing a coding schedule and checking inter coder reliabilities
6. Data collection and analysis (Devi Prasad, 1994).

The above steps had already been completed before the final stage of step 6 which is the statistical analysis of the data collected from the final study.

3.11.1 Statistical analysis of the data

Statistical analysis of the coded data and ranking of levels of fear was carried out utilizing the software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 17.0.1). Descriptive statistics were used to describe the most common fears, levels of fear and possible solutions. Correlations were explored and demographic characteristics tested for differences with regard to age and gender.

3.12 Measures taken to ensure validity and reliability

Various steps were undertaken by the researcher during the research process to establish validity and reliability which are key concepts in quantitative studies.

3.12.1 Validity

"Validity is that quality of research results that leads us to accept them as true, as speaking about the real world of people, phenomena, events, experiences, and actions" (Krippendorff, 1980, p.313). To address threats to validity a number of factors were considered.

From a quantitative perspective, effective sampling increases validity as it "enables us to make claims, in terms of statistical probabilities, about a population without having studied all the constituent elements that make up the population" (Terre Blanche et al. 2006, p.134). The use of stratified random sampling in the present study allowed the researcher to accurately represent all the major subgroups of the overall population to be analysed thereby providing evidence of sampling validity (Krippendorff, 1980).

In order to yield valid data by ensuring that the measuring instrument 'measures what it is supposed to measure' the current research made use of a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions which allowed the participants to respond in their own way (Krippendorff, 1980; Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The anonymous approach of the questionnaire allowed the participants to answer the open-ended questions that may be considered sensitive in an honest

manner, without fear of reprisal. Furthermore, the anonymous box used for participants' completed questionnaires also encouraged honesty in answers and decreased the risk of participants giving socially desirable answers thereby enhancing validity (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The questionnaire was pre-tested on a pilot study sample to determine suitability. Possible threats to validity were identified and the necessary refinements were made before the questionnaire was administered to the final study sample. To further enhance validity, the participants in the pilot study were requested to make recommendations on how to improve data collection, and to assist in the development and suitability of the coding categories, thus ensuring the content was adequately described before analysis.

3.12.2   Reliability

The present study has established reliability by giving a clear explanation of the research process, with comprehensive records of data collection and analysis to enable future researchers to repeat the work (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

In order to ensure the measuring instrument (questionnaire) was reliable by producing similar results in different circumstances the researcher pre-tested the questionnaire on a pilot study sample which was representative of the final study sample (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The current study made use of at least two independent coders when the data was coded. This ensured a high degree of inter-rater reliability (Kappa = .967).

3.13   Chapter summary

In chapter 3, a detailed description of the methodology was provided, including: the objectives of the research; research questions; research design; location of the study; sampling and sampling methods; instrument for data collection; preliminary study; the development of content categories, including a systematic attempt to conceptualize adolescent fears in a South African context guided by the Conservation of Resources theoretical framework; coding of the pilot study data; preparing a coding schedule; data collection procedures and data analysis. The measures the researcher took to ensure reliability and validity were also discussed. The following chapter will discuss the main findings that emerged from the analysis of the data in the present study.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

4.1   Introduction

The main findings of the present study that emerged from the analysis of the data will be discussed and presented in tables. The chief objective of the study was to explore South African adolescent children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the school. More specifically, the researcher was interested in what adolescents are most afraid of, what their level of fear is, and what they believe could happen or what anyone could do to make them feel safer at school. Therefore, the findings will be discussed in terms of frequency and rating of fear responses, how they relate to the demographic variables, and what were the proposed solutions.

4.2   Demographic characteristics of participant's responses

Of the 312 questionnaires collected from participants in the study, 294 usable responses (94.2%) were submitted for the final study. Table 5 shows the comparison of the demographic characteristics of participants who submitted usable and non-usable responses. The results indicated that usable responses did not differ significantly from the non-usable responses in terms of age, gender or grade, thus suggesting the unlikelihood of systematic bias (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

4.3   Demographic characteristics of the school sample

Table 6 shows demographic information of the research participants using the variables age, gender, race, and grade. The ages of the research participants ranged between 13 and 18 years, with a mean age of 14.78. The sample group consisted of 125 (42.5%) male and 169 (57.5%) female research participants which indicated that both gender were well represented. The ethnicity of the participants of the study sample were predominantly black South African adolescents (90.1%) and were mainly from grade 7 (54.8%).

Table 5: Comparison of Demographic Characteristics of Participants who Submitted Usable and Non-usable Responses

Demographic variables	Responses		Statistic	*P =*
	Usable	**Non-usable**		
Gender			$\chi^2(1) = 1.11$	.293
Male *(n)*	125	10		
Female *(n)*	169	8		
Grade			$\chi^2(1) = 0.23$	.629
Grades 7-9 *(n)*	249	16		
Grades 10-12 *(n)*	45	2		
Age				
Mean Age	14.78	14.83	$t(310) = -0.16$	.877

Table 6: Demographic Characteristics of the School Sample

Demographic Variables		Study sample (n=294)	
Age (years)	Mean	14.78	
	SD	1.538	
	Range	13 - 18	
		N	*%*
Gender			
	Male	125	42.5%
	Female	169	57.5%
Race			
	Black	265	90.1%
	White	5	1.7%
	Coloured	23	7.8%
	Indian	1	0.4%
Grade			
	7	161	54.8%
	9	88	29.9%
	10	30	10.2%
	11	15	5.1%

4.4 Proportional representation of the sample based on quintiles

The seven schools from the North West province that took part in the present study were selected from quintiles 1 to 5, grouped on the basis of their socio-economic status of the community surrounding the school, ranging from Quintile 1 schools, the poorest, to Quintile 5 schools, the wealthiest (Meny-Gibert & Russel, 2010). Table 7 shows proportional representation of the socio-economic groups in terms of the quintiles. Of the 312 research participants, the majority (32%) were from quintile 1, which is the poorest according to socio-economic status.

Table 7: Seven Schools in the Study (quintiles 1-5): 312 Respondents

Quintile	Number of participants		Percentage of schools in the NW Province by quintiles
	n	$(\%)$	$(\%)$
1	100	(32.0)	36.7
2	56	(17.9)	18.0
3	47	(15.1)	13.7
4	55	(17.7)	17.6
5	54	(17.3)	14.0

4.5 Frequency and rating of fear by resource domains

The findings in table 8 show that fear manifestations, which related to the primary resource category (those resources directly associated with survival including those that ensure safety), were not only experienced the most frequently, but were also rated higher, which indicate that they were considered the scariest. Fears related to secondary resources (which are the "tools" that increase the chance of acquiring primary resources such as interpersonal and financial resources) were rated the next scariest and those fears related to emerging threats of tertiary resources (more distal resources such as competence and social standing), were rated the least scary (Hobfoll, 1998).

The findings of the frequency and rating of fear by resource domains did not vary as a function of either age or gender.

Table 8: Frequency and rating of fear by resource domains

Resource Category	Frequency	Rating
	n (rank)	*M* (rank)
Primary Resources	104	3.36 (1)
Secondary Resources	70	3.01 (2)
Tertiary Resources	47	2.98 (3)

4.6 Frequency and rating of fear content domains

Table 9 shows the fear content domains and their sub-categories examined in terms of what fears were experienced the most frequently, how these fears were rated according to which were considered the scariest and how they were related to the age and gender variables.

The most common fears in the school context, as reported by the participants, were interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity (27.6%); followed by interpersonal problems (20.7%) and threats to the individual's sense of competence (12.2%). These findings indicate that fears in the sub-category under the primary resource category, which relate directly to survival including resources that ensure safety, are also the most common (Hobfoll, 1998).

The highest rating in terms of fear was found to be in terms of experiences related to threat of death, loss and separation from significant others (secondary resource category) (3.50), followed by interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity (primary resource category) (3.42); and threats to the individual's social standing, respect, dignity (tertiary resource category) (3.18).

The findings show that gender differences were apparent in fears related to interpersonal disputes as the mean ratings for interpersonal disputes provided by females ($M = 3.40$) was significantly higher than the mean rating provided by males ($M = 2.52$) ($t[25] = 2.29$, $p = .024$). This indicates that females are more likely to experience high levels of fear as a result of interpersonal disputes.

With regards the age of respondents, no significant age differences were found in the rating of the levels of fears according to content domains.

Table 9: Frequency and rating of fear content domains

Nature of resource/ Content area	Frequency	Rating
	n (rank)	*M* (rank)
Primary Resources		
Survival/physical integrity	81 (1)	3.42 (2)
Safety/physical well-being	10 (6)	3.10 (5)
Material resources	13 (4)	3.15 (4)
Secondary Resources		
Financial insecurity	0 (9)	(9)
Death/Separation	4 (8)	3.50 (1)
Health (others)	5 (7)	2.06 (8)
Interpersonal disputes/issues	61 (2)	3.05 (6)
Tertiary Resources		
Underperformance/punishment	36 (3)	2.92 (7)
Respect/dignity/social standing	11 (5)	3.18 (3)
Correlation between frequency and rating of fear manifestations	$r(8) = .488, p = .267$ (not significant)	

4.7   Frequency and rating of specific fear manifestations

Table 10 shows a more comprehensive analysis of the data according to the 19 specific fear manifestations, and indicates that the most common fears experienced at school as reported by respondents were problems with peer relationships (17.7%); interpersonal trauma direct exposure (13.6%); and achievement including failure and underachievement at school (7.5%). The specific fears that rated the highest in terms of levels of fear were found to be non-interpersonal threats to the individual's survival (5.00), followed by death of significant others, either a family member or known persons (3.67) and awareness of violence (3.58).

Table 10: Frequency and rating of specific fear content domains

Name of Resource	Description	Frequency *n* (%)	Rating *M* (rank)
Primary Resources			
Interpersonal trauma (direct exposure)	Being a victim of violence or threat of violence	40 (13.6%)	3.25
Interpersonal trauma (vicarious exposure)	Witnessing or being aware of a specific incident of violence	21 (7.1%)	3.57
Interpersonal trauma (ambient exposure)	Awareness of violence (that does not involve a specific incident)	19 (6.5%)	3.58
Non-interpersonal trauma	Non-interpersonal threats to the individual's survival	1 (0.3%)	5.00
Natural dangers	Fear of animals, lightening, loud noises, etc	4 (1.4%)	3.25
Imaginary/supernatural dangers	Fear of monsters, ghosts, spirit possession etc	3 (1.02%)	2.67
Illness, pain and injury	Illness, painful or potentially painful experiences and accidents (including accidents that almost happened) to the participant	3 (1.02%)	3.33
Theft	Taking of property that does not involve victim contact	13 (4.4%)	3.15
Damage to material resources	Damage to property or home	0	0
Secondary Resources			
Loss of financial resources	Poverty and unemployment	0	0
Death of significant others	Death of a family member or a known person	3 (1.02%)	3.67
Loss and separation	Divorce of parents, separation from a significant other	1 (0.3%)	3.00
The health of others	Illness or medical problems involving other	5 (1.7%)	2.60
Family disputes	Fighting/disputes involving family members	0	0
Peer relationships	Problems involving the participants peers	52 (17.7%)	3.08
Problems with authority figures	Interpersonal problems with teachers and authority figures	9 (3.1%)	2.89
Tertiary Resources			
Achievement	Failure and underperformance	22 (7.5%)	2.95
Censure	Criticism, blame or punishment	14 (4.8%)	2.84
Loss of social standing	Issue of respect and dignity	11 (3.7%)	3.18

4.8   Proposed solutions

Children's responses to the open-ended question "What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do to make you feel safer at school?" indicated that the majority proposed that a school authority figures (22.11%) followed by increased safety and security measures (13.99%) formed part of the solutions (see table 11).

The researcher made use of two independent raters to code the data from the questions related to proposed solutions, including the 7 questionnaires requiring translation and got 100% agreement.

Table 11: Frequency of Proposed Solutions

Proposed solution	Frequency *n* (%)
Nothing	41 (13.9%)
No sense	47 (15.9%)
Translation	7 (2.4%)
AGENTS: 1 (person / agent / body)	
Community	0
Police	27 (9.2%)
Family	9 (3.1%)
Government (eg social workers)	2 (0.7%)
Peer Support	19 (6.5%)
School Authority	65 (22.1%)
Religion	0
Self	9 (3.1%)
Unspecified Other	38 (12.9%)
SPECIFIC PROPOSALS: 2 (specific action required)	
Safety and security	41(13.9%)
Health	8 (2.7%)
Policy (rules)	1 (0.3%)
Other (esp. in response to specific problems)	14 (4.8%)

4.9   Qualitative analysis

The researcher conducted a qualitative analysis on the open-ended question 'what is the scariest or most upsetting thing that happened to you at school in the past year' and a number of responses related to the 19 specific fear manifestations were revealed. The principle responses will be presented below:

4.9.1   Problems with peer relationships

The most common specific fear as reported by participants in the school context was related to problems with peer relationships (17.7%) and included the following responses:

P20:   *'Other school children were bullying me'*

P50:   *'The other pupils were calling me granny and I was afraid to tell my teachers'*

P56:   *'Losing my best friend because of listening to other people'*

P61:   *'When I fight. I didn't want to fight but that girl pushed me to fight'*

P62:   *'Last year I was an angry person. I was always fighting at school. This scared me'*

P72:   *'I am scared because there is a boy who fights with other learners in the class'*

P90:   *'I was upset when my friends said I was thin and my pants don't fit on me'*

P99:   *'When a guy from the school bullied me'*

P134:   *'I have been bullied at my school friends. They smoke and they want me to smoke'*

4.9.2   Interpersonal trauma direct exposure

With respect to interpersonal trauma (that related to the primary resource sub-category 'interpersonal threats to survival') there were a number of responses which rated high in levels of fear. Children experienced high levels of fear in schools related to gang activity and violence or threat of violence from a school teacher as indicated by the following responses:

4.9.2.1 Fears related to gang activity

Specific fears related to gang activity which has infiltrated schools accounted for 33 (11.2%) responses including the following responses:

P30: *'A gang called the BTK threatened to kill us and burn our school down, holding scary weapons'*

P38: *'When the gang called BTK arrived at school and children started running away'*

P39: *'The BTK gangsters came to our school last year and tried to kill all the learners'*

P43: *'When the gangs BTK started beating us. They disturbed our school by making fires'*

P53: *'The Born To Kill (BTK) gangs attacked us during school hours'*

P54: *'The scariest thing is when the gang called the BTKs were threatening us and they end up killing people and we were not going to school'*

P55: *'The time when the BTKs were disrupting schools and killing people'*

P80: *'The scariest thing was when the BTK group threatened to kill all the school children'*

P94: *'There was a group called the BTKs. One day they said they will come to our school and kill us'*

P172: *'Gangsters tried to burn our school and beat the other learners like they don't want us to learn'*

P177: *'It is when we heard that the BTKs were coming to schools to kill or burn schools'*

P180: *'When the BTK gangsters came to our school and attacked one of our class and killed him in front of us'*

P292: *'When a gang called the BTK threatened to kill everyone wearing uniforms'*

4.9.2.2 Fears related to violence or threat of violence from a school teacher

Results indicate that teachers are often perpetrators of violence as specific fears relating to violence or threat of violence from a school teacher accounted for 22 (6.8%) responses including:

P28: *'When my teacher beats me without a reason'*

P31: *'The scary thing is that every day you would be beaten by the teacher at our school'*

P32: *'Children from last year say the teacher loves to use a stick if you fail maths'*

P37: *'I was scared when the teacher beat me with a stick'*

P75: *'My teacher beat me with a stick. I was so upset'*

P163: *'I didn't do my assignment. My class teacher beat me'*

P170: *'When I didn't write my homework my class teacher beat me like I killed her child'*

P238: *'There is a teacher who likes to beat us with his hands'*

P256: *'The teacher always beats us for simple things'*

P263: *'My teacher beat me with a pipe'*

4.9.3   Achievement including failure and underachievement at school

Fears relating to achievement, including failure and underachievement at school, accounted for 7.5% of responses from participants including:

P9:   *'I am slow in English'*

P33: *'I always fail maths and some passed. I get upset and scared because I'm going to fail'*

P49: *'I failed mathematics test this year that makes me feel scared'*

P78: *'I was scared when the report came out. I think I failed but I passed'*

P92: *'I was scared when I failed grade 7 last year'*

P93: *'I was scared when I didn't do my homework and I didn't understand the questions at all'*

P121: *'When it comes to getting our reports for term 4'*

P168*: 'I failed term 1'*

P297: *'When I failed grade 9 again that makes me very upset'*

4.9.4   Proposed Solutions

Research participants' responses to the open-ended question "What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do to make you feel safer at school?" included the following proposed solutions to make them feel safer at school:

4.9.4.1 School authority as a proposed solution

Of the participant's responses, 65 (22.11%) indicated that school authority figures were considered part of the solution. Responses included:

P16: *'To tell the teacher or the principal'*

P20: *'The teacher must tell them to stop'*

P28: *'The principal must talk to the teacher to stop doing it again'*

P62: *'When I have a problem I will talk to someone I trust like a teacher'*

P81: *'The teachers protect us and I will feel safe and I am sure that every person will feel safe'*

P99: *'The teachers should take action when someone bullies them'*

P128: *'I suggest the principal takes action and dismisses him'*

P293: *'The teachers must do a code of conduct search'*

4.9.4.2 Safety and security measures as a proposed solution

Of the responses from research participant's 41 (13.99%) revealed that they considered safety and security measures formed part of the solution to being less afraid at school including:

P8: *'Put more safety and security'*

P46: *'I will feel safer when teachers put up security in our school'*

P53: *'Patrols during school hours and security being heightened'*

P82: *'To make me feel safe at school is to put security alarm and cameras in the whole school'*

P112: *'At school we want security to check boys and girls coming with things that are not good'*

P163: *'School security should protect us'*

P171: *'At school they should organize security to make us feel safe at school'*

P188: *'They need security guards at school gates'*

P191: *'They can put security cameras in the schools'*

P195: *'They can put security guards at the gates every day'*

P263: *'Put cameras in the classroom'*

P282: *'Put cameras in each and every classroom so that when teachers beat us they will be caught'*

4.9.4.3   The role of the police as a proposed solution

Responses indicated that 27 (9.18%) of the research participants considered that the police formed part of the solution to make them feel safer at school including:

P38: *'Police have to arrest those people so that they stop killing school children and disturbing schools'*

P42: *'The police should arrest those gangs for the rest of their lives because they make us scared when we go to school'*

P43: *'If they can call the police and then explain they must protect us'*

P45: *'I believe the police should arrest them (BTK)'*

P53: *'The police should patrol at school'*

P76: *'I want the police to deal with them'*

P94: *'The police must beat them and lock them in the prison for ever'*

P180: *'The police should come around to protect us in our school yards'*

P219: *'Police must always look out for school kids and always look after them because they get peer pressure from these gangsters by forcing them'*

4.10   Chapter summary

Chapter 4 discussed the findings of the present study including the frequency and rating of fear responses, their relation to the demographic variables and the proposed solutions. The main finding indicated that fear manifestations which related to the primary resource category (those resources directly associated with survival including those that ensure safety) were not only experienced the most frequently, but were also rated higher in terms of levels of fear.

Chapter 5 will focus on the discussion, limitations and implications of the present study.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

5.1   Introduction

The aim of the present study was to provide a systematic explanation of how South African adolescent children conceptualize and understand their own fears and anxieties in the school context. Therefore, the researcher has made an attempt to link the observed trends found in the present study to existing literature on the topic. Included will be how Conservation of Resources theory provides useful insight into the conceptualisation of children's fears, the importance of the child-centred approach, and how the Ecological Systems theory helps us to conceptualize the developing child's perception of fear in a way that provides a better understanding of adolescent childhood fears that is relevant to the contemporary South African context. The limitations and implications of the present study will also be discussed.

5.2   The Conservation of Resources Theory

In a systematic attempt to conceptualize children's fears in the South African context, the present study utilized Conservation of Resources theory, which states that fear responses occur in individuals when stress is experienced as a result of a threat of loss or actual loss of resources that are necessary to sustain the individual (Hobfoll, 1998). When applying Conservation of Resources theory to the present study, the researcher expected the findings to show that primary fears were more common and scary because Conservation of Resources theory predicts that the closer the individual is to the loss or threat of loss of resources directly required for survival, the higher the level of fear (Hobfoll, 1998). Therefore, the frequency and rating of fears found in the present study will be discussed according to the classification of the particular fear resource domains in terms of their proximity to survival, including: primary resources, secondary resources and tertiary resources, their sub-categories and specific fear manifestations.

5.2.1   Primary resource domain

The findings of the present study show that fear manifestations associated with the primary resource domain, which relate directly to survival (including adequate food, clothing and shelter as well as resources that ensure safety), were not only experienced the most frequently, but were also rated the highest in terms of level of fear. These results are supported by the majority of previous studies on normative childhood fears, which predominantly focused on the 10 most common fears and found they were not only consistently associated with survival, but also produced the highest level of fear (Burkhardt, 2007; Guillemette, 2012; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983). Previous studies also suggested that the dominant fears which are directly associated to survival are universal and occur in children worldwide, regardless of developmental level or environmental influences (Burkhardt, 2007; Guillemette, 2012; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983). The observed trends of the present study are thus consistent with the Conservation of Resources theory which suggests that survival is the primary concern of all people and that the closer the individual is to the threat to survival, the higher the level of fear they will experience (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.2   Secondary resource domain

In the present study, the fears related to secondary resources, which contribute indirectly to primary resources (including social support, attachment and financial security), were found to rate the next highest in terms of frequency and levels of fear. As secondary resources are an indirect route to primary resources, the findings of the present study are consistent with the predictions of Conservation of Resources theory, which classifies resources in terms of the proximity of the resource to survival and predict that the closer the person is to the threat of survival, the more likely they will be afraid (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.3   Tertiary resource domain

The findings in the present study showed that fears related to emerging threats to tertiary resources (including competence, social status and social standing which allow greater access to secondary resources), had the lowest fear rating. These findings are consistent with

Conservation of Resources theory as fears related to the tertiary resource domain are considered the more distal resources in terms of threats to survival, which would therefore be expected to have the lowest rating in terms of fear intensity (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.4 Most frequent fear in terms of content domain: Threats to survival or physical integrity

It was evident from the present study that the majority of fears reported in the school context according to content domain, related to interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity (a sub-category of the primary resource domain). Furthermore, these findings suggest that fears associated with the primary resource category which relate directly to survival threats are not only the most common, but indicate they have the most impact in terms of producing high levels of fear in the school context.

These findings are in line with findings from available literature that focuses on the prevalence of interpersonal violence at school as one of the greatest perceived risks to South African children, and what they fear most (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Findings from the present study are also largely consistent with previous studies into normative childhood fears that made use of fear survey schedules, which predominantly focused on investigating the most 10 common fears, indicating they were mainly associated with danger and death (Burkhardt, 2007; Guillemette, 2012; Gullone & King, 1992; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983). Findings from previous literature suggests that, although certain specific types of fears may be related to context, others, particularly those related to danger and death, are considered to be universal and evoke similar high fear ratings responses in children worldwide (Burkhardt, 2007; Papalia, 2006).

These observed trends are in accordance with the conceptualization of fears in terms of the Conservation of Resources theory, which predicts that the closer the individual is to the loss or threat of loss of resources directly required for survival and physical integrity, the higher the level of fear (Hobfoll, 1998). Major life stressors, for example interpersonal violence, would have a significant impact on the attainment and protection of these resources, and the individual's emotional response would be increased levels of anxiety and fear. This has significant implications for research, particularly in relation to the high prevalence of

interpersonal violence (classified under the primary resource domain) in South Africa that has been found to produce high levels of fear in children (Gopal & Collings, 2013; Hobfoll, 1998). Conservation of Resources theory helps to provide an explanation as to why threats to life and death and dangers are consistently in the top 10 most common fears regardless of context, "because of the common basis of human survival, most of these resources are valued across cultures" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.56).

5.2.5 Most highly rated fear in terms of content domain: Threats of death, loss and separation from significant others

The highest rating in terms of fear in the present study was found to be specific experiences related to threat of death, loss and separation from significant others (a sub-category of the secondary resource domain). These findings are consistent with literature on normative childhood fears, which indicate that items such as 'someone in the family dying' and 'someone in the family getting a serious illness,' rate highly in terms of levels of fear intensity (Encyclopaedia of Children's Fears, 2013; Muris & Ollendick, 2002). Hobfoll (1998) explains that because children across cultures are strongly embedded in social relationships, they are dependent on these relationships for the provision of primary resources. As a result, threat of death, loss and separation from significant others, contributes indirectly to threats to primary resources. Conservation of Resources predicts that any resource loss at this level may have a greater stress impact because the individual is closer to the threat of survival (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.6 Most frequent fear in terms of specific fear manifestations: Problems with peer relationships

The present study found that the most common fear experienced at school was problems with peer relationships. Previous literature shows that the relationship with peers, particularly during adolescence, has a strong influence on the developing child as acceptance from the peer group and the desire to 'fit in' is important (Burger, Gouws & Kruger, 2000; Papalia, 2006). On the other hand, "rejection, negative group expectations, snobbery, coercive pressure to conform and jealousy often cause uncertain doubt and acute loneliness" (Burger et al., 2000, p.5). The desire to 'fit in' may influence dysfunctional behaviour and conflict in relationships with peers, which can lead to psychological distress (Papalia, 2006).

Furthermore, the prevalence of violence in South African society has been found to increase the chance that children will be exposed to violent peers, which could possibly result in problems with peers (SACE, 2011; Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005). The findings of the present study are thus consistent with the view that problems with peer relationships are a considerable source of stress and may be associated with high levels of fear at school. According to the Conservation of Resources theory, problems with peer relationships would be classified under secondary resources, which are an indirect route to primary resources, as "individuals must rely on social attachment for well-being, self-esteem, and survival" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.55). In terms of understanding adolescent fears related to problems with peers, the Conservation of Resources theory offers a framework that predicts that fear occurs when stress is experienced as a result of a threat of loss, or actual loss of the resources that include social support and attachment (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.7   Most highly rated fear in terms of specific fear manifestations: non-interpersonal threats to the individual's survival

Specific fears that rated highest in terms of levels of fear, were found to be related to non-interpersonal threats to the individual's survival (primary resource category), followed by death of significant others, either a family member or known persons (secondary resource category) and exposure to ambient violence (primary resource category). However, due to the small sample size, caution must be taken when observing trends related to the most highly rated fear in terms of specific fear manifestations, as there was only one response in the non-interpersonal threats to survival category. Therefore, interpretation of the results relating to this particular category may not be meaningful.

5.2.8   Fears related to gang activities

Specific fears related to gang activity were found to account for high levels of fear at school in the present study. These findings are consistent with available literature, which suggests that gang related activity has infiltrated South African schools and has contributed to school violence, which results in many children being afraid of going to school (Burton, 2007; Boqwana, 2009; Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011; Shields et al., 2009). The findings of the present study also substantiate the evidence that interpersonal violence in South Africa is common, which results in particularly high levels of fear in schools (Abrahams & Jewkes

2005; Burton, 2007; Shields et al., 2009). Conservation of Resources theory can be applied to make predictions that gang related activity and related violence, classified under the primary resource domain directly associated with survival, will elicit high levels of fear (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.9   Fears related to violence or threat of violence from a school teacher

Violence or threat of violence from a school teacher was found to be related to specific fears within the school context. Despite the fact that corporal punishment was abolished in South African schools since 1996, the findings of the present study support results of earlier studies, which indicate that corporal punishment is still widely used as a common disciplinary measure in schools, and that teachers are often the perpetrators of violence (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Seedat et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2009 Burton and Leoschut, 2013). Results from earlier studies also suggest that violence from teachers leads to the increased chance that learners will be afraid in school (Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Burnett, 1998; Burton & Leoschut, 2013; Seedat et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2009). Furthermore, high levels of fear related to corporal punishment may also be interpreted as being associated with violence being viewed as an acceptable way of resolving conflict, not only at school but in the broader social context of South Africa (Abrahams & Jewkes 2005). Violence is a dominant fear that is directly associated with survival, therefore classified under primary resources according to Conservation of Resources theory. Any loss or threat of loss of resources such as safety, in this instance the threat comes from the teacher, will result in an increased likelihood that the learner will be scared at school (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.10   Fears related to failure and underachievement at school

Failure and underachievement at school was found to contribute towards children's fears in the school context. These findings are consistent with other studies which found that the consequences of the unequal quality of education in South African often leads to high failure rate, grade repetition, lack of motivation and low self-esteem. Without the necessary academic support, learners have been found to get discouraged and fear failure (Modisaotsile, 2012; UNICEF, 2012). According to Conservation of Resources theory, the benefits of achievement at school would include competence, social status and social standing and allow greater access to secondary resources therefore, it is not surprising that fear responses occur

when stress is experienced as a result of a threat of loss or actual loss of these resources (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.2.11 The relevance of applying the Conservation of Resources Theory to the present study

Findings from the present study have yielded important information on how Conservation of Resources theory provides a useful conceptual framework to describe the construct of fear in South African adolescent school children in a meaningful and comprehensive way.

The observed trends in our findings suggest that Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources theoretical framework has heuristic value, as not only were the majority of fears in our present study related to primary resources, fears related to secondary resources were rated the next scariest and those fears related to emerging threats of tertiary resources, were rated the least scary (Hobfoll, 1998). These findings are also consistent with what has emerged in most previous studies of childhood fears using Fear Survey Schedules, which found that the top 10 childhood fears were ranked according to their perceived threats to survival (Burkhardt, 2007; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983).). "A classification made on the basis of proximity to survival might be helpful because it is hierarchical and may indicated how impactful a loss or gain would be at different levels of the hierarchy" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.60). Thus, the predictions of Conservation of Resources theory would appear to be particularly relevant to the conceptualization of children's fears, as it is applicable to most studies on childhood fears, and helps to explain why investigations into normative childhood fears find that threats to survival are consistently ranked in the top 10 fears regardless of context (Burkhardt, 2007).

Another key finding of the present study is that children's fears can be usefully classified according to the primary, secondary and tertiary domains, thus Conservation of Resources theory provides a unique framework which can be utilized to identify fear domains that are universal. An additional strength of Conservation of Resources theory in terms of categorization of fears in a particular resource domain, is that the present study found that these categories proved to be both exhaustive (as the domains were able to represent all fear responses without exception) and mutually exclusive, as all the fear responses fitted in to one or another distinct domain without ambiguity (Krippendorff, 1980). Conservation of

Resources theory therefore provides a framework that can be applied at a broad level across cultures (Hobfoll, 1998).

With an emphasis on the necessity of future research into childhood fears to explore cultural diversity, Conservation of Resources theory (which states that stress is experienced as a result of a threat of loss or actual loss of resources), offers a valuable framework that can be utilized to assess specific fears related to culture, as the hierarchical nature provides useful insight into how certain resources are valued in a particular context and also the related fear responses as a result of a threat to those valued resources (Burkhardt, 2007; Greene & Hill, 2005; Hobfoll, 1998; Papalia, 2006).

Furthermore, as a considerable amount of research has been conducted to investigate fears that are developmentally appropriate, Conservation of Resources theory recognizes that as children develop and their needs change, so does the relative value of their resources (Burkhardt, 2007; Greene & Hill, 2005; Papalia, 2006). Conservation of Resources theory thus also takes cognisance of childhood development and can be successfully used in predicting fear outcomes in children as a result of adverse conditions in a variety of contexts.

Therefore, the major contribution of Conservation of Resources theory, is that it provides a conceptual framework of childhood fears that "makes specific predictions that can be placed in either a larger cultural context or more personally defined individual space" (Hobfoll, 1998, p.86). Conservation of Resources theory thus offers valuable new insight into how adolescent children conceptualize and understand their own fears and anxieties within the South African context.

5.3   Fears not evident in the findings of the present study

Contrary to results from existing literature which indicated that the threat of sexual harassment and sexual assault was found to be widespread and disturbingly high in South African schools which leads to a threat in the child's sense of safety, there was an absence of these threats reported in the findings of the present study (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Burton, 2008; Jewkes et al., 2010; Modisaotsile, 2012).

However, when looking at trends in terms of frequencies and ratings of specific fear experiences, the above findings need to be approached with caution due the relatively small sample size and may not be representative of the broader South African population. Furthermore, it is important to consider that the research participants may have been unwilling to disclose any information of a sensitive nature. This may have contributed to the absence of certain specific fears being reported in the present study.

5.4   Proposed solutions

It emerged from the data relating to the question "what do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do to make you feel safer at school?" that the majority of the respondents proposed 'school authority figures', followed by an 'increase in safety and security' measures at school as part of the solution.

From these findings it is evident that children feel that 'school authority figures', including principals and teachers, should play an important role in protecting their safety at school. Teachers in particular have a duty to protect the basic rights of learners and need to act *in loco parentis* and assume the role of a responsible parent so that an environment is created where they can grow and reach their full potential (Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) Bill of Rights; The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996). Findings in the present study support previous research which indicates that the teacher-child relationship plays a vital role in the child's life in ensuring a safe, supportive environment, so that they focus on the primary aim of learning (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011).

The data also reveal that children believe that 'safety and security' measures at school need to form part of the solution to make them feel safer. The literature review in the present study indicated that the lack of security in many of the schools in South Africa has contributed to learners being scared. Furthermore, it has been recognized as a matter which needs to be urgently addressed by the department of Education (Nair, 2013).

By affording the research participants the opportunity to propose their own solutions, the present study thereby encouraged children to become part of the decision making process with regards to the future of their own safety and security within the school context.

5.5   A Child-centred perspective

The present study recognized the importance of exploring children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the school from a child's perspective, in an attempt to access a better understanding of how children conceptualize their own fears.

Previous studies of childhood fears were conducted predominantly utilizing highly structured assessment instruments with predetermined responses (Burkhardt, 2007). Many of these measuring instruments are difficult for children to understand, so they are unable to meaningfully participate (Greene and Hill, 2005). The present study on the other hand, made use of a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions to explore the fears of children in the adolescent phase of development. By allowing children to answer in their own way without restrictions, information-rich data were provided (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). These included evidence relating to high levels of fear related to gang activity in particular schools. Research participants in the present study reported specific details relating to gang activity, which included the name of the gang 'Born to Kill' (BTK), and that learners at school were specifically being targeted. For example one research participant mentioned they were scared *'When a gang called the BTK threatened to kill everyone wearing uniforms'*.

 Further evidence from the data included specific problems with regard to peer relationships and the various types of corporal punishment still commonly used within schools. These specific and detailed findings would not have emerged from pre-determined response categories of a structured questionnaire.

Responses relating to children's solutions to what they believe could make them feel safer at school also provided valuable insight. The findings indicated the necessity of looking beyond the individual level as an agent for change to rather looking at multiple levels, as participant's responses included teacher support, safety and security, police, peer support and safety and security.

From the findings of the present study it is evident that by giving children a voice and a right to actively participate in all aspects of their lives, they can also contribute meaningfully towards being part of the solution (Greene & Hill, 2005). By involving children in the research process, the present study was in line with the United Nations Convention on the

Rights of the Child (Article 12), which makes provision for the views of the child to be respected and "encourages adults to listen to the opinions of children and involve them in decision-making" (UNICEF, 2013). By treating children as people with their own rights and views rather than simply treating children as object of concern, the present study was able to provide valuable insight into children at risk and provide a more complete understanding of how they actually feel in their daily lives (Pinheiro, 2006).

5.6   Comparative studies

Whilst previous studies have investigated childhood fears and anxieties in the South African context, there have been a number of different methodologies employed which have lead to variations in research findings.

The aim of Burkhardt's (2007) study was to develop a measuring instrument that was relevant to the South African context, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods to investigate the content, number, level, and pattern of fear in a sample of middle childhood children. This adapted scale was referred to as the South African Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC-SA)

Although the aims of the present study were similar, different methods of data collection were employed. The study was exploratory in nature in order to obtain information from a child's perspective. An integrated approach was used in an attempt to get a broad picture by conducting the study across three domains: the school, the family and the community.

Even though Burkhardts (2007) study emphasized the necessity of taking the South African context into consideration when investigating South African children's fears, her study relied heavily on the use of Fear Survey Schedule for Children Revised (FSSC-R) to understand the concept of fear. The present study on the other hand, considered a more holistic perspective which included the broader contextual factors of home, school, and family. Contemporary research recognizes the necessity of considering a wider range of experiences across the multiple interrelated contexts in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of children's experience of fear (Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013).

The advantages of using a measuring instrument such as fear survey schedules, is that they are cost and time effective, they provide a significant amount of information over a short time period, they are flexible, convenient to use and can be scored objectively which minimizes the influence of assessor bias (Burkhardt, 2007). However, although the aim of Burkhardt's study was to develop a scientifically measuring instrument that is sensitive to cultural differences and relevant within the South African context, the adapted measurement scale added specific items such as 'tigers' and 'gorillas' to existing items such as 'bears', 'wolves' and 'putting on a recital'. Those items may have lead to construct overrepresentation as these particular animals and experiences are not endemic to the South African context, thus children are unlikely to have been experienced them as actual fears. Conversely, absent from the adapted measurement scale were items related directly to survival which may have lead to construct underrepresentation. Therefore, the overall construct validity of the instrument as a measurement for 'real' childhood fears in the South African context could be questioned. In addition, the validity of the Fear Survey Schedule for Children Revised (FSSC-R) as an instrument for measurement has been questioned, regarding whether it measures actual childhood fears or if the items listed on the questionnaire merely represent hypothetical constructs. It is possible that when children rate fear responses they are hypothetical occurrences rather than actual fears experienced in their daily lives (Muris, Merkelbach, Ollendick, King, Meesters, & Van Kessel, 2002).

Rather than using a highly structured questionnaire with predetermined responses, the present study in comparison made use of a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed the participants to communicate their experiences of fear and anxiety in their own words without any restrictions and to avoid the limitations of predetermined response items (Krippendorff, 1980; Terre Blanche et al. 2006). For example, research participants in the present study reported specific fears related to gang activity. This enabled the researcher to substantiate findings from existing literature that gang related activity contributed to school violence and the associated high levels of fear in the school context (Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Burton, 2007; Shields et al., 2009). Thus, the use of open-ended questions in the present study helped provide information-rich results that contributed to a broader range of findings.

Despite the different methodological approaches employed to investigate childhood fears in the South African context, both Burkhardt's (2007) study and the present study yielded

similarities in results at a broader level, as both studies found that threats to survival were what South African children feared the most. Although Burkhardt's (2007) study revealed that South African children feared 'getting HIV' the most, and in contrast the findings of the present study suggest that fears relating to 'interpersonal threats to survival or physical integrity' contributed to the most fear in children, they are both associated with the primary resource category related directly to survival threats. Differences in the results of Burkhardt's (2007) study and the present study would however appear to be related to the manifestation of childhood fears at a more specific level.

5.7   Ecological Systems Theory

The present study drew upon Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in order to look beyond the school context towards how the interrelation of multiple social contexts influences the developing child, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of adolescent children's fears in the South Africa context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The findings of the present study will be discussed not only in terms of the influence of environmental factors, but also how the child's perception of their environment provided a vital key to understanding adolescent's fear responses (Papalia, 2006).

5.7.1   Individual factors

The results of the present study show that females are more likely to experience significantly higher levels of fear than males as a result of interpersonal disputes. These findings are consistent with previous research on childhood fears indicating that females show a greater intensity of fears than males, which suggests the expression of fear responses may be influenced by gender dynamics (Burkhardt, 2007; Foster et al., 2004; Guillemette, 2012; Gullone & King, 1992; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Papalia, 2006). The differences in fear responses could be as a result of differences in socially formed stereotype roles, for example, females may be required to be sensitive and show emotions, whereas males maybe encouraged to be strong and to not show fear (Muris et al., 2008; SACE, 2011). These findings are in keeping with Ecological Systems theory which predicts that individual characteristics such as age, gender, race and temperament, influence how the child interacts with other contexts, and with these contexts in turn interacting with the child and thereby

creating a complex bidirectional interaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Papalia, 2006; Ward, 2007).

5.7.2   Problems with peer relationships

Problems with peer relationships which result in conflict were found to be the most common fear experienced in school. Consistent with previous literature, the findings from the present study show there were a number of bi-relationships that children interact with on a daily basis that may have had a strong influence on the developing child (Burkhardt, 2007; Ward, 2007; Paplia, 2006). For example "peer pressure", which is the influence of the relationship with peers, is particularly strong during adolescence. Acceptance from the peer group is important therefore, the adolescent may be under pressure to conform in order to 'fit in'. Rejection from the peer group or conflict with peers can also result in a considerable amount of stress (Burger et al., 2000; Papalia, 2006; SACE, 2011). In terms of understanding adolescent fears related to peer problems, Ecological Systems Theory offers a framework that can explain the perceptions of fear as a dynamic evolving process which is strongly influenced by the daily interactions of the individual developing child, and their relationships, (for example peer relationships, within a given context, for example the school) (Bronfenbrenner,1979).

5.7.3   Problems with teacher-child relationships

In the school context, teachers have a duty to protect the basic rights of learners so that they can learn in a safe environment that is conducive to learning without feeling threatened or afraid (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). However, the participants of the present study revealed that the teacher-child relationship frequently lead to increased levels of fear as a result of threat of violence from teachers at school. These findings are consistent with previous studies indicating that perpetrators of violence in schools are often the child's teacher and that levels of corporal punishment are disturbingly high (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Human Rights Watch, 2001; Shields et al., 2009).

5.7.4   The school context

When applying Ecological Systems theory to fear in children, the theory dictates that the school context would have an effect on the child's perceptions of fear. The present study

found that there were high levels of fear at school which has led to a compromised learning environment. These findings are consistent with previous findings reviewed which have recognized that there are numerous interacting risk factors in South African schools which results in a pervasive climate of fear (Abrahams & Jewkes, 2005; Barbarin et al., 2001; Burton, 2013; Cluver et al., 2010; De Wet, 2003; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). In line with Ecological Systems theory, the researcher has looked beyond the school context towards how the interrelation of multiple social contexts influences the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The present study found evidence supporting previous literature which shows that perpetrators had no difficulties gaining access into the schools and that violence from the other domains, namely the community and home, frequently overflowed into the school (Gopal & Collings, 2013). With regards to gang activity, findings indicated that gang members appeared to gain easy access into the schools, for example one participant mentioned: "*When the BTK gangsters came to our school and attacked one of our class and killed him in front of us*". These findings emphasise the importance of taking into consideration that the child's perception of fear is shaped by the complex, dynamic interaction of the broader contextual factors of the home, school, and community (Bronfenfenbrenner, 1979).

5.7.5   Proposed solutions

The study findings indicated that participants proposed teacher support, peer support, increased safety and security measures, the police and school policy as part of the solution. The findings from the study indicated the importance of looking beyond the individual towards multiple levels when looking at proposed solutions. Ecological Systems framework which takes into account the influence of the interaction of multiple levels, acted as a useful guiding framework to gain a better understanding of who children believe could be agents for change in order for them feel safer at school.

5.7.6   The relevance of applying the Ecological Systems Theory to the present study

An important strength of applying Ecological Systems theory to the present study is that children were seen as not merely acted upon by the environment, but that they are both active and reactive in that their responses shape the environment (Papalia, 2006). This view is also in keeping with the child-centred approach of the present study (Greene and Hill, 2005). By

acknowledging that childhood development is influenced by the dynamic interaction of multiple factors, a more comprehensive understanding was provided on how South African adolescent school children view their own experiences of fear and anxiety.

5.8   Limitations

The researcher acknowledges that the present study had methodological challenges and certain limitations.

The questionnaire utilized in the present study was administered in English and not translated into the research participants' home language. Therefore, language could have been a potential source of bias as translation is not always easy, and the intended meaning of the questions may have been lost (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005). Despite the fact that the participants were afforded the opportunity to answer the questions in their mother tongue, some of the questionnaires collected from participants in the study suggested that respondents had experienced challenges in responding in English.

Although the length of the questionnaire was considered relevant to the adolescent age group, the time required for participants to complete it was limited and may have contributed to the lack of in-depth information obtained in some cases.

Questionnaires were administered on school grounds. Existing literature has found that fear is common in South African schools, which reduces a child's sense of safety in this particular environment (Burton & Leoschut, 2012; Burton, 2013; De Wet, 2003; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Shields, et al., 2009). If a child is administered a questionnaire in an environment in which they do not feel protected or safe, they may be reluctant to disclose information about their fears related to the school context, for fear of reprisal. Despite the fact that research participants were assured of anonymity, there may still have been some socially desirable answers which would impact on the validity of the results (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

Greene and Hill (2005) states that children may be influenced by demand characteristics, which include the nature of the relationship between themselves and the person who administers the questionnaire. The questionnaires used in the present study were administered by school counsellors or teachers in the classrooms at school as part of Life Orientation

Skills. This may have been problematic as teachers were often found to be the perpetrators of violence in South African schools (Burnett, 1998; Abrahams & Jewkes 2005; Seedat et al., 2009; Shields et al., 2009). As a result, children may not have answered the questionnaire honestly for fear of being victimized by the teachers. Therefore, demand characteristics of the present study may have impacted on the findings (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2005).

Another factor that cannot be ignored in the present study is that child-adult power relations may have impacted on children's responses. "Adults typically have authority over children, and children often find it difficult to dissent, disagree or say things which they think may be unacceptable" (Greene and Hill, 2005, p.10). The suggestibility of children in power relations could have lead to participants providing socially desirable answers.

The scope of the present study may constitute a limitation, as findings were based on reports by adolescents living in the North West province, who cannot necessarily be assumed to be representative of all South African adolescents.

Previous research has recognized that, due to South Africa's socio-political history and the inherited legacy of the Apartheid, inequalities remain between the different race groups. As a result, research indicates the necessity of making comparisons between the different race groups in terms of fear and anxiety experiences (Burkhardt, 2007; Muris et al., 2008). However, the majority of the research participants of the present study were black South African. This may have created a limitation in terms of generalisability across the different race groups within the South African context, as it did not allow for cross-race comparisons in terms of fear responses. Further research requires a larger sample size that is representative of all race groups in South Africa, in order to improve generalisability.

The present study only explored the fears and anxieties of South African children in the adolescent stage of development. However, the nature of fear responses may change according to the child's developmental stage (Guillemette, 2012). Future research investigating normative childhood fears could therefore include different stages of childhood development, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding.

The focus of the present study was to explore adolescent children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the school context. Therefore, the researcher was limited to reporting findings

specific to one domain. However, contemporary research recognizes the necessity of considering a wider range of experiences across the multiple interrelated contexts that influence the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Paplia, 2006). It is therefore recommended that further research is necessary to investigate not only the school context, but to include the complex interaction of the contextual factors of the home, community and society, in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of children's experience of fear (Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013).

5.9   Implications

5.9.1   Implications of the findings for the conceptualization of normative childhood fears

A Conservation of Resources perspective was able to provide a systematic explanation of how South African adolescent children conceptualize and understand their own fears and anxieties. The heuristic value of Conservation of Resources theory, whereby classification according to primary, secondary and tertiary domains are made on the basis of proximity of the resource to survival, has significant implications for future research investigating normative childhood fears, as it can be successfully applied in predicting fear outcomes as a result of adversity across different childhood developmental levels and in a variety of contexts (Hobfoll, 1998).

Whilst extensive studies on normative childhood fears, which utilized Fear Survey Schedules, in particular the revised version of the Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC-R), have contributed a significant amount of knowledge, they have also raised criticism with regards the measurement of the content of childhood fears (Burkhardt, 2007). The construct validity of the Fear Survey Schedule as an instrument for measurement has been queried as to whether actual childhood fears are reflected, or if the children's responses to the items listed on the questionnaire simply represent hypothetical constructs (Muris et al., 2002). Muris et al. (2002) suggested that the child's perception of what is threatening was important when looking at their responses as "children's ratings of such items are, in a majority of cases, not based on actual experiences with such situations and thus may reflect children's appraisal of threat in case they would be confronted with such events" (Muris et al., 2002, p.1324).

As the child's perception of their environment provides a vital key to understanding the adolescent's fear responses, the present study drew on Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory by looking beyond the school context towards how the interrelation of multiple social contexts influenced the developing child's interpretation of fear (Papalia, 2006).

Therefore, based on the findings of the present study it is important that future research into normative childhood fears be mindful of the potential limitations of Fear Survey Schedules. It is therefore recommended that, in order to get a more comprehensive understanding of normative childhood fears, a combined assessment approach utilizing both Conservation of Resources theoretical framework and the Revised version of the Fear Survey Schedule for Children (FSSC-R) should be considered, but also taking into account how multiple interrelated contexts will influence the child's fear responses.

5.9.2   Methodological Implications

Findings of the present study have important methodological implications for future research into normative childhood fears. The present study utilized a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions for data collection where research participants were able to communicate their feelings of fear and anxiety in their own words without restrictions (Terre Blanche et al. 2006). The data was coded according to categories based on Conservation of Resources theoretical framework and then analysed using Content Analysis (Hobfoll, 1998; Krippendorff, 1980). The value of the approach of the present study is that, not only was the researcher able to identify broad childhood fears that are universal such as fears relating to death and danger, but also fears on a more specific level which reflect actual fears of children in the South African context. Thus, results yielded from the present study helped to provide a more accurate indication of exactly what South African children are afraid of in their daily lives. However, further research replicating the methodological approach adopted in the present study is necessary to comprehensively evaluate its value.

5.9.3   Implications for future cross-cultural research

Based on findings of the present study, Conservation of Resources theory would appear to provide a valuable theoretical framework in which to identity dimensions of normative childhood fears that are universal. In addition, the findings from the present study supported

the view of previous studies which utilized Fear Survey schedules and found that, although the same dominant fears are universal, there are variations in the manifestation of certain specific types of fear and in terms of their salience that may be related to context "which highlights the importance of the respective context when interpreting results" (Burkhardt, 2007, p.22). These variations could provide valuable information with regard to cultural diversity in the manifestations of fear (Burkhardt, 2007). Therefore, it is recommended that future cross-cultural research needs to replicate the methods utilized in the current study by applying the Conservation of Resources theoretical framework to assess specific childhood fears related to different cultures (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.9.4   Implications for future research on the various stages of human development

Previous studies have indicated that research into common childhood fears at each developmental stage is important, as it provides crucial information that helps determine whether fears are normal and adaptive, or excessive and maladaptive that may result in psychological distress (Burkhardt, 2007, Muris, et al., 2008). Contemporary research also recognizes that "development in childhood is connected to development throughout the rest of the life span" (Papalia, 2006, p.10). Conservation of Resources theory is applicable to future research on various stages of human development, as it states that fears associated with survival are the primary concern of all people regardless of chronological age. Furthermore, Conservation of Resources theory takes into account that the value of resources change as the individual develops and their needs change (Burkhardt, 2007; Greene & Hill, 2005; Papalia, 2006). For example, according to Hobfoll (1998), young children and older adults are strongly embedded in social relationships, and as a result they are more dependent on these relationships for the provision of primary resources. Therefore resource loss at this level may result in a greater stress impact. Further research is recommended to confirm the findings of the present study by utilizing the framework of Conservation of Resources theory to investigate normative fears that include different stages of the human life span (Hobfoll, 1998).

5.9.5   Implications for the South African context

Conservation of Resources theory is particularly relevant to the South African context where various studies have shown that childhood adversity is associated with a wide range of

negative effects, including psychological distress, poor psychosocial adjustment and high levels of fear. Specifically related to studies on interpersonal violence, various researchers have concluded the necessity for future research into childhood experiences of fear in the South African context, to include interventions for children at risk (Boqwana, 2009; Burton, 2008; Gopal & Collings, 2013; Jewkes et al., 2010; Seedat et al., 2004; Shields et al., 2009). Furthermore, the findings of the present study were consistent with previous studies which indicated that high levels of fear are common in South African schools and needs to be addressed urgently (Burton, 2013; De Wet, 2003). Conservation of Resources theoretical principles based on resource losses that are necessary to sustain the individual and the vulnerability in terms of attainment of resources, can be utilized in future research to help explain why South African children are more vulnerable to psychological distress. Conservation of Resources theory's premise which states that, those individuals who lack resources are more vulnerable to resource loss, is particularly appropriate in the South African context, where childhood adversity is common and children may lack the resources to successfully cope with threats to survival (Hobfoll, 1998). In addition, Conservation of Resources theoretical principles can also be utilized as a basis for research into intervention, particularly with regards resource acquisition and primary resource pathways in order to determine what will most benefit those children who are in a low resource context (Hobfoll, 1998; Jewkes et al., 2010).

5.9.6   Implications for intervention

Based on the findings of the present study, the necessity of looking beyond the child's immediate school environment to consider the complex interaction of the broader contextual factors of the home, community and society was emphasized when addressing fear and anxiety in South African adolescent school children. It is therefore recommended that any intervention not only takes into account the individual, but also how the interrelation of multiple levels will influence the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Paplia, 2006).

The results of the present study indicate the importance of promoting a safe, supportive school environment which will encourage children to focus on the primary aim of learning, so that they have the opportunity to attain a wide range of skills and thrive in accordance with their academic potential (Le Roux & Mokhele, 2011). Thus, it is vital that schools provide a safe, supportive environment which upholds the values contained in Chapter 2 of the

Constitution of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) the Bill of Rights and The South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) which requires education to be transformed and democratised in accordance with the values of human dignity, equality, basic human rights, freedom, tolerance, non-racism and non-sexism. The whole school approach is essential when looking at creating a safe school environment which looks at multiple levels and "moves away from examining individual aspects of the school context to understanding the school as an entity consisting of several components, all of which are interdependent – learners, educators, principals, school management teams, SGBs, and parents or caregivers" (Burton, 2008, p.77).

At the individual level, interventions should consider the strengthening of psychosocial support for vulnerable children including counselling services, peer and educator support. Based on the findings of the present study which suggest that 'problems with peers' was a prominent fear, Life Orientation skills could address more effective coping strategies to assist children. These skills could include interpersonal problem solving, prosocial methods as a way of resolving and alternate ways to handle anxiety and fear to help establish more positive relationships between peers (Barbarin et al., 2001; Department of Basic Education, 2012; SACE, 2011).

Positive relationships could be built between schools and parents to involve parents in all aspects of the child's school career. Skills development could be offered on the school grounds for example, on the normative development of childhood fears and the challenges that contribute to children being afraid (Department of Basic Education, 2012; SACE, 2011).

The role of the teachers should be more clearly defined so that teachers are able to provide learners with the necessary support. The findings in the present study suggest that as corporal punishment contributed towards high levels of fear in school children, further training for teachers is necessary, particularly with regards conflict resolution skills and alternate disciplinary measures to corporal punishment (SACE, 2011). These may help "reduce the reliance on power-assertive control strategies" (Barbarin et al., 2001, p.24).

Schools should promote the building of positive relationships that include all role players, including between learners and educators; parents and educators; families and communities. Schools could offer life skills programs that foster positive relationships, including conflict

management and health promotion. Facilities that promote a positive learning environment should also include both cultural and sporting facilities. The present study found that learners feared failure and underachievement which highlights the need for improved academic support. Learners, educators, and parents should be aware of the School Codes of Conduct as to "what is acceptable or unacceptable behaviour in schools" (SACE, 2011, p.34). Proposed solutions from participants in the present study indicated that safety and security measures need to either be upgraded or implemented in schools, to prevent 'outsiders' gaining access onto the school grounds.

With regards the community, pathways to and from school need to be monitored to ensure children's safety. Findings from the present study indicated that 'spillover' activity from the community onto the school premises was common and lead to increased levels of fear, in particular 'gang activity' and urgently needs to be addressed (Gopal & Collings, 2013).

A priority recommendation is that the Department of Basic Education strives towards quality education for all South African children, to ensure that schools provide a safe environment that is conducive to positive learning outcomes, without children feeling threatened or scared (2012). A safe school environment will promote the optimal wellbeing of all South African children (UNICEF, 2012).

5.10 Conclusion

- In an attempt to provide a systematic approach to conceptualizing childhood fears, the present study found that Conservation of Resources theory, which suggests that survival is the primary aim of all people, helped to provide a more accurate reflection of adolescent fears and anxieties in the South African school context (Hobfoll, 1998).

- The most frequent fears in the present study were 'threats to survival or physical integrity' in keeping with Conservation of Resources theory, which predicts that the closer the individual is to loss or threat of loss or resources directly required for survival, the higher the level of fear (Hobfoll, 1998).

- The findings of the present study were consistent with the majority of previous investigations into normative childhood fears using Fear Survey Schedules which found that the top 10 childhood fears related to fears of death and danger (Burkhardt, 2007; Gullone & King, 1992; Gullone & Lane, 1999; Muris & Ollendick, 2002; Ollendick, 1983).

- Conservation of Resources theory, whereby classification of fears is made on the basis of proximity of the resource to survival was found to have significant implications for future research investigating normative childhood fears, as it can be successfully applied in predicting fear outcomes as a result of adversity across different childhood developmental levels and in a variety of contexts (Hobfoll, 1998).

- Although some dominant fears were found to be universal, there were also variations found in the manifestations of specific fears that are related to context (Burkhardt, 2007). For example, the most frequent fear in terms of specific fear manifestations was found to be problems with peer relationships. In addition, specific fears were also related to violence or threat of violence from a teacher and failure or underachievement at school. As children spend approximately half of their time at school, it follows that specific fears would be related to the school context, thus highlighting the importance of considering context when interpreting results.

- The present study considered a holistic perspective towards understanding adolescent children's experience of fear in the South African school context. Ecological Systems theory provided a useful framework to emphasise the important of looking beyond the school context towards how the dynamic interrelation of multiple social contexts influences the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). For example, the present study shows how gang members appeared to gain easy access to schools, leading to increased levels of fear, which indicated that violence from other domains, namely the home and community overflowed into the schools.

- As Education is a priority in South Africa, the importance of intervention programs was discussed in order to promote safe school environments. The necessity of the whole school approach was considered, whereby intervention should take into

account not only the individual, but also how the interrelation of multiple levels will influence the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Paplia, 2006).

- The present study employed a child-centred approach, which enabled children to actively participate in matters concerning their own wellbeing (Greene & Hill, 2005). By recognizing the importance of exploring children's experiences of fears and anxieties in the context of the school from a child's perspective, the present study was able to access a more complete understanding of adolescent childhood fears that is relevant to the contemporary South African context.

- Whilst the present study has been able to provide valuable insight into children at risk in the South African school context, further research is necessary to investigate the high levels of fear and anxiety in children that not only have a detrimental impact on academic performance but that also hinders all aspects of the child's development.

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APPENDIX 1

QUESTIONNAIRE

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS ON THE PAGE

1. How old are you: ☐ 2. Are you male or female: ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. What grade are you in: ☐ 4. What is the name of your school: ☐

5. What is your race group: ☐ Black ☐ White ☐ Coloured ☐ Asian

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THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **AT HOME IN THE LAST YEAR**

6. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you **AT HOME** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below?

_____
_____

7. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all ☐   A little ☐   Quite a lot ☐   Very ☐   Extremely ☐

8. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer at home?

_____
_____

THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **AT SCHOOL IN THE LAST YEAR**

9. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you **AT SCHOOL** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below?

_____
_____

10. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all ☐   A little ☐   Quite a lot ☐   Very ☐   Extremely ☐

11. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer at school?

_____
_____

THESE QUESTIONS ARE ABOUT THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU **IN YOUR COMMUNITY IN THE LAST YEAR**

12. What is the scariest or most upsetting thing that has happened to you in your **neighbourhood or community** in the past year (describe what happened in the space below?

_____
_____

13. How scared or upset did it make you feel (put an X in one box)?

Not at all ☐   A little ☐   Quite a lot ☐   Very ☐   Extremely ☐

14. What do you believe could happen, or what could anyone do, to make you feel safer in your neighbourhood or community?

_____
_____

APPENDIX 2

INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

Dear Learner

We are doing a study to find out what children find scary and upsetting at home, at school and in the neighbourhood or community. The information we collect will be useful to understand how much fear children experience, and what they believe could happen or what anyone can do to make them feel safer. Your views will be very helpful to us. Here is the information you need to decide whether you will take part in the study:

- If you agree to take part in this study you will be asked to fill in a form with some short questions about what makes you feel scared or upset.
- The form is one page long and should take about 10 minutes to finish.
- There are no wrong or right answers.
- You will not be asked to put your name on the answer sheet so no-one will know what you have written.
- You will not be forced to give any information which you would rather keep private.
- You are free to stop taking part at any time.
- The teacher who hands out the questions will explain what you have to do and will answer any of your questions.
- Please make sure that you answer the questions as honestly as you can.
- The teacher will also give you the name of a person you can contact if you feel you want to talk to anyone privately after you have answered the questions.
- You can also contact the researchers if you have any questions about the study.
    - o Project leader: Steven Collings (031 2602414)
    - o University Research office: Phume Ximba (031-2603587)

If you would like to take part in the study, please sign the consent form and bring it back to your school. If you are under 18 years, please ask your parent/guardian to sign the form as well.

Thank you for taking part in this study.

APPENDIX 3

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I have been informed about the details of the study: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

I have read and understood the written information about the study. I understand everything that has been explained to me and freely agree to take part in the study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

If under the age of 18 -

I have been informed about the details of the study: Exploring children's fears and anxieties in the family, at school and in the community.

I have read and understood the written information about the study.

Signature/ Mark of thumbprint of parent or guardian: _____ **Date:** _____

APPENDIX 4

INSTRUCTIONS TO TEACHERS FOR ADMINISTERING QUESTIONNAIRES

- Hand out one questionnaire to each learner in the class.
- Explain to learners that the questionnaire is designed to obtain an understanding of things that have made them feel scared or upset in the past year.
- Explain to learners that they will not be putting their name on the questionnaire, and that nobody will be able to know what they have said
- If learners have trouble understanding any part of the questionnaire, please explain to them (using the learner's home language if necessary) what the questionnaire is about.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUSTIONS 1 TO 5
- Ask learners to complete questions 1 to 5 [it might be useful to explain the questions using the learners home language if necessary]

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONS 6 to 8
- Explain to learners that these questions relate to things that have happened at HOME in the past year.
- Before answering question 6, ask them to think about things that made them feel SCARED or UPSET at home.
- Once they have thought about it, ask them to write down the thing that made them feel most scared or upset at home in the space provided in question 6
- Then ask them to indicate how scared or upset they had felt by ticking one box provided in question 7.
- Finally ask them to indicate (in question 8) what they believe could happen, or what anyone could do, to make sure that they felt safer or less upset at home

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING QUESTIONS 9 TO 14
Please use the same procedure used for questions 6 to 8 to answer questions 9 to 14. Please point out to learners that questions 9 to 11 relate to experiences at SCHOOL while questions 12 to 14 relate to experiences in the COMMUNITY.