

AN ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

by

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DECLARATION OF OWN WORK

I, **Annemarie Emslie, (Student Number: 24428401)** declare that the dissertation, which I hereby submit for the degree **MEd (Adult and Community Education and Training)** at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary education institution.

I also declare that as far as I am aware, all references used and made in this dissertation have been cited and acknowledged.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

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KEY WORDS

Youth violence

Violence prevention

Collaboration

Ecosystemic perspective

Ecological developmental focus

Systems theory

Qualitative approach

Sociological Interpretative paradigm

Content analysis

Framework approach



ACRONYMS

CASEL	Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning
CJCP	Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention
DoE	Department of Education
IEB	Independent Examination Board
NSVS	National School Violence Study
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
RNCS	Revised National Curriculum Statement (Grade 7-9) Schools
SAHR	South African Human Research Committee
SEDL	South West Education Development Laboratory
SEL	Social Emotional Learning
SGB	School Governing Body
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organisation

AN ANALYSIS OF COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS TOWARDS VIOLENCE PREVENTION IN URBAN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Supervisor: Dr CJ Gerda Bender

The purpose of the current study was two-fold. Firstly, to explore and describe how school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent violence at two urban secondary schools and secondly, to help school staff members, parents and policymakers to gain a better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted problem of addressing school violence, which should result in guiding them to adopt effective strategies to prevent violence.

The ecosystemic perspective, which is an integration of ecological and systems theories combined with the typology of violence, was the theoretical lens through which the phenomenon of adolescent learner violence was viewed. The study was rooted in the sociological interpretative research paradigm and a qualitative descriptive and exploratory case study design was employed.

Multi-method data collection strategies (individual, dyad, triad and group interviews; document reviews) were employed to obtain trustworthy data from the three population units of analysis (school staff members, learners and parents) at the two selected urban secondary school sites situated in Johannesburg, South Africa.

The inductive qualitative content analysis of the framework approach was used to give a transparent account of the data analysis process. Constant comparative analysis was employed to discover the emergent themes. The main research findings were interpreted by relating the results to the research purpose, the socio-ecological theoretical framework and the existing knowledge base on collaborative strategies for violence prevention.

The findings of the current study suggest that family-school collaboration in violence prevention is especially important for families with adolescent children. Adolescence is characterised by many physical and psychological changes and development. Adolescents strive to find their independence and establish their own identities. However, this experimentation may lead to risk-taking or antisocial behaviour.

Contrary to current belief, the findings of the current study suggest that adolescent learners want their parents to be involved in their lives and that parents want to support their children's education but may lack the know-how. The learners explicitly expressed their need for the support and guidance of both their parents and also the school staff members in withstanding the peer and societal pressures that can result in their acting in aggressive or violent ways at school. To promote the positive development of all young people, the school staff members and most centrally young people and their families, must actively work together to establish positive and effective family-school collaborative partnerships as part of their violence prevention strategies.

'N ANALISE VAN SAMEWERKING TEN OPSIGTE VAN GEWELDSVOORKOMING IN STEDELIKE SEKONDÊRE SKOLE

deur

Annemarie Emslie

Studieleier: Dr CJ Gerda Bender

Die doel van hierdie studie was tweeledig. Eerstens, om by twee stedelike hoërskole te bepaal hoe die skool personeel hul leerlinge en gesinne betrek by hul strategieë vir die voorkoming van skoolgeweld. Tweedens, om skool personeel, ouers en beleidmakers te help om beter insig in die komplekse aard van skoolgeweld te verkry, met die doel om hulle in staat te stel om meer effektiewe strategieë vir geweldsvorkoming te implementeer.

Die eko-sistemiese perspektief, wat die ekologiese en sisteemsteoriëe integreer, tesame met die tipologie van geweld, was die teoretiese lens waardeur tienerleerlinggeweld beskou is. Die studie is gegrond op die sosiologiese verklarende navorsingsmodel (paradigma) en 'n kwalitatiewe, ondersoekende en beskrywende gevallestudie-ontwerp is gevolg.

Meervoudige data-invorderingsmetodes (individuele, paar-, drietal- en groepsonderhoude asook 'n dokumentoorsig) is gebruik om geloofwaardige data van die drie deelnemergroepe (skool personeel, leerlinge en ouers) by die twee stedelike hoërskole geleë in Johannesburg, Suid-Afrika, te bekom..

'n Induktiewe, kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise-raamwerk benadering is gevolg om 'n deursigtige beskrywing van die dataontledingsproses te gee. Voortdurende vergelykende ontleding is toegepas om die voortspruitende temas te identifiseer. Die hoof bevindinge van die studie is vertolk deur die resultate in verband met die doel van die studie, die sosio-ekologiese teoretiese raamwerk en die bestaande empiriese kennis ten opsigte van samewerkende maatreëls vir skoolgeweldsvorkoming te bring.

Die bevindinge van die huidige studie dui daarop dat familie-skool samewerking ten opsigte van geweldsvoorkoming veral vir families met tiener kinders belangrik is. Puberteit word gekenmerk deur fisiese en sielkundige veranderinge en ontwikkeling. Tieners streef daarna om meer onafhanklik te word asook om hul eie identiteite te ontwikkel. Hierdie eksperimentering kan hulle egter aan gevaar blootstel of tot antisosiale gedrag lei.

In teenstelling met wat algemeen aanvaar word, dui die bevindinge van die huidige studie daarop dat tieners wel graag verlang dat hul ouers by hul lewens moet betrokke wees en dat ouers graag hul kinders se opvoeding wil ondersteun maar beskik soms nie oor die nodige kennis nie. Die leerlinge het dit uitdruklik gestel dat hulle die ondersteuning en leiding van albei hul ouers en die skoolpersoneel benodig om die druk van hul portuurgroep of ander sosiale omstandighede om aggressief of gewelddadig op te tree, suksesvol te kan hanteer. Om alle jongmense op 'n positiewe wyse te laat ontwikkel, moet die skoolpersoneel en veral die jongmense en hul gesinne aktief saamwerk om positiewe en effektiewe familie-skool samewerkingsvenootskappe as deel van hul strategieë vir geweldsvoorkoming te ontwikkel.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF PROBLEM AND GOAL OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Youth violence and school safety have become major concerns for parents, educators and the wider South African public. This concern, however, is shared by many people globally, as reflected in numerous international conferences and publications on school-based learner violence. A report issued after the 2003 Second International Conference on Violence in Schools states that the problem of school violence is spreading across the globe (Council of Europe, 2006).

There are various types of youth violence, occurring in places that should be safe sanctuaries for young people, such as their homes, schools and the wider community (Council of Europe, 2006). Empirical evidence suggests that the nature of these violent acts include bullying (see Human Rights Watch Report, 2001; United Nations Secretary-General's study on Violence against Children, 2006), sexual and gender-based violence (see UNAIDS, 2006; World Health Organisation, 2006), physical fighting (see World Health Organisation, 2006), gang violence and assault with weapons (see United Nations Secretary-General's study on Violence against Children, 2006). The Internet and cell phones seem to provide a new medium for bullying and have given rise to terms such as *cyber-bully* and *cyber-bullying* (Ybarra, 2004, p. 1308).

Sensational media reporting has highlighted the nature and extent of school-based violence, causing the general public to perceive schools as unsafe places. The April 1999 Columbine School shootings in the United States of America resulted in the death of 12 learners and a teacher, and the wounding of 23 others. Since then a variety of initiatives, ranging from international comparative studies to small-scale studies at local levels have provided a clearer picture of the widespread nature of the problem in all regions of the world (California Department of Education and Office of the Attorney-General, 2002).

The World Report on Violence against Children (2006) gives some idea of the range and scale of the violence, illustrated by the following statistics:

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) estimates that almost 53 000 child deaths in 2002 were homicides (WHO, 2006).
- In the Global School-Based Student Health Survey carried out in a wide range of developing countries, between 20% and 65% of school-aged children reported having been verbally or physically bullied in school in the previous 30 days (WHO, 2006).
- An estimated 150 million girls and 73 million boys under 18 have experienced forced sexual intercourse or other forms of sexual violence (WHO, 2006).
- Only 2,4% of the world's children are legally protected from corporal punishment in all settings, including schools (Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children, 2006).

In a South African context, Burton (2006) argues that in a country where crime is widely seen as endemic, the lack of focus on young people as victims or perpetrators of violence is a serious concern. The recent National Youth Victimization Study (Leoschut & Burton, 2006) gives some indication of the extent of the problem:

- Between September 2004 and September 2005, 42% of South African children and young people between the ages of 12 and 22 years were victims of crime or violence (\pm 4,3 million). These crimes included assault, sexual assault and rape, theft, robbery, housebreaking and car hijacking.
- Repeated victimisation is common. More than one-tenth (14%) of all those interviewed had been victimised on more than one occasion during the preceding 12-month period.
- An analysis of victimisation by age shows that children between 12 and 14 years and youth between 18 and 20 years old are most likely to be victims of crime.
- Roughly 1 in 6 (17%) young people were assaulted in 2005. These assaults were most likely to occur at school (26%), in the street near shops (21%) or at home (20%). Nine out of ten young people knew their attacker, most often from school or elsewhere in the community (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

These findings are in accordance with the trends identified in the International literature which suggests that in the majority of violent acts against young people, the perpetrator is known to, and often a peer of the victim (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Tuner & Hamby, 2005; Leoschut & Burton, 2006). The chilling reality of this trend was once again confirmed when 18-year old learner Morné Harmse arrived at the Nic Diederichs Technical High School in Krugersdorp, South Africa, on Monday 25 August 2008 armed with three samurai swords, slashing and killing 16-year-old Jacques Pretorius on the school grounds (Roux, Smith, Botes & Steinberg, 2008).

Although the national and international empirical evidence indicates that violence in schools is a global problem, only a small proportion of these violent acts is reported or investigated. More often than not, many incidents of learner violence go unreported as many schools and communities seem to tolerate or ignore the existence of interpersonal violence (United Nations Secretary-General's study on Violence against Children, 2006).

1.2 MOTIVATION FOR THE CHOICE OF THE STUDY

School-based violence is often a reflection of the levels and patterns of violence that occur in young people's homes, communities and countries. The reality is that many young South Africans perceive violence as a normal and acceptable way of life. However, schools are uniquely positioned to intervene and stop these patterns of violence, in this way ensuring access to quality education (which includes safe school environments) for all children and young people as stated in the Millennium Developmental Goals and the related efforts detailed in the Dakar Framework of Action (UNESCO, 2005; United Nations, 2000: World Education Forum, 2000).

Overtly aggressive individual acts of learner violence have received much attention. Osher and colleagues (2004), however, argue that a growing body of literature identifies the need to explore the social context of behaviour. They claim there is empirical evidence that the community, school, family, and peer group interact with the characteristics of an individual young person. This interaction will either help to prevent antisocial or support the development of pro-social behaviour (Osher, VanAcker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer & Quinn, 2004). The social context of a school affects the way learners behave as well as their academic achievement (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000).

For this reason, attention should be given to individual incidences of violence as well as to the school environment in order to prevent school-based violence (Osher, Dwyer & Jackson, 2003). According to Furlong and colleagues (2005), in order to overcome the challenge of reducing violence, it is time for everyone to break the silence that too often characterises even the best-intentioned schools and communities (Furlong, Felix, Sharkey & Larson, 2005).

Based on this empirical evidence I felt compelled to attempt in this study to make a contribution to the existing knowledge base on the prevention of school based violence. As a trained educator and parent, the well being, safety and academic success of our children and young people is of the utmost importance to me. To this end, I believed that I needed to examine the social structures and environment in which school violence occurs, as well as involve those directly affected by school violence, namely the school staff members, learners and their families. My view is that any failure to address these critical areas would lead to a generation of children and young people who will increasingly feel disillusioned with the education system and society, which may result in the continuance of antisocial and violent learner behaviour.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Recently, sensational media reporting of violent acts in schools has led to renewed pressure from the government and specifically the Department of Education on teachers and school staff members, to deal with learner violence and to create safe and caring schools. In her address at the School Safety Colloquium in Pretoria, South Africa on 21 November 2006, the then Minister of Education Ms Naledi Pandor referred to comments that she had received from parents and the general public regarding school discipline and school violence. She said she was in agreement with them that the presence of poor discipline and various forms of school violence required determined and urgent action (Department of Education, 2006).

The Minister clearly stated that the Department was determined to maintain safe and caring schools throughout the country, and that parents, teachers, community leaders and learners would have to unite to confront the challenge of school violence (Department of Education, 2006). However, much of the responsibility for violence prevention falls on the teachers who may themselves be ill-equipped to fulfil this

responsibility or who may fear the behaviour of their own learners. I believe this to be a true reflection of what is happening in many schools in South Africa today. Jody Kollapan, Chairperson of the Human Rights Commission, referred to a recent report by the Human Sciences Research Council indicating that teacher morale was poor because many teachers suffered from psycho-social stress because of the violent and insecure environment in schools (Kollapan, 2006).

In reviewing the existing knowledge base on school-based violence, Furlong and colleagues (2004) suggest that it is evident that the professional literature mirrors the media releases of violent incidences at schools (Furlong, Morrison, Cornell & Skiba, 2004). However, current theoretical models of school violence and its prevention emphasise a comprehensive perspective which includes serious violent incidents, day-to-day discipline and school climate issues. All of these issues shape how safe learners perceive their schools to be (Skiba, Simmons, Peterson, McKelvey, Forde & Gallini, 2004). Although considerable research has explored the school context in an effort to identify the risk factors contributing to academic failure and antisocial behaviour in schools, there are major areas that still need to be addressed, namely:

- Research to guide educators on ways to implement important and sustained change in teachers' behaviour and attitudes towards creating a positive school climate conducive to violence prevention strategies (e.g. Hester, 2002).
- Research which helps identify the social factors that bring about and maintain positive outcomes in the social environment of the school and school community (Osher et al., 2003)
- Research on school ecology as it relates to the extent to which school staff members either promote or undermine positive learner development and effective family-school partnerships (Furlong et al., 2004).

It is clear from this empirical evidence that we need to pay attention not only to individual incidents of violent behaviour but also to monitoring the school climate and school environment. Schools have to look for and address the factors that can cause aggressive or violent learner behaviour (Osher et al., 2004). This study focused on investigating these issues by collecting data directly from the school staff members, learners and their parents in an attempt to identify emerging problems, to monitor success and to guide schools in adopting effective strategies to establish safe and

caring school environments. As schools are important education institutions, they are obliged to end the cycle of violence. However, to create safe and violence-free environments, school staff members need to collaborate with learners, their parents and the broader community in addressing the societal systemic violence that has apparently infiltrated our schools (Furlong, Orpinas, Greif & Whipple, 2005).

1.4 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Adelman and Taylor (2006) argue that the problem of unsafe schools is widespread and often linked to societal and environmental factors which may act as barriers to healthy and positive learner development and socialisation. I am in agreement with them that these complex issues call for comprehensive solutions. Slater (2004) states that the ability to work collaboratively with others is becoming an essential component of contemporary school reform. She refers to various societal and educational trends, such as viewing schools as organic, interconnected systems, decentralisation and building community schools, which affect the operations of schools. These new trends require school staff members to review the way they interact with the learners and their families; and Adelman and Taylor (2006) suggest that collaboration among school staff members, learners and their families would bring together the resources and strategies that could assist school staff members with addressing the problem of school-based learner violence (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, pp. 38-43).

The main goal of the study was two-fold: firstly to explore and describe how school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent violence in urban secondary schools and secondly, to provide school staff members, learners, parents and policy makers with a better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted problem of addressing school violence, which should guide them with adopting appropriate violence prevention strategies.

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- To establish the extent to which the school climate impacts on the collaborative efforts of school staff members, learners and their families to address the prevailing forms of violence;

- To identify and describe the nature and prevalence of violence in urban secondary schools;
- To identify and describe what school staff members, learners and parents perceive as the major contributing factors to either promoting or preventing violent behaviour among adolescent learners;
- To explore and describe how school staff members, learners and parents develop their existing capacity, knowledge, skills and resources to address school-based violence;
- To describe how school staff members, learners and parents deal collaboratively with violence in urban secondary schools; and
- To describe what school staff members, learners and parents suggest schools could do to address violent behaviour among learners.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND SUBQUESTIONS OF THE STUDY

A focus on safe schools that should promote the positive development and well being of young people requires schools to put violence prevention on their education agendas. A climate of mutual trust and respect is needed among school staff members, learners and their families to overcome possible personal or institutional barriers to effective collaborative efforts to prevent violence (Twemlow & Cohen, 2003). In reviewing the existing knowledge base on efforts to prevent school violence, it is apparent that effective efforts to prevent violence balance physical security measures and discipline with positive support and skill building, parent and community involvement and an improved school climate. Empirical evidence suggests that when these principles are incorporated in the foundations of school policy and procedures, not only is violence reduced but learners also achieve better, academically and emotionally (Furlong et al., 2005; Osher et al., 2003).

The study was directed by the following research question:

How do school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent violence in urban secondary schools?

The following subquestions emanated from the main research question:

- How does the school climate impact on the collaborative efforts among the school staff members, learners and parents to address the prevailing forms of violence?
- What is the nature and prevalence of learner violence and victimisation in urban secondary schools?
- What do school staff members, learners and parents perceive as the major contributing factors to either promoting or preventing adolescent violent behaviour?
- How do school staff members, learners and parents develop their existing capacity, knowledge, skills and resources to address school-based violence?
- How do school staff members, learners and parents collaboratively deal with violence at secondary schools?
- What can schools in general do to address school-based learner violence?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Theory is important for any research, provided that it has a framework for viewing and contextualising the specific phenomenon being studied. In the present study, theory not only gives a broader insight into violence in general and school violence in particular, but also frames approaches to successful violence prevention strategies. According to Culley and colleagues (2006), effective violence prevention programmes are empirically based and recognise the interdependence of people and their environments at multiple levels (Culley, Conkling, Emshoff, Blakely & Gorman, 2006). The theoretical lens deemed appropriate for viewing the phenomenon of adolescent learners' violent behaviour in the secondary school setting, includes the following theories and perspectives:

1.6.1 Systems Theory

Systems Theory in its broadest sense is the interdisciplinary study of social organisations, such as schools. Many early systems theorists aimed at finding a general systems theory which could explain all systems in all fields of science. The term “systems theory” was coined by biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy. In his book,

General System Theory (1968), he wants to use the term “*system*” to describe the principles that are common to systems in general. He writes: “It seems legitimate to ask of a theory, not of systems of more or less special kind, but of principles applying to systems in general” (Von Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 32).

Systems Theory is the understanding that a system consists of interrelated parts, which interact with one another. All of the parts or components in education are important. Schools are open systems which include the school staff members, parents, learners, administrators, politicians, community leaders and the environment in which the school exists. These components interact not only with one another, but also with the surrounding environment (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 2002, p. 47). In the context of this study, the school as a system is regarded as a set of units with the capacity to interact within the scope of the school, family and community environments. These interactions influence all the different parts of the system, for example, if adults (parents or school staff members) use anger or aggression to solve their own problems, they contribute to an overall climate which condones violence as an acceptable way of resolving problems.

1.6.2 Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory, also called Development in Context or Human Ecology Theory, specifies four types of nested environmental systems, with bi-directional influences within and between the systems. The theory was formulated by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), generally regarded as one of the world’s leading scholars in the field of development psychology. Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Model of Child Development (1979) explains child development as happening within the following four nested systems:

- **The microsystem:** immediate environment (family, school, peer group, neighbourhood, and childcare environments)
- **The mesosystem:** a system comprised of connections between immediate environments (i.e. an adolescent’s home and school)
- **The exosystem:** external environmental settings which only indirectly affect development (such as the parent’s workplace)

- **The macrosystem:** the larger cultural context (i.e. Eastern vs. Western culture, national economy, political culture).

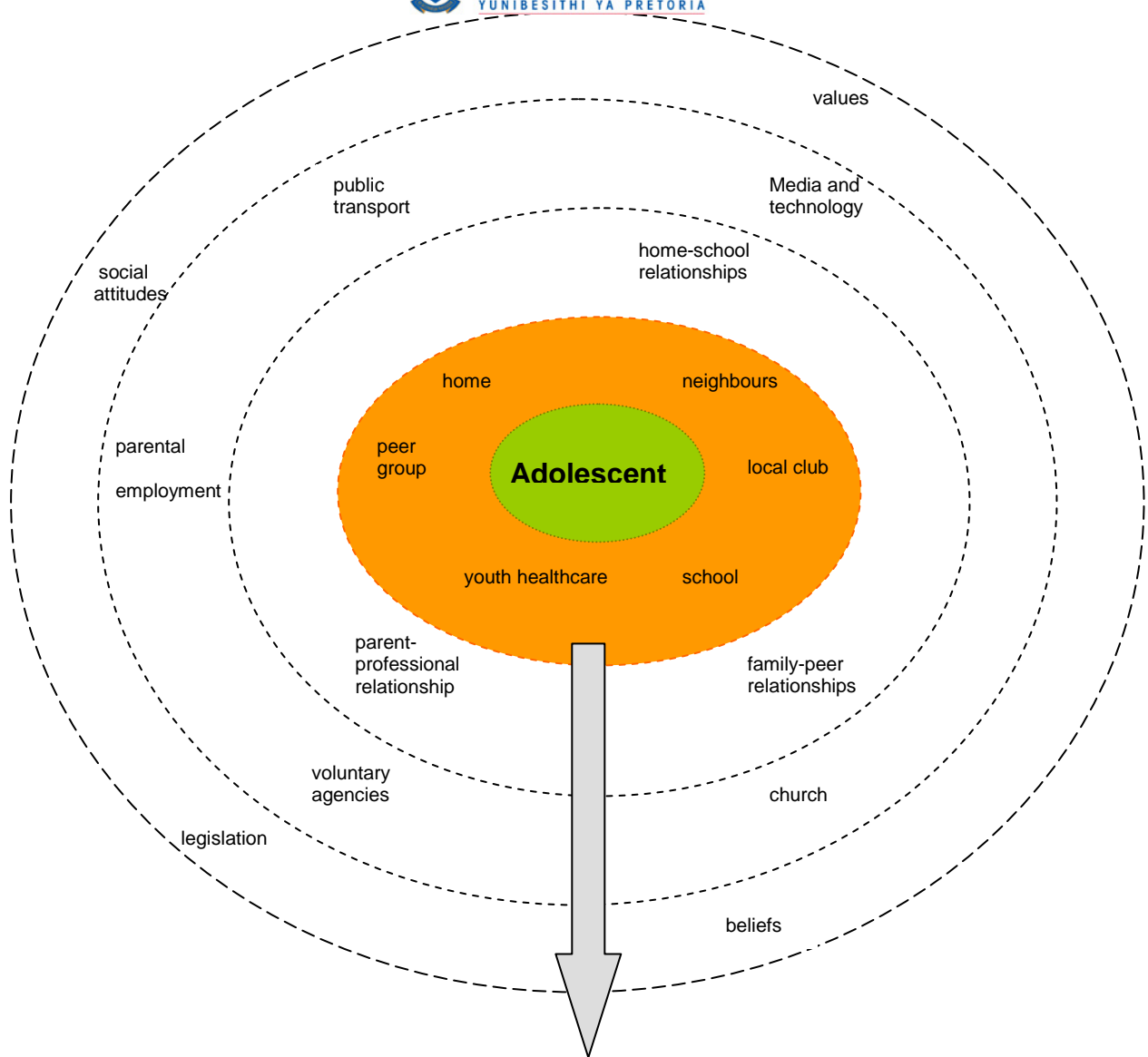
A fifth system was added:

- **The chronosystem:** the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the course of life.

This theory has recently on occasion been called Bio-Ecological Theory, as a person's own biology may be considered part of the microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Donald et al., 2002). Interpersonal violence viewed in the ecological framework is seen as the outcome of the interaction between factors at all four these levels, namely individuals, close relationships, communities and society.

- **The first level – individual:** identifies the biological and personal factors that can increase an individual's likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence (i.e. age, level of education, income, substance use or prior experience of abuse);
- **The second level –relationships:** examines close relationships such as those in family, with friends and peers. It explores how these relationships increase the risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence;
- **The third level –community:** explores the community context in which social relationships occur, such as schools and neighbourhoods; and
- **The fourth level –social factors:** looks at the societal factors that can help create a climate in which violence is encouraged or inhibited. These include social and cultural norms and other larger societal factors such as health, economic, educational and social policies (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

The Social Ecological Framework is illustrated in Figure 1.1 overleaf.



**Key Risk Factors for Youth Violence:
An Ecological Approach**



(Adapted from: Beveridge, 2005 p. 8).

Figure 1.1: The Social Ecological Framework

1.6.3 The ecosystemic perspective

The ecosystemic perspective is an integration of both the ecological and systems theories. This perspective shows that individuals and groups at different levels in the social context are linked in dynamic, interdependent and interacting relationships (Donald et al., 2002). Ecological theory, which forms the basis for the ecosystemic perspective, regards as extremely important the interdependence and relationships between different organisms and their physical environment. Social theorists place the individual person in a social context. In the present study, the adolescent learner is placed in the context of the school and community environment. How the adolescent learner behaves and develops will be influenced by his/her relationships with school staff members, peers, family members and community members, as viewed in systems theory. Therefore, from an ecosystemic perspective, the internal characteristics of an adolescent and the external barriers in the systems in the environment (i.e. home and school) continuously develop and interact with one another (Donald et al., 2002, pp. 44-57).

According to Ozer (2006), there is growing acknowledgement in prevention science in general and in school-based violence prevention in particular, that it is important to go beyond studying the overall effects of a programme to studying for whom the programme is most effective and under what conditions. Greenberg et al. (2001) highlight the following conclusions after reviewing 130 universal, selected prevention programmes for school-aged children (5 to 18 years). Firstly, programmes that focus on the multi-domain (e.g. individual, school and family) are more effective than those that focus on the child only; and secondly, for school-aged children the school ecology and climate should be the central focus of intervention (Greenberg, Domitrovich & Bumbarger, 2001).

Adopting the ecosystemic perspective would help school staff members to understand the multi-level and multi-faceted nature of violence in schools. In contrast to simplistic explanations, the ecological model emphasises that a combination of factors, acting at different levels, influences the likelihood that violence will occur, recur or cease. The various factors relevant to the different levels of the ecological model will also be affected by the context of the settings in which young people interact – the home and

family environment, at school, as well as in their communities and broader society (World Health Organisation, 2005).

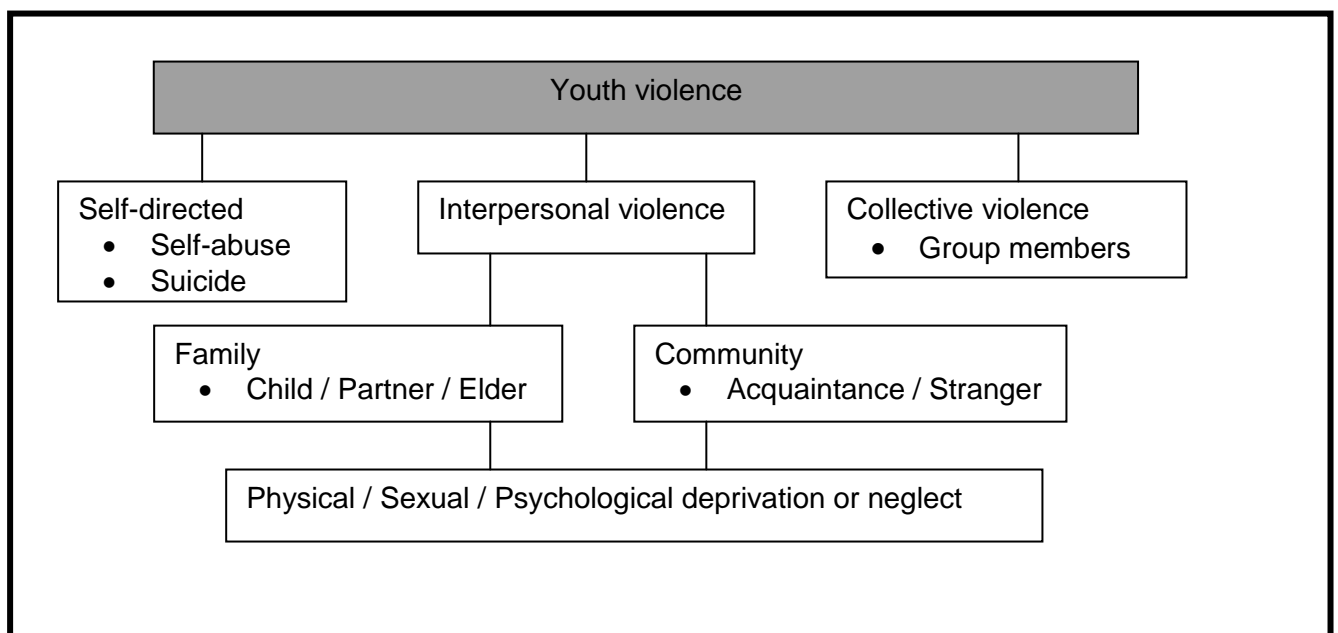
1.6.4 A typology of violence

School staff members should have an understanding of the type and nature of the prevailing forms of violence in their schools if they are to develop effective violence prevention programmes. The World Report on Violence and Health (2002) defines youth violence as follows:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, exerted by or against children, adolescents or young adults, aged 10 to 29, which results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (cited in Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lorenzo, 2002, p. 5).

The general definition of violence is firstly divided into three types of violence according to the relationships between victim and perpetrator, and then each of these is further divided into more specific subtypes of violence. The nature of violence in these types is depicted in Table 1.2 (cited in Krug et al., 2002, p. 5).

Table 1.2: Typology of violence



(Source: Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lorenzo, 2002, p.5)

National and international youth victimisation surveys, using this typology to define youth violence, show that violence is widespread and inappropriately affects young people between 10 and 29 years of age (Leoschut & Burton, 2006; World Health Organisation, 2006) as victims, bystanders or perpetrators. Youth violence includes aggressive behaviour (i.e. verbal abuse, bullying, hitting, slapping or fighting) as well as serious violent or delinquent acts such as aggravated assault, robbery, rape and homicide (Mercy, Butchart, Farrington & Cerdá, 2002). The ultimate goal should be to stop violence before it begins, because violence harms the social fabric of young people and their families in countless ways (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2006).

The ecosystemic perspective combined with the typology of violence was deemed an appropriate framework within which to contextualise this study. The ecological framework provides the mechanism for understanding the levels where different factors exist and which can trigger violence in young people. By identifying these levels, primary prevention intervention can be directly targeted at the specific level. Understanding the types and nature of the prevailing forms of violence in their schools could guide the school staff members with addressing the underlying problems that can contribute to learners behaving violently.

1.7 RESEARCH PARADIGM

A paradigm can be defined as an overarching philosophical or ideological stance. When applied to the research setting, it is the researcher's belief system, on the basis of which he/she goes about producing knowledge (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In the context of this study, as the researcher, my paradigmatic position relates to my understanding of the nature of knowledge (my epistemological viewpoint) and of reality (my ontological standpoint). Although quantitative, positivist approaches, which claim that reality is fixed and that objective knowledge can be produced through rigorous methodology, have been dominant for a large part of the twentieth century, a strong qualitative or interpretative tradition emerged in the 1960s and 1970s. An interpretative researcher maintains that knowledge is socially constructed and reality is ultimately subjective (Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

1.7.1 A sociological interpretative research paradigm

The research problem that the study aimed to address emphasised the need to investigate how school staff members, learners and parents experience and deal with the prevention of interpersonal violence in the school context. The sociological paradigm deemed appropriate for the study is the interpretative paradigm. Interpretative researchers focus on the understanding of research participants, pursuing an analysis based on the constructivist ontological position that individuals actively negotiate meaning. As ontology refers to the study of the nature of reality, a constructivist ontological view is that reality is constructed rather than carved in stone. It is not objectively measurable, and furthermore, individuals construct their reality by associating meaning with certain events or actions (Bryman, 2008). This study has been rooted in the sociological interpretative paradigm. As Rubin and Rubin (2005) suggest, interpretative social research is about figuring out what events mean to the research subjects; how people adapt and how they view what has happened to them and around them. Ezzy (2002) and others argue that identifying this complexity and subjectivity should underpin qualitative research projects.

1.8 RESEARCH APPROACH

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 22) state that the purpose of a research design is to specify a plan for generating empirical evidence which will result in the most credible and valid conclusions derived from responses to the research questions. They classify research approaches into three major categories, namely quantitative, qualitative and mixed-method research. Quantitative research, based on positivism, aims at measuring the social world objectively and at testing hypotheses. A quantitative study can therefore be defined as an investigation into a human or social problem, based on testing a theory consisting of variables, measured with numbers and analysed with statistical procedures to determine whether the predictive hypothesis holds true (Bryman, 2008). By contrast, the qualitative, antipositivistic, interpretative approach aims mainly at understanding social life and the meaning that people associate with their everyday lives. Qualitative research focuses on reporting the meaning, experiences or perceptions of research participants by generating descriptive data in the participants' words (Bryman, 2008).

1.8.1 Qualitative research approach

The qualitative research approach was deemed appropriate for this study because as the researcher my concern was understanding rather than explaining; observing the phenomenon of school violence in a naturalistic setting (the schools) rather than using controlled measures; and subjectively exploring the participants' reality from the perspective of an insider, in contrast to the objective outsider perspective of a quantitative researcher.

1.9 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

De Vos and colleagues (2000) state that the various strategies employed by qualitative researchers will differ, depending on the purpose of the study, the nature of the research question and the resources available to the researcher (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2000, pp.272-274).

1.9.1 Research design

Given the various types of qualitative designs, Creswell (2006) identified five main strategies of enquiry which can be used for conducting qualitative research. These approaches include narrative analysis, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography and case-study design. Although these designs have some features in common, each has a "somewhat different focus, resulting in variations in how the research question might be asked, sample selection, data collection and analysis, and write-up" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The case study is an in-depth exploration and analysis of one or more cases. By focusing on a single phenomenon (or case), this approach provides an in-depth and detailed description of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2006; Merriam, 1998). As my research focus was to discover and understand the perspectives of the participants regarding their collaborative efforts at violence prevention, the case study design was deemed the most suitable research design.

1.9.1.1 An exploratory and descriptive case study design

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002, p. 18) state that a case study is a "specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle. [...] The single instance

is a bounded system.” They suggest that because a case study examines the phenomenon with real people in real situations, it would enable readers to understand ideas better because they are not presented with abstract theories or principles only.

An exploratory and descriptive case study design was employed to enable me to describe, explore and gain a better understanding of how school staff members, learners and parents collaboratively address learner violence in two urban secondary schools. As an interpretative, inductive form of research, case studies explore the details and meanings of experiences and do not usually attempt to test a prior hypothesis. Instead I attempted to identify important patterns and themes in the data. The richness of a case study is related to the amount of detail and contextualisation that is possible when analysing a small number of focal cases and issues. A case study examines a case in detail by employing multiple sources of data found in the settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p.27). I have chosen to conduct an in-depth investigation into the effect that collaborative efforts among school staff members, learners and their parents have on violence prevention in the urban secondary school setting.

1.9.2 Methodology

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2002, p. 44) state that methods refer to the techniques and procedures used in the process of data gathering and they refer to Kaplan (1973) who suggests that the aim of methodology is “to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry, but the process itself” (cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2002, p. 44). Researchers use triangulation, which is the cross-validation among data sources, data collection strategies and theoretical schemes. Different sources, situations and methods are compared to find recurring patterns and themes in the data. The use of multiple methods of data collection also increases the reliability of observations and the trustworthiness of the qualitative data (Creswell, 2006).

1.9.2.1 Data collection strategies

Qualitative research is concerned with understanding social phenomena from the participants’ perspectives. Accordingly, I employed multi-method strategies to obtain

valid data from the participants. The qualitative phases of data collection and analysis are interactive research processes which occur in overlapping cycles (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). A two-pronged approach was followed in the data collection process:

The pilot study: interviews with Principals. After gaining entry to the two school sites, initial in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the two Principals at both sites. This enabled me to evaluate the applicability of the Interview Guide. The Interview Guide was reviewed and adapted accordingly. The data collected from these two interviews was tape-recorded, transcribed (verbatim) and incorporated in the data analysis process.

Main data collection phases. A four-phase sequential data collection process was followed in which I collected data from different sources using multiple methods at both schools.

Phase One: school staff members – in-depth semi-structured interviews. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 350), “in-depth interviews are open-response questions to obtain data of participant meanings – how individuals conceive of the world and how they explain or make sense of the important events in their lives.” Key informant interviews were conducted with selected Grade 9 teachers at both schools, using the Interview Guide. The interview questions focused on the school staff members’ experiences, opinions, values, feelings and perceptions of each topic under discussion. Each individual interview was tape-recorded and transcribed (verbatim) to enhance validity by providing an accurate and relatively complete record of the interviews.

Phase Two: Grade 9 learners – group interviews. To gain a better understanding of the collaborative nature of strategies for the prevention of school violence, I conducted group interviews with a class of Grade 9 learners at both school sites. The interview protocol used was the same as for the individual interviews, and each session was tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and the data incorporated in the data analysis process.

Phase Three: parents – individual, dyad and triad interview sessions. To include all stakeholders in the research process I conducted individual, dyad (pair) and triad (3 participants) interviews with the parents of the Grade 9 learners at both school sites. These interview sessions were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and the data incorporated in the data analysis process. Conducting interviews in small group settings gave opportunities for explicit discussions of differences and opinions, which provided some quality checks and balances on the various views expressed by the participants. This not only increased the validity of the initial individual interview findings but also the credibility of the entire study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 360).

Phase Four: document review. To conclude the data collection process, I reviewed school documents as they pertained to the collaborative nature of the school violence prevention strategies. The documents I reviewed included: the School Prospectus, the School Code of Conduct, the Grade 9 Life Orientation Curriculum and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

Multi-method strategies permitted the triangulation of the data across the different enquiry techniques, providing different insights into the collaborative nature of the violence prevention strategies at the two school sites and increasing the credibility of the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 325).

1.9.2.2 Data analysis procedures

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p.364) state: “Qualitative data analysis is primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns (i.e. relationships) among the categories [...] Most qualitative researchers lean more towards the interpretivist/subjectivist style than the technical/objectivist style” (p.366).

Semi-structured, in-depth interviews and group interviews. I adopted a general inductive content analysis approach to select, categorise, compare and interpret the data collected from the semi-structured in-depth interviews and the group interviews. The data analysis began informally during the interviews and group sessions, and continued during transcription, when recurring themes, patterns and categories emerged. To gain a sense of the whole, all the transcribed data was read to guide me in coding, classifying and naming categories to identify themes. I used the research

questions, interview guide, theoretical frameworks, prior knowledge gained through the literature study and the data itself as a guide for coding and interpreting the data into categories and themes.

Document review. The school documents were reviewed, and the content analysis of these school documents assisted with the triangulation of the data collected from the individual and group interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 374), and concluded the data analysis process.

1.10 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLING STRATEGIES

1.10.1 Purposeful sampling

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 319) refer to Patton (2002, p. 242) by stating that purposeful sampling, in contrast to probabilistic sampling, is “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth, when you want to understand something about those cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases.” The logic of purposeful sampling is that a few cases studied in depth yield many insights into the topic, whereas the logic of probabilistic sampling depends on selecting a random or statistically representative sample to generalise the findings to a larger population.

1.10.2 Site selection

McMillan and Schumacher (2006) suggest that if the research focus is on a complex micro process (such as school-based learner violence), the sites should be purposefully selected to locate the people involved in that particular phenomenon. I obtained permission from the Gauteng Department of Education, the Board of Governors as well as the Principals of the two selected schools to conduct my research at two urban secondary schools situated within the Midrand residential area of Johannesburg. My rationale for purposefully choosing these two secondary school sites was that although they are situated in the same urban area, their learner populations come from vastly different socio-economic backgrounds as well as representing different racial compositions. The first school is a public, co-educational, English-medium secondary school situated in a middle to lower income residential

area. The second school is a co-educational, English-medium private secondary school situated in an affluent residential area.

Neighbourhood characteristics have been found to play an important role in promoting adolescents' well being and their community's characteristics, such as residential stability and income, have been linked to risk-taking attitudes and aggressive behaviour among adolescents (Kowaleski-Jones, 2000 cited in Watt, 2003, p. 346). The different socio-economic and racial composition resulted in obtaining insightful data on the impact that family and community environments have on the incidence of adolescent violence in schools. When reporting on the results of the 2005 National Youth Victimization Study, Leoschut and Burton (2006) conclude that one-fifth of the youth who participated in that study did not feel safe in the communities in which they lived and more than half of them (70, 5%) resided in urban areas (Leoschut & Burton, 2006, p. 19). Internationally, empirical evidence shows that secondary schools are more likely to have violent incidences than primary schools (United States (U.S.) Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2006).

1.10.3 Sample size

The logic of the sample size is related to the purpose, the research problem, the data collection strategies, and the availability of information-rich cases (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 322). It was important to select participants from all the stakeholders at the school, namely the Principals, school staff members, learners and parents at both school sites, as each of these subsystems play an integral part in the school system. The aim of the study was to include the views of all these population units of analysis regarding the collaborative role of their violence prevention strategies. The size of the different participant groups was mainly determined by the availability and willingness of the various participants to take part in the study.

1.10.4 Participant selection

After being granted permission to conduct my research at the two selected school sites, I circulated an Information Letter to all the Grade 9 school staff members, Grade 9 learners and their parents. In this letter, I explained the purpose of the study and the

intended use of the data; and requested their informed consent for volunteers to participate in the study, giving them my assurance of confidentiality and anonymity.

Pilot study: I conducted individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the Principals of both schools.

Main data collection strategy: in-depth, semi-structured interviews with school staff members. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006, p. 351): “Key-informant interviews are in-depth interviews of individuals who have special knowledge, status, or communication skills that they are willing to share with the researcher.” After a ten-minute presentation to the staff members at both school sites, four staff members were selected from the group of volunteers, on the basis of predetermined criteria (see Chapter Three: participant selection).

Supplementary data collection strategies: group interviews. Patton (2002) explains that the focus group interview is an interview with a small number of people (6 to 8) on a specific topic. Typically the participants are a relatively homogenous group of people who are asked to reflect on the questions that the interviewer poses.

Grade 9 learners: at both school sites I addressed a class of Grade 9 learners, explaining the purpose of my research and requesting their informed and voluntary participation. At School One, 22 learners and at School Two, 16 learners volunteered to participate in the research. There were three main reasons for choosing specifically Grade 9 learners as one of the population units of analysis, namely:

- **Windows of opportunity:** research on effective intervention programmes suggest that these programmes take advantage of developmental “windows of opportunity”, i.e. points at which interventions are especially needed or likely to make a difference. The developmental challenges of adolescence are a particular window of opportunity, since antisocial behaviours and aggression tend to peak during adolescence. Therefore, targeting adolescents when designing violence prevention programmes can help them to navigate developmental crises safely and help prevent violence by and towards adolescents (Center for Mental Health in Schools at the University of California, LA, 2004, p. 26).

- **Age of highest risk:** self-report studies indicate that the age of highest risk for the initiation of serious violent behaviour is between 15 and 16 years (Grade 9). Youngsters aged 16 and 17 years are at the highest risk of participating in serious violent acts (Elliott, 1994, p. 2).
- **Peer group pressure:** adolescents' physical and sexual maturity is associated with their drive to gain independence from their parents and families, and to relate strongly to their peers (Donald et al., 2002). Nevertheless, the family and peer networks each serve as critical environments, because parents and peers have a significant influence on the behaviour of adolescents (Culley et al., 2006).

Parents of Grade 9 learners: an information letter explaining the purpose of my research and requesting parents to volunteer to participate, was given to all Grade 9 learners to take home to their parents, at both school sites. I conducted interviews with six parents who volunteered at each school – one individual interview, one dyad (pair interview) and one triad (3 participants) interview (see Chapter Three: participant selection).

1.10.5 Researcher's role

McMillan and Schumacher (2006, pp. 344-346) argue that because of the importance of the researcher's social relationship with the participants, she needs to make explicit her role and status within the group. My role, which was appropriate to the purpose of this qualitative study, was that of interviewer and moderator.

1.10.6 Legal and ethical considerations

I obtained informed written consent from the Gauteng Department of Education, and the Principals of the two schools, to conduct the research. The purposefully selected school staff members, Grade 9 learners and parents of Grade 9 learners were given a Participant Information Letter, requesting their voluntary participation. Informed written consent was obtained from all three population units of analysis. Proxy consent was also obtained from the parents/guardians of the learners who participated in the group sessions. Confidentiality and anonymity were respected and strictly adhered to during

and on completion of the study. I did everything in my power to protect the participants from any physical or emotional harm or discomfort, and personally upheld high levels of integrity and ethics.

1.11 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

To place this study in context, one should understand that this study did not intend to develop a violence prevention programme to be implemented in all schools; or to do a comprehensive analysis of the nature and types of violence in schools. Instead, the intention was to explore and describe the role that collaborative efforts among school staff members, learners and their parents play in creating school climates conducive to violence prevention.

1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

In this section, only certain key concepts are explained to indicate the emphasis of the study. Other important concepts are clarified further in this research report.

1.12.1 Youth violence

In 2001, on the recommendation of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the General Assembly in its resolution 56/138 requested the then United Nation's Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, to commission an in-depth study on the question of violence against children and to put forward recommendations for consideration by Member States for appropriate action. The report on this study, *The World Report on Violence against Children* (2006), was issued in Geneva on 20 November 2006. The study adopted the definition of violence as that of article 19 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (1989), namely "all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation including sexual abuse". It also draws on the definition in the *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002), namely "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against a child, by an individual or group, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity" (in Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lorenzo, 2002, p. 5).

Most international and local researchers adopt one or both of these definitions of violence in their studies on violence. Krug et al. (2002, p. 5) use the *World Report on Violence and Health* (2002) to define youth violence as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, exerted by or against children, adolescents or young adults, ages 10 to 29, which results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation (in Krug et al., 2002, p.5).

For the purpose of this study, I used the above definition of youth violence (Krug et al., 2002) as it pertains to adolescent learners in the school, home and community environments.

1.12.2 Risk factors and protective factors

Extensive research has sought to identify various personal characteristics and environmental conditions that either place children and adolescents at risk of violent behaviour or that seem to protect them from the effects of risk. Risk and protective factors can be found in every aspect of the adolescent's life. Research has identified various individual, family, peer groups, school and community risk factors which can contribute to youth violence. These factors seem to exert different effects at different stages of development (Mercy, Butchart, Farrington & Cerdá, 2002). During adolescence, the influence of family is largely replaced by peer influence. It seems that in this age group (13 to 18-year-old youth), the strongest risk factors are weak ties to conventional peers, belonging to a gang and involvement in other criminal acts (Elliott & Tolan, 1999). Risk factors seem to operate in clusters and the greater the number of risk factors to which a young person is exposed, the greater the likelihood that he/she will become violent (Herrenkohl, Maguin, Hill, Hawkins, Abbott & Catalano, 2000).

Protective factors seem to act as buffers, protecting young people from becoming violent. These factors are also present at the various levels but to date these protective factors have not been studied as extensively as risk factors. However, it is equally as important to identify and understand protective factors as it is to research the risk factors (Resnick, Ireland & Borowsky, 2004). Violence prevention and intervention

efforts depend on identifying possible risk and protective factors. To be effective, such efforts must be appropriate to a young person's stage of development and specifically targeted at that age group – for this study, that is the adolescent learner aged 15 to 16 years.

1.12.3 Collaboration

Adelman and Taylor (2006, p.38) assert that collaboration involves more than simply working together. In the context of school-community collaboration, all the stakeholders – school staff members, learners, families and community members and agencies, should bring together their resources and strategies to enhance safe and caring schools and communities that support all youth and their families and enable success at school and beyond. The defining feature of collaboration is for all participants to establish an autonomous structure for accomplishing goals which would be difficult for any of the participants to achieve on their own. A collaborative structure requires shared governance (power, authority, decision making, accountability) and bringing together a set of resources to pursue the shared vision and goals (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, p. 42). In the context of this study, the collaborative efforts among the school staff members, learners and their families towards establishing a positive school climate that would support the healthy development of all the learners were explored. Collaboratively, the whole school-community could develop positive links with one another to establish a multi-disciplinary networking approach to combating violence in secondary schools, which could result in safer schools and communities (Finnish Centre for Health Promotion, 2006).

1.12.4 School climate and culture

Although the concept school climate has been studied extensively, there is a lack of agreement about the definition of the construct. Terms such as “atmosphere” or “feelings” or simply “climate” are used (Sackney, 1988, p. 3) whereas others have chosen to use terms such as “culture” (Deal, 1985) and “school ethos” (Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston & Smith, 1979) for referring to the internal characteristics of the school. Tangiuri (1968) defines climate as the total environmental quality within an organisation, consisting of the following four dimensions:

- Ecology (physical and material aspects)
- Milieu (social dimensions created by characteristics of groups of people)
- Culture (social dimensions created by belief systems, values, cognitive structures and meaning), and
- Social system (social dimensions created by the relationships of people and groups) (Tangiuri, 1968, p. 2 in Anderson, 1982, pp. 368-420).

Anderson (1982) argues that Tangiuri's definition is preferable to those of others because "it reflects the growing consensus of many school climate researchers that school climate includes the total environmental quality within a given school building" (Anderson, 1982, p. 369). In the context of this study, the term school climate was used to explain the interrelatedness and interdependence of all the dimensions of the school, namely its ecology, its milieu, the culture and existing social systems, as suggested by Tangiuri (1968). As Boyd (1992) explains, bringing all these dimensions of the school together creates its environment or context.

1.12.5 Prevention and intervention programmes

Numerous violence prevention and intervention programmes have been developed to target different groups and types of aggressive or violent youth behaviours.

Prevention programmes: true or primary prevention programmes are implemented on a universal scale aimed at preventing the onset of youth violence and related risk factors. Some are designed to change individual risk factors, others target environmental risk factors, and yet others are designed to change both individual and environmental risk factors. Primary prevention programmes are usually population-based, involving youth, peers, educators, schools and families, and are designed to promote pro-social behaviour. Secondary prevention programmes, however, target youth who are at high risk of becoming violent (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Intervention programmes: intervention is defined as reducing the risk of violence among young people who display one or more risk factors for violence, or preventing further violence or the escalation of violence among youths who are already involved in violent behaviour. These types of intervention are also known as secondary and

tertiary prevention, respectively (United States Department of Health and Human Services, 2001).

Although there is some overlap between prevention and intervention efforts, the programmes that are most effective in general populations of young people are not always effective in reducing further violence among seriously delinquent youths (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Czeh, Cantor, Crosse & Hantman, 2000). The information gathered from the school staff members, learners and their families about identifying the individual and environmental risk and protective factors that they perceive as impacting on the 15- to 16-year-old (Grade 9) age group's inclination to become violent, can assist them with designing effective prevention programmes to reduce violence by changing the individual risk and environmental factors.

1.12.6 Adolescent learners

Adolescence is a period of transition from childhood to adulthood. The age boundaries are not exact but early adolescence usually starts at the age of 10 or 11 to age 14, middle adolescence from the age of 15 and 16, and late adolescence from the age of 17 to 18. The onset of adolescence is usually indicated by rapid physical growth and the hormonal changes of puberty (Patten & Robertson, 2001). This study focused on the middle adolescence group, namely the 15- and 16-year-olds, because as Elliott (1994, p. 2) suggests this is the age of highest risk for the initiation of serious violent behaviour. This is also the age group where young people strive for independence from their parents and when they relate strongly to their peers (Donald et al., 2002). Peer pressure has been shown to be a significant predictor of the extent to which adolescents engage in violence (Culley et al., 2006).

1.12.7 Family/Parent

Webster's New College Dictionary (1997) defines the traditional family as: "all of the people living in the house; household." Unlike previous years, today's family does not necessarily consist of two parents and their biological children, where the father goes to work and the mother stays at home to raise the children. Children today may be raised by single parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, non-married heterosexual couples, non-married homosexual couples or they may be raised by siblings or live in

foster care (Williams & Huitt, 1999). In the context of this study, parents refer to the people who act as the caregivers or guardians of the learners when the biological parent(s) does/do not play that role. Family-related circumstances have to be considered when teaching adolescents, because they bring with them into the classroom not only the structural differences of their families, but also the problems of their families (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). All these circumstances can have a significant impact on how the adolescent learner behaves at school.

1.12.8 Community and neighbourhood

Educating a child takes co-operation and involvement from school staff members, parents, families and the community. Everyone has heard the saying, 'it takes a village to raise a child', but as discussed in 1.12.7 (Family/Parent) we now see an increasing number of children and youth being raised in less than ideal conditions. For the purpose of this study, community and neighbourhood refer to the environment in which the adolescent learner resides, as well as where the school is situated.

1.13 CONTENTS OF THE RESEARCH REPORT

This chapter explains my motivation for undertaking this qualitative, exploratory and descriptive case study, grounded in the socio-ecological theoretical framework. In the remaining chapters I describe my approach to addressing the posed research question. In **Chapter Two**, the literature review, I review and synthesise the existing empirical evidence as it relates to adolescent school violence prevention. In **Chapter Three** I justify my choice of employing a qualitative research design by describing the methodology for collecting, managing, documenting and analysing the data. In **Chapter Four** I present the main research findings and discuss and interpret the five major themes that emerged from the data as the data relate to the research question, socio-ecological theoretical framework and the existing empirical evidence. In **Chapter Five**, the final chapter, I draw my conclusions in terms of the original research objectives and questions; I reflect on the possible significance and limitations of the study and conclude with recommendations for practice and future research in the field of school-based adolescent violence prevention.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FOUNDATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The review of the existing knowledge base on adolescent violence in the school context supports the central argument of this chapter, namely that prevention programmes ought to be a collaborative effort among learners, parents and school staff members, focusing on developing the young person's strengths, in order to address interpersonal school violence effectively. This chapter begins with a brief overview of the developmental stages and social needs of adolescents, seen from a developmental and ecosystemic perspective. Different forms of adolescent school violence and their contributing risk and protective factors are then examined, followed by a discussion of empirically proven effective strategies for the prevention of school violence. The chapter concludes by examining the existing empirical evidence on the effect that collaborative home-school partnerships have on promoting the positive development of adolescents, and that can assist with addressing school violence.

2.2 THE ADOLESCENT: A DEVELOPMENTAL AND ECOSYSTEMIC PERSPECTIVE

Research on youth violence has identified certain personal characteristics and environmental conditions that place children and youth at risk of engaging in violent behaviour or that seem to protect them from that risk. These characteristics and conditions – risk and protective factors, respectively – are present not only in the individual young person but also in every social setting in which youth find themselves, namely their family, school, peer group and community (Developmental Research and Programs Inc, 2000; Office of the Surgeon General, 2001; Smith & Sandu, 2004).

Schools accommodate adolescent learners who may deal with emerging lifestyles which seem to tolerate weapons, drugs and dysfunctional behaviour. Adolescents bring the impact of these experiences to school (Riner & Saywell, 2002). The social, emotional, physical and intellectual development of children and young people should

be the main focus and concern of schools and school staff members (Berns, 2007). However, the increase in the number of acts of interpersonal violence among learners, ranging from name-calling and bullying to acts of physical violence and assault, work destructively to develop these negative areas (Morrison, 2007; Oosthuizen, 2005).

Empirical evidence indicates that successfully addressing the issues that could contribute to the development of interpersonal youth violence, one has to take into account the developmental stages of the learner and also explore the impact of the learner's immediate social environment (i.e. home, school, peer group and neighbourhood) (Youngblade, Theokas, Schulenberg, Curry, Huang & Novak, 2007; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007).

2.2.1. The ecology of human development

Ecology involves studying humans in their physical, social and cultural environments, all of which are affected by societal change. Human ecology involves the biological, psychological, social and cultural contexts in which a developing person, in this instance, the adolescent learner, interacts and the consequent learning and behavioural trends that develop over time (Berns, 2007; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998).

Bronfenbrenner's (1993) definition of the ecology of human development is as follows:

The scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation, throughout the life course, between an active, growing, highly complex bio-psychological organism characterised by a distinctive complex of evolving interrelated dynamic capacities for thought, feeling, and action – and the changing properties of the immediate setting in which the developing person lives as the process is affected by the relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded (Bronfenbrenner, 1993, p.7).

Human ecology therefore involves the interrelationships between humans and their environments, including the consequent psychological, social and cultural processes over time (Berns, 2007).

2.2.2 An ecological model of adolescent development

As discussed in Chapter 1, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model has four basic structures – the micro, meso, exo and macrosystems – in which relationships and interactions take place to form the patterns that affect the development of humans, such as the adolescent learner (Bronfenbrenner, 1989).

From an ecological perspective, adolescence can be described as the period in human development that results from the interaction between individual characteristics and the social systems in which the adolescent participates directly (i.e. family, school, peer group and community) or that have an indirect effect upon the adolescent's behaviour and development (e.g. the school board or the state legislature). Accordingly, the interplay of physical, social and psychological influences is particularly important for the optimal development of adolescents (Berns, 2007).

A systems approach to adolescent development is based on the idea that the adolescent is a system, made up of the many organ systems inside the boundaries of the body. The adolescent is also part of some larger systems, such as the adolescent's family and his/her school. The physical environment plays an important role in the various systems that comprise and include the adolescent. Therefore, the individual adolescent's experience is seen as part of a set of subsystems working within even larger systems "as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). Concerns about adolescent development, both positive and negative, can be expressed in a systematic way which allows us to organise empirical information, theoretical issues and public concerns – such as school violence (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The systems approach examines the environment in which the adolescent lives at four levels beyond the individual organism, namely from the micro to the macro level.

Although societies differ in what they value and in their norms for behaviour, some basic human needs are found in every society. All humans have physical needs (e.g. food and shelter) and psychological needs (e.g. affection and continuity). Within these universal needs, development is shaped also by social class, gender, religion, ethnicity, and genetics, representing either opportunities for development or risks counteracting healthy development. The combination of individual characteristics and characteristics

of the environment is the central concept of human ecology (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Berns, 2007).

2.2.2.1 Adolescent developmental periods and areas

Opportunities for development arise when the adolescent's relationships find the emotional and social support that is in line with their needs and capacities at a specific point in their developing lives. The best fit between adolescents and their environment must be worked out through individual experience and then adapted again as development proceeds and situations change (Berns, 2007; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Risk to development can come from direct threats and also from the absence of normal expectable opportunities. Besides obvious biological risks (e.g. malnutrition and injury), there are socio-cultural risks which can undermine development, such as the absence of positive experiences and relationships (Berns, 2007).

Children and adolescents act in vastly different ways at specific age levels. Developmental periods are usually divided into the following time periods, namely Infancy (birth to 2 years), Early Childhood (2 – 6 years), Middle Childhood (6 – 10 years), Early Adolescence (10 – 14 years), and Late Adolescence (14 – 18 years). The last-mentioned developmental period was the unit of analysis for this study (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Children and young people also develop all the time in several closely related but different areas. The following developmental areas have an impact on the behaviour that children and young people display.

Physical development involves bodily changes, including growth and hormonal changes. Puberty, a phase of physiological changes, includes the development of the sexual reproductive system triggered by the release of hormones (Manning & Bucher, 2005) and remarkable development in adolescents' brains (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). These physical changes enable the young person to perform new behavioural tasks (Finestone, 2004). Educators and parents should realise that these physical developmental characteristics may affect the young person's emotional, psychological and social development (Wiles, Bondi & Wiles, 2006).

Intellectual development refers to young people's increased ability to understand and reason. The development of a young person's cognitive abilities shapes his/her

perception and understanding of the world, which will guide that person's behaviour (Finestone, 2004). Educators ought to consider the varying intellectual developmental differences among adolescents when planning violence prevention strategies (Manning & Bucher, 2005). Schools, which are generally recognised as places where adolescents learn socially appropriate behaviour, have become places where interpersonal tension between teachers and learners, and among learners, has increasingly resulted in various forms of violent behaviour (McLin, 2006). McLin (2006) asserts that many learners do not understand the consequences of their behaviour and do not have the ability to plan appropriate actions, which seriously limits their ability to make intelligent social decisions (McLin, 2006).

Emotional development is characterised by adolescents' search for independence and personal identity. It is a time when young people seek their own sense of individuality and uniqueness. A greater understanding of these young people's own feelings should assist them with developing suitable behavioural patterns but their emotional variability puts them at risk of making decisions with negative consequences (Scales, 2003). Individual differences in emotional functioning are the result of biology (e.g. temperament and gender-specific hormones) and the environment (e.g. socialisation by parents, peers and culture) (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007).

Adolescents face the large task of establishing a sense of identity. Their new cognitive skills give them the ability to reflect on who they are and what makes them unique. However, the individual still has to be able to operate successfully as part of a social group – for example with his/her peers. Adolescents need to develop the relationship skills that will allow them to get along with others and make friends. The specific skills they have to master as part of their emotional development include skills such as recognising and managing emotions, developing empathy, learning to resolve conflict constructively and developing a co-operative spirit (American Psychological Association, 2002).

Emotional Intelligence, according to Goleman (1995), is the ability one has to monitor and regulate emotions effectively and appropriately, including the emotions displayed by others. Lynn (2002) claims that emotional intelligence explains why, despite similar intellectual capacity (IQ), training or experience, some people excel whereas others of the same calibre lag behind. Goleman (1995, 1998) outlines a framework of the skills

involved in identifying, understanding and managing emotions. They are divided into two subcategories: Personal Competences and Social Competences. The Personal Competences category determines how the young person will manage his/her self and include self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation. The Social Competences category determines how the young person will handle relationships and includes empathy and social skills (Goleman, 1995, 1998). Emotional intelligence is now seen as an intelligence which can and should be developed in children and adolescents to assist them with developing a range of skills and competences to achieve their full intellectual and emotional potential (Maree & Ebersöhn, 2002).

Social development refers to a young person's ability to relate to other people and to develop the appropriate interaction patterns required in a social situation (Finestone, 2004). Adolescents have a strong need to belong to a group – and peer approval becomes more important as adult approval decreases in importance (Scales, 2003). Educators must recognise the importance of friendships and peer interactions when planning violence prevention programmes (Kellough & Kellough, 2008).

Socialisation can be described as the process by which individuals, such as the adolescent learner, acquire the knowledge and skills that enable them to participate as effective members of groups and of society as a whole. It is a reciprocal, dynamic process, in which young people play an active role in their own socialisation as a result of their biology, their culture and their individual life experiences (Berns, 2007). Socialisation is aimed at developing a young person's self-concept, teaching the appropriate social roles and using developmental skills at social, emotional and cognitive levels (Berns, 2007). The biological changes occurring during puberty interact with social environmental factors to influence the behaviour of the adolescent (Perry, 2000).

Psychologist Robert Havighurst (1972) examined how society's expectations with regard to certain behavioural skills change as the individual matures (chronosystem influence), using the term developmental task to explain this aspect of socialisation (Havighurst, 1972 in Berns, 2007). Havighurst (1972) states: "A developmental task is midway between an individual need and a societal demand. It assumes an active learner interacting with an active social environment" (Havighurst, 1972, p. vi, in Gay, Williams & Flagg-Williams, 1997, p. 2). Havighurst adds that specific developmental

tasks arise at certain periods in the life span of an individual and that successfully achieving these tasks leads to success with later tasks. By contrast, failure leads to unhappiness, disapproval by society and difficulty for the individual with later developmental tasks (Havighurst, 1972 in Gay, Williams & Flagg-Williams, 1997, p. 2). The specific developmental tasks include accomplishments related to autonomy, sexuality, attachment, intimacy, achievement and identity (Havighurst, 1972; Perry, 2000). Adolescents strive to accomplish the following tasks:

- To become independent and able to make their own decisions
- To understand their changing social-sexual roles and sexual identity
- To change their relationships with their parents by achieving emotional independence
- To achieve new and more mature relationships with their peers
- To focus their ambitions on their futures
- To transform their images of themselves to accommodate their physical and psychological changes.

These tasks have been described as the driving forces in adolescent behaviour (Havighurst, 1972; Perry, 2000). The promotion of positive youth development is complementary to the goal of successfully achieving the developmental tasks of adolescence (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002).

Moral development is associated with a young person's ability to make ethical choices, so becoming more aware of the differences between right and wrong (Finestone, 2004). One of the greatest social changes for adolescents is the new importance of their peers and gaining their independence from their families. By identifying with peers, adolescents start to develop moral judgement and values, and to explore how they differ from their parents (American Psychological Association, 2002).

All of the developmental changes that adolescents undergo prepare them to experiment with new behaviours but this experimentation can result in risk-taking, which is a normal part of adolescent development. Engaging in risk-taking behaviour helps adolescents to shape their identities, try out their new decision-making skills, and gain peer acceptance and respect (Roth & Brook-Gunn, 2000). Unfortunately, some of the risks that adolescents take may affect their health and well being. The behaviours

of most concern are smoking, drinking alcohol and using drugs, precocious and unprotected sexual behaviour, unhealthy eating practices, and violent, deviant, or risky behaviours (American Psychological Association, 2002).

2.2.2.2 The development of pro-social and aggressive behaviour

Many researchers have studied the causes of and connection between the two types of interpersonal behaviour, namely pro-social behaviour and aggression, especially among adolescents (Berns, 2007; McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Pro-social behaviour is regarded as actions intended to promote the well being of another person, whereas aggression is an action intended to hurt another person, either physically or psychologically (McDevitt & Ormrod, 2007). Existing theories explaining the causes of aggression include the following general categories: it is genetically and biologically influenced; it is a learned behaviour; it is an information-processing impulse response to frustration; it is a result of social cognitive factors such as peer group pressure, and it is socialised by ecological (environmental) factors (Berns, 2007).

Genetics refers to the individual characteristics of the parents that are passed on to their children, which can influence the way adolescents behave (Rose, 2007). Research analyses of the relationship between biological factors and aggressive behaviour conclude that aggression occurs indirectly through the interaction of biological processes and environmental events (Dodge & Pettit, 2003). Reid and colleagues (2002) have synthesised the findings on aggression in the hypothesis that the route to chronic delinquency is marked by a reliable developmental sequence of ecological experiences. The first experience in this sequence is ineffective parenting which may be influenced by factors such as socio-economic status, neighbourhood and level of education. The second is a behavioural conduct disorder leading to academic failure and peer rejection, which may in turn lead to an increased risk of becoming part of a deviant peer group. The last in the sequence occurring in early adolescence is chronic delinquent behaviour (Reid, Patterson & Snyder, 2002). Therefore, antisocial behaviour appears to be a developmental characteristic which begins early in life and often continues into adolescence and adulthood.

The success of every young person's socialisation process also depends on a series of interactions with significant socialising agents, such as parents, teachers, peers and

the media (Collins, Maccoby, Steinberg, Hetherington & Bornstein, 2000). Families and cultures affect children's and young people's pro-social or aggressive tendencies. For example, at one end of the continuum is authoritarian parenting, especially when expressed through physical punishment or abuse. At the other end of the continuum, permissive parenting appears to foster aggression and other antisocial behaviour. Families that display pro-social behaviours, and explain why certain behaviour is unacceptable, promote pro-social behaviour in their children (Harris, 2006).

Schools provide additional contexts in which young people can learn either pro-social or aggressive behaviours. Unfortunately, various forms and levels of aggressive behaviour (i.e. racial and sexual harassment, bullying, vandalism), are fairly common in schools nowadays (Garbarino, Bradshaw & Vorrasi, 2002). The reality is that many young people today encounter aggression in their homes, schools and communities (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Hamby, 2005).

In concluding this section, it is evident that although one cannot deny the existence of problems during the adolescent years, or the importance of efforts to prevent problems, the best way to prevent problem behaviour from a developmental systems perspective is to focus on adolescent strengths instead of deficits, and to promote positive changes across the adolescent stage of life (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Lerner, 2006). In short, all policies, programmes and interventions should be designed for the specific target population and, in particular, to suit a group's developmental and environmental circumstances (Kiesner & Kerr, 2004; Schulenberg, 2006; Youngblade & Curry, 2006).

2.3 ADOLESCENT VIOLENCE IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

The safety of South African learners has become a matter of national concern, because many incidents of school-based violence are reported (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2006). School violence has a negative effect on the quality of the education that learners receive, as well as undermining their right to a safe environment as prescribed in Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Burton, the Research Director of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (2007), comments that of equal concern is that the extent, scale and nature of violent behaviour in South African schools are largely unknown. For various reasons, including low reporting rates, fear and

intimidation, and a lack of a co-ordinated response and monitoring system, there are no accurate data available (Burton, 2007).

2.3.1 The extent and prevalence of violence in South African schools

This gap in the data was partially addressed by the National Youth Victimization Study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2005. The study interviewed over 4 500 young people nationally, aged between 12 and 22 years. A summary of the main findings of this study (Leoschut & Burton, 2006) follows below.

2.3.1.1 Criminal acts of violence

The findings of the National Youth Victimization Study (Leoschut & Burton, 2006) indicate that for crimes against the individual, the school environment was cited repeatedly as the site of the victimisation, as indicated by the following statistics.

- In total more than half (52,4%) of those who reported thefts, had their property stolen at school
- More than one-quarter (26%) of those assaulted reported that this had happened at school
- School was also the most common site for sexual assaults, with over one-fifth (21,1%) of sexual assaults occurring at school
- Schools were the second most common site for robberies, as 13,7% of those who reported robberies had been robbed while at school.

However, many incidents of violence are probably not reported, as friends, schoolmates and other adults put pressure on the victim to prevent reporting the crime. Therefore many school authorities are often not aware of the scale of any problem or violence in their schools (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). An alarming fact is that the perpetrator of the crime is known to the majority of the young people interviewed. These findings are in accordance with international literature, pointing to people known to children and young people as the most common perpetrators of violence and personal crimes (Finkelhor, Ormrod, Turner & Hamby, 2005). Most commonly, the offences listed above were committed by classmates, other school-going children and people known to the victim in the community (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

These research findings confirm the results released by the Human Rights Watch in 2001, on alleged sexual violence and harassment involving schoolgirls from a variety of different social, economic and ethnic backgrounds (Human Rights Watch Report, 2001). The results of the Human Rights Watch Report (2001) show that sexual violence occurs in prestigious, predominantly white schools, in impoverished predominantly black township schools, in schools for the learning-disabled and even in primary schools. The forms of violence experienced in the school system included rape and sexual coercion, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, intimidation, sexualised touching, or emotional abuse in the form of threats of violence. The findings were that the different forms of sexual violence had been committed by other learners, by teachers or other school employees (Human Rights Watch Report, 2001).

2.3.1.2 Non-criminal acts of violence

In addition to the above criminal acts of violence, school-going children in South Africa commonly experience a range of non-criminal acts of violence in and related to the school environment. These acts are associated with travelling to and from school, as well as acts of bullying, teasing and taunting, and other acts which instil fear and insecurity and cause trauma to children and young people. The following information was released by the National Youth Victimization Study (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

- 16,8% of those interviewed reported that they feared travelling to and from school
- 12,8% of participants reported that they were particularly afraid of certain areas in the school. Nearly half (49,3%) identified the toilet area at the school as the most frightening. Other areas identified included open grounds (16%), playgrounds or sports fields (10,7%) and the principal's office (11,5%)
- Threats and intimidation were common occurrences at these young people's schools. One in five (20,9%) of the participants reported that they had been threatened or hurt by someone at school. In nearly half of these cases (43,9%) the offender was a fellow learner, or classmates (38,1%) or other children outside the respondents' schools (8,1%) (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Of those who had been threatened, scared or hurt at school, nearly half (49,1%) reported that this had occurred once, whereas more than a third (33,4%) had been victimised in this way two to five times (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Insults and other forms of verbal abuse also proved to be widespread in South African schools. Nearly a third (32,8%) of the young people participating in the National Youth Victimization Study reported that they had been teased, insulted or otherwise scared at school. More males (34,3%) than females (31,3%) had been insulted at school. The perpetrators in these incidents were primarily classmates (54,1%), other learners attending the same school (36,7%) and children from other schools (4,3%). Some participants (9,5%) also revealed that other people at school had compelled them to engage in wrongful activities against their will. The majority of these were males (59%) and respondents in the age groups of 12-14 (10,1%) and 18-20 (10,4%) years (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

Corporal punishment as a means of discipline was also widespread among the participants: more than half (51,4%) the participants reported being caned or spanked at school for their offences. Corporal punishment, however, is now effectively illegal in South Africa, and when it occurs, it constitutes an act of assault by the educator against the learner. Moreover the continued use of corporal punishment merely serves to reinforce violence as an acceptable part of everyday life (Leoschut & Burton, 2006). These findings suggest that many young people are at constant risk of danger at school, even from teachers and principals. Another alarming reality is the staged fights, bullying and other acts of aggression and violence that have been recorded on cameras and cell phones, which seem to be becoming increasingly common in schools (Leoschut & Burton, 2006).

2.3.2 The nature of school violence: a national and international perspective

These findings from South African studies are in accord with international research findings on the nature of adolescent violence in the school context. Violence continues to be the second leading cause of death among young people, and bullying and other forms of aggression are both serious and prevalent. Consequently, research on how to prevent the problem has intensified during the past decade (United Nations Secretary-General's Study on Violence against Children, 2006).



2.3.2.1 Aggressive behaviour

Extreme forms of youth violence have received a great deal of attention worldwide for decades, though less attention has been given to lesser forms of violence, such as bullying. Only during the past decade have aggression and bullying in schools moved from being considered a “normal” part of growing up to a public health and social problem which must be addressed and solved. This change in perspective is the result of research, showing the high prevalence of physical, verbal and relational aggression in schools and the emotional and physical damage caused by all forms of aggression (Furlong, Orpinas, Greif & Whipple, 2005). Aggressive behaviours are considered less extreme than violent behaviours (e.g. homicide, rape, robbery and aggravated assault) and include physical, verbal, relational and sexual aggression. Furlong et al. (2005) give definitions and examples of these types of aggression as follows:

Table 2.1: Types of aggression

Physical aggression: the intentional use of physical force with the potential for causing death, disability, injury or harm	
Biting	Kicking
Burning	Poking with hands or objects
Choking	Pulling hair
Damaging property	Pushing or shoving
Forcing someone’s head into water/mud	Throwing objects with the intent to hurt
Hitting, punching or slapping with hand/fist	Forcing someone to do any of the above
Verbal aggression: the intentional use of words with the potential for causing psychological or emotional harm	
Blackmailing	Teasing, ridiculing, taunting or provoking
Coercing	Threatening physical harm
Encouraging others to fight	Threatening to use a weapon
Hassling	Yelling or shouting angrily
Putting down, insulting or name-calling	Making racist and sexist taunts
Relational aggression: behaviours which harm others through peer relationships	
Disclosing personal information inappropriately	Leaving a learner out of an activity
Excluding someone from a group	Sending negative notes about someone
Gossiping	Spreading rumours
Isolating others during lunch or sport	Withdrawing friendship
Keeping others from liking a learner	
Sexual harassment: any unwelcome and unsolicited words or conduct of a sexual nature	
Being forced to do something sexual	Making unwanted or unsolicited sexual comments
Engaging in indecent exposure	Jokes, sexual propositions, suggestive gestures
Staring at body parts	Suggestive facial expressions
Peeping into dressing rooms	Touching, pinching, grabbing or fondling

(Source: Furlong, Orpinas, Greif & Whipple, 2005, p.19).

2.3.2.2 Bullying

Many international researchers consider bullying a subset of aggression (Olweus, 2001; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefoghe, 2002). Olweus (2001) defines bullying as “repeated acts of aggression, intentionally designed to harm a person who is weaker than the bully” (in Furlong, Orpinas, Greif & Whipple, 2005, p. 20). Current research shows that learners tend to dislike learners who are victims of bullying and they suggest that effective prevention programmes should work towards developing social norms that would prohibit bullying and encourage supportive behaviour by learners (Olweus, 2001; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson & Liefoghe, 2002).

Although much is known about bullying in developed countries such as Europe and the United States of America, there are very little data about the extent of bullying in developing countries, including South Africa (Ohsako, 1999). Liang, Flisher and Lombard (2007) conducted a quantitative research study on 5 074 adolescent learners in Grades 8 and 11 at 72 government schools in Cape Town and Durban, to determine whether bullying trends in South Africa are similar to those in developed countries and whether bullying behaviour may also be an indicator of other risk-taking behaviours. This has been the first large-scale study addressing the important issue of bullying among adolescents in South Africa (Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007).

The results of this South African study confirm that bullying is a serious problem in South African schools, as 36,3% of those who participated in this study were involved in acts of bullying. The findings are also consistent with those from international research, in that bullies have the highest ratio for drinking alcohol and they are more likely to engage in violent, antisocial and risk-taking behaviours (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpela, Rantanen & Rimpela, 2000). Empirical evidence highlights the fact that the origins of bullying are often complex and it is important for educators to select an intervention that has the “best fit” with their school ecology (Furlong et al., 2005).

2.3.3 Risk factors and protective factors influencing violent adolescent behaviour: an ecological framework

Factors that influence adolescent behaviour have been examined within and between multiple domains, including genetic and biological factors, social and environmental

factors and personal factors (Perry, 2000). Recently, several researchers have begun to use the term risk factors and protective factors in these domains to define the factors that seem to increase or decrease, respectively, the occurrence of health-compromising behaviour or conversely, health-enhancing behaviour. The identification of these factors explains why adolescents engage in particular behaviours and become the foundation for intervention or prevention design (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002; Perry, 1999).

Researchers are increasingly investigating the role of the social environment and social context of adolescents. As Perry (1999) explains: “Adolescents are searching the social environment for clues on how to accomplish their developmental tasks, and peers, family members, other adults and the media all become their mentors” (Perry, 1999, p.229). Therefore, the way that the environment fits the needs of adolescents becomes critical to successful development.

Masten and colleagues (1999) stress that most factors with demonstrated protective capacity are not merely the opposite of risk factors, although some are. Most protective factors intersect with one another and with risk factors to create a risk/assets gradient for individual young people (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy & Ramirez, 1999). Many protective factors have been identified empirically but how these protective factors work to reduce negative outcomes and/or promote positive ones is not so clear (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001). Figure 2.1 overleaf represents an ecological model of the childhood antecedents of adolescent health risk behaviours and health outcomes.



Macrolevel environment

- Political realities
- Youth laws/policies
- Macrolevel economics
- Historical events

Social environment

<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Arrests by age, type - Poverty - Single parent/female head - Medicaid (proportion and payment) - Access to tobacco, alcohol, drugs, firearms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Community fertility rates by age - Age of migration/immigration - Exposure to violent media - Exposure to youth-oriented advertising - Television/video watching 	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational attainment by age - Health care facilities - Employment rates of adults - Religious institutions - Access to role models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School enrolment for 16-19 year olds - Health care utilisation - Informal supports/number of caregivers - Prosocial media
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Family

<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low parental education - Family mental illness - Maternal stress - Large family size - Overcrowding - Poverty - Access to weapons - Engaging in health compromising behaviors - Authoritarian/neglectful parenting style - Exposure to family violence 	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connectedness - Parental presence - Parental values <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ~ Toward school ~ Toward risk behavior - Two parents - Fewer siblings/child spacing - Family cohesion - Authoritative parenting style
--	--

School

<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Retention - Size of school - Absenteeism - Suspension - Poor academic performance 	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connectedness to school - Higher GPA - Consistency of schools attended - School policies
--	--

Peers

<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Prejudice from peers - Perception of threat - Social isolation - Participation in deviant culture 	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Being treated fairly by peers - Having low-risk friends - Peers with prosocial norms
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Individual

<p>Risk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Biological vulnerability - Intellectual impairment - Dyssynchronous maturation - Aggressive temperament - Impulsivity - Affective disorder - ADHD - Aggressive behavior - Stress reactivity - Perception of risk 	<p>Protection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spirituality/religiosity - Social skills - Average intelligence - Late maturation - Higher self-image - Higher self-efficacy - Perceived importance of parents
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Health risk behaviors in adolescence

- Substance use
 - ~ Tobacco
 - ~ Alcohol
 - ~ Marijuana
 - ~ Other
- Diet and exercise
 - ~ Inactivity
 - ~ Unhealthy eating
 - ~ Eating disorders
 - ~ Overconsumption
- Injury/Violence
 - ~ Weapon carrying
 - ~ Interpersonal violence
 - ~ Seatbelt nonuse
 - ~ Helmut nonuse
 - ~ Motorcycle use
 - ~ Drinking and driving
 - ~ Sexual assault
- Sexual/reproductive
 - ~ Noncontraception
 - ~ Condom avoidance
 - ~ Early sexual debut
 - ~ Multiple sexual partners

Youth health outcomes

Physical health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate pubertal development - Normotensive - Age-appropriate cholesterol, LDL - Perception of self as healthy - Physically fit - Injury free - Not obese or over fat - No STDs/HIV - No unintended pregnancies
Emotional health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of self as happy - No clinical evidence of depression - No history of suicide attempts - No mental or emotional health disorders
Social health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contributing to community - Positive family relationships - Prosocial values - Relationships with healthy peers

(Source: National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001. pp. 58-59)

Figure 2.1 An Ecological Model of Childhood Antecedents of Adolescent Health Risk Behaviours and Health Outcomes

Building on the framework in Figure 2.1, empirical evidence suggests three general propositions about how protective processes may work to moderate negative health outcomes among adolescents. Firstly, there are protective processes across multiple contexts. Traditionally, research on risk and resilience has identified protective mechanisms at the level of the individual and the family but these mechanisms also operate at the environmental level (i.e. school, peer group and neighbourhood) (Steinberg, 2000). The findings of research by Sampson and colleagues (1999) are that individual adolescents are less likely to commit minor crimes in neighbourhoods with high collective self-efficacy (Sampson, Morenoff & Earls, 1999).

Secondly, protective processes vary across the various social domains. For example, a school which creates a stimulating academic environment for its learners may promote intellectual development (Guo & Harris, 1999), but it is not necessarily protective against other outcomes, such as alcohol abuse. Lastly, protective processes vary across risk processes. The same negative outcome may result from different risk processes. An individual or environmental characteristic may be a protective factor for one of those risk processes but not necessarily for another (Blum, McNeely & Nonnemaker, 2001).

2.3.3.1 Risk factors and protective factors in the school context

According to Frank (2006), schools provide unique opportunities to offer services and skills for the large numbers of learners who attend schools daily. She refers to Gottfredson (2001, p. 231) who notes:

Schools are particularly well situated to provide prevention services: they provide regular access to students during the developmental years and may represent the only reliable access to large numbers of crime prone youths. Schools are staffed with individuals trained to help youth develop into healthy, happy, productive citizens and the community is generally supportive of schools' efforts to socialise youths. On these grounds alone, schools have crime prevention potential (Gottfredson, 2001, p. 231, in Frank, 2006).

However, schools may also promote young people's predisposition to becoming perpetrators of various forms of violence (Frank, 2006). As discussed in the previous section, the available data on school-based violence indicates that various forms of violence do exist nation-wide in South African schools (Burton, 2006; Human Rights Watch Report, 2001; Liang et al., 2007; Leoschut & Burton, 2006). However, Griggs (2005) argues that very few schools have policies and procedures in place that can deal effectively with violence-related problems. Reinke and Herman (2002) state that there has been little research into school environments as a developmental pathway to antisocial behaviour. Understanding school contributions to antisocial behaviour may yield new insights which could be used in designing strategies to modify and reduce such behaviour (Reinke & Herman, 2002).

Today's South African youth are also exposed to violent images in the media as well as being confronted with the reality of violence in their own homes and neighbourhoods – as either witnesses, victims or perpetrators. This exposure to violence will influence the way that adolescent learners behave at school, as it can reinforce aggressive and violent behaviour towards their peers and the school staff members. Existing individual and family risk factors can be aggravated by school risk factors, increasing the possibility that youth may develop antisocial and violent behaviour (Burton, 2007). Empirical evidence suggests that the following school-related factors could either promote or prevent violent behaviour among learners.

School climate: researchers in the area of school climate consider how the “personality” of the school may contribute to antisocial behaviour among youth. The term school climate is a broad concept which includes factors such as norms and values, communication patterns, relationships and the school's physical characteristics (McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Tobin & Sprague, 2000; Welsh, Stokes & Greene, 2000). Welsh and colleagues (2000) believe that the school administration, teachers and other members of the school staff help to establish a school's climate and, in schools with the worst discipline problems, rules are unclear, unfair or inconsistently enforced. Furthermore, in such schools the teachers and administrators do not know the rules, or disagree about the rules or the teachers ignore learner misconduct (Welsh et al., 2000). Conversely, effective schools have positive influences on their learners despite the conditions in the learners' homes, their diverse social status, gender, race or ethnicity. In these schools, systematic procedures are followed to ensure school

discipline and good teacher-learner relationships are in place (McEvoy & Welker, 2000). A school climate that fosters antisocial behaviour cannot be overlooked when considering effective programmes for violence prevention.

Disciplinary strategies: to promote school safety, many schools have relied mainly on typical law enforcement methods, including metal detectors, security guards, closed-circuit television and locked doors and windows (Nims, 2000). Although these methods may sometimes be effective, they can have negative side-effects (Stanley, Juhnke & Purkey, 2004). Adding to such a prison-like atmosphere are school policies which maintain “zero tolerance” for any sort of violence, potential or real. Curwin and Mendler (1999) argue that “zero tolerance, despite its appearance of fairness, is inherently an unfair policy” (Curwin & Mendler, 1999, p. 120). They maintain that behaviour is always on a continuum, so adopting a one-size-fits-all approach could violate the very nature of a democratic society.

Disciplining learners for inappropriate behaviour is important and must be done to ensure school safety (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). However, empirical evidence suggests that an unwelcoming and highly inspected school environment leads to a higher incidence of aggressive school conduct, instead of reducing it. Skiba and Peterson (2000) assert that schools that rely on physical security measures are ineffective overall in handling disruptive and violent incidents. Corporal punishment and other harsh punishment and disciplinary policies have not been shown to be effective when trying to promote a school atmosphere conducive to preventing school violence (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Nims (2000) notes: “Effective school violence programmes seek to positively affect the whole social fabric of the school and these approaches are comprehensive and multifaceted” (Nims, 2000, p. 13). Prevention plans that ignore the school culture are unlikely to be successful (Stanley, Juhnke and Purkey, 2004).

Peer relationships: a consistent finding in studies on adolescent delinquency is the relationship between peer influence and delinquent behaviour. Dishion and colleagues (1999) found that association with deviant peers was highly predictive of the onset of substance use (alcohol, tobacco and marijuana) (Dishion, Capaldi & Yoerger, 1999). Empirical evidence also indicates that interaction with violent peers increases the likelihood that a youth will behave in a violent manner (Henry, Tolan & Gorman-Smith, 2001).

In the school context, academic failure may result in uncommitted and alienated learners and these young people may become prime targets for selection into peer groups of antisocial learners. As schools push away these learners, they find peer groups with values supporting delinquent antisocial behaviour. To sum up, considerable research supports the finding that the peer group has a strong influence on adolescent behaviour, including risk taking (e.g. Caffray & Schneider, 2000; MacNeil, Stewart & Kaufman, 2000; Santor, Messervey & Kusumakar, 2000)

Lack of proper adult supervision and monitoring: from an ecological perspective, adult supervision involves the community and school as well as the parents. Poor monitoring in schools may be the result of a lack of concern by, or the lack of involvement of school staff members and of the mismanagement of the school's physical environment. Reported school crime occurs most frequently in places where supervision is weakest, such as hallways, bathrooms and stairs, as well as unmonitored entrances and exits (Welsh et al., 2000). Learners may feel unsafe in poorly supervised school environments, creating a perception of school disorder. As the learners' fears increase, they lose confidence in the school administration and teachers (Welsh et al., 2000). Schools that effectively monitor common areas provide a sense of school order that will decrease the likelihood of violence on school grounds (Reinke & Herman, 2002).

General school characteristics: Astor and colleagues (2002) found that learners' judgement of their school's overall problem with violence was related directly to the school climate characteristics (Astor, Benbenishty, Zeira & Vinokur, 2002). Several characteristics make schools more conducive to violent learner behaviour. School size, location, physical condition, ethnic distribution and discipline policy all play a role in the amount, type and severity of violence (Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman, 2000). Furlong and Morrison (2000) suggest that school size is an essential factor for determining the rates of violence. They imply that in a larger learner population, exposure to violent acts on the school grounds is greater, leading to a larger number of incidents (Furlong & Morrison, 2000). School violence has been seen as an "urban" problem but rural and suburban schools have clearly shown that violent behaviour in schools is not restricted to urban settings (Dwyer et al., 2000). It is important that no school should be dismissed from the potential of violence, based on its location (Eisenbraun, 2007).

The physical condition of a school building may influence learner motivation, attitude and behaviour. For example, school buildings with uncomfortable temperatures, are polluted and in need of repairs apparently have higher incidences of fighting and other forms of violence (Dwyer et al., 2000). Just as schools can be part of the path to violence, they can also provide a positive school climate which fosters supportive and strong bonds with their learners and parents, leading to positive growth and development in youth. Sprague and Walker (2005) argue that although one recognises that no school can ever be made perfectly safe, they believe that school safety is best conceptualised as a bipolar dimension ranging from unacceptable to acceptable (Sprague & Walker, 2005). A holistic approach to promoting optimum adolescent development requires an understanding of the school factors related to reducing risk-taking behaviour and also increasing positive youth behaviour (Youngblade & Theokas, 2006; Schulenberg, 2006; Theokas & Lerner, 2006).

2.4 SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES

During the past decade, those who study adolescence have generally moved from a conceptualisation of adolescents grounded in the stages of life described by twentieth-century scholars, such as Piaget and Erickson, to an ecological model in which contextual factors and social settings are viewed as major sources of influence on the developmental processes in a young person's life. As a result, increasing attention is being given to the ways in which social and cultural factors in the environment of today's young people affect their biological, behavioural and developmental processes (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2006). What also became apparent is an understanding of the interrelationships between the predisposing factors that create vulnerability and the factors that buffer, moderate or change the path that can lead to delinquency (Blum, McNeely & Nonnemaker, 2001).

2.4.1 A positive youth development (PYD) perspective on preventing school violence

There has been another significant conceptual shift, from a risk or deficit model – a focus on all that can go wrong with young people – to what is called a positive youth development model (Smith & Sandu, 2004). Developmental systems theories of human

development emphasise that the bases of positive and healthy development across life lie in mutually beneficial relations between the developing person and the resources supporting and promoting healthy growth in his or her environment (Lerner, 2004). For adolescents, these theoretical models have been used to frame what has been termed the positive youth development (PYD) perspective (e.g. Damon, 2004; Lerner, 2005; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). This positive youth development model contrasts with traditional deficit perspectives about young people (e.g. Erikson, 1968).

In contrast to the problem-focused approach, a positive approach to the prevention of violent behaviour at school focuses on building a set of social and emotional strengths that are incompatible with antisocial behaviour. These include developing emotional intelligence and literacy skills, boosting resilience factors and establishing a high degree of connectedness between learners and their families, peers, schools and communities (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007; Smith & Sandu, 2004.) Lerner (2004) hypothesises that the enhancement of positive youth development should lead a young person to make multifaceted contributions – to self, family, community and civil society – and diminish the likelihood of the emergence of risk/problem behaviour (Lerner, 2004). Replacing the deficit view of adolescence, the positive youth development view sees all adolescents as having strengths.

This perspective suggests that increased well-being and thriving are possible for all young people by aligning their strengths with the developmental assets present in their social and physical ecology (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Thriving in the field of positive youth development refers to the changes adolescents experience and undertake to grow into well-adapted adults. Thriving is promoted by academic achievement, taking responsibility, psychological well-being and applying appropriate strategies to dealing with problems and developmental risks (Lerner, Brentano, Dowling & Anderson, 2002). As outcomes of the process of thriving, five attributes (the five C's) are suggested, namely intra- and interpersonal competence, confidence in others and own competences, a strong character and supportive social relationships with high levels of connections and care (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Moreover, a sixth C (contribution) may be the result of the development toward an engaged, interested, and motivated adolescent (Lerner, Almerigi, Theokas & Lerner, 2005).

Certain conditions in the individual and his or her developmental contexts make positive developmental processes such as thriving more likely. These are called the internal and external developmental assets. Developmental assets are resources for positive development and are based conceptually on the developmental psychopathological concept of protective factors and resilience. Developmental assets have a cumulative effect on positive outcomes, such as academic achievement and pro-social behaviours. Furthermore, the more developmental assets adolescents report, the less likely they will be to engage in problem behaviours such as aggression or violence (Scales, Benson & Leffert, 2000).

A framework depicting the internal and external developmental assets has been developed after a synthesis of research in a number of fields (Scales, Benson & Leffert, 2000, Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). The framework displays external assets such as support (family, school and neighbourhood), empowerment, clear boundaries and expectations, and the constructive use of time. The internal assets include a commitment to learning, having positive values, being socially competent and having a positive identity (good self-esteem) (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Unlike traditional problem-focused approaches, the positive approach to school violence is preventive, solution-driven, and systemic in its efforts. The goal is to enhance the overall well-being of learners and others in the context of the school (Smith & Sandu, 2004).

2.5 PROMOTING POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT IN THE SCHOOL

According to Judd (2006):

Positive youth development is an approach that focuses on young people's capacities, strengths, and developmental needs – not solely on their problems, risks, or health compromising behaviors. It recognizes the need to broaden beyond crisis management and problem reduction to strategies that increase young people's connections to positive, supportive relationship and challenging, meaningful experiences (Judd, 2006. p. 3).

Pittman and colleagues (2003) argue that the youth development approach calls for a balance between services designed to prevent, intervene or treat health problems and

efforts that promote development through preparation, participation and leadership experiences. In order to be fully prepared, adolescents have to be fully engaged – with responsibilities and opportunities to practise the skills needed to prepare them for their roles as well-balanced and successful adults (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003, in Judd, 2006).

2.5.1 Youth development principles

Based on empirical evidence (Judd, 2006), the following four basic principles capture the essence of the youth development approach:

Table 2.2: Youth development principles

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES		
Developmental areas		
<p>Growth occurs across developmental domains</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive • Physical • Vocational • Civic engagement • Social/Emotional (including spiritual/moral development) 	<p>Key features of positive developmental settings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physically and psychologically safe • Appropriate structures (organisational) • Positive social norms • Opportunities to belong (supports, connections) • Opportunities for skill building • Support for efficacy and mattering (contribution) • Integrating family, school and community efforts. 	
Multiple factors influence adolescent development and well-being		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protective factors and personal resilience • Environmental and personal risk factors 		
Supports, services and opportunities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports: the ongoing positive relationships that youth have with adults and peers: motivational and emotional supports help increase opportunities and connection to positive groups and organisations. • Services: basic services include education, health care, transportation, treatment and the prevention of threats to health. • Opportunities: youth engagement and skill building (see below). 		
Youth engagement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult perceptions of youth are positive. Young people are seen as resources to develop, not problems to be fixed. • Youth engagement teaches life skills, provides opportunities to practise these skills and offers a variety of leadership experiences. • Young people need a variety of opportunities and meaningful roles to contribute to their world, through relationships with adults. 		
Community context		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development occurs across multiple contexts, including family, school and community. Culturally specific settings (tribal or ethnic groups, religious/faith organisations) can give young people additional opportunities to test and demonstrate new skills. • Collaboration between sectors is important (e.g. school-business partnerships or school-health provider collaboration). 		

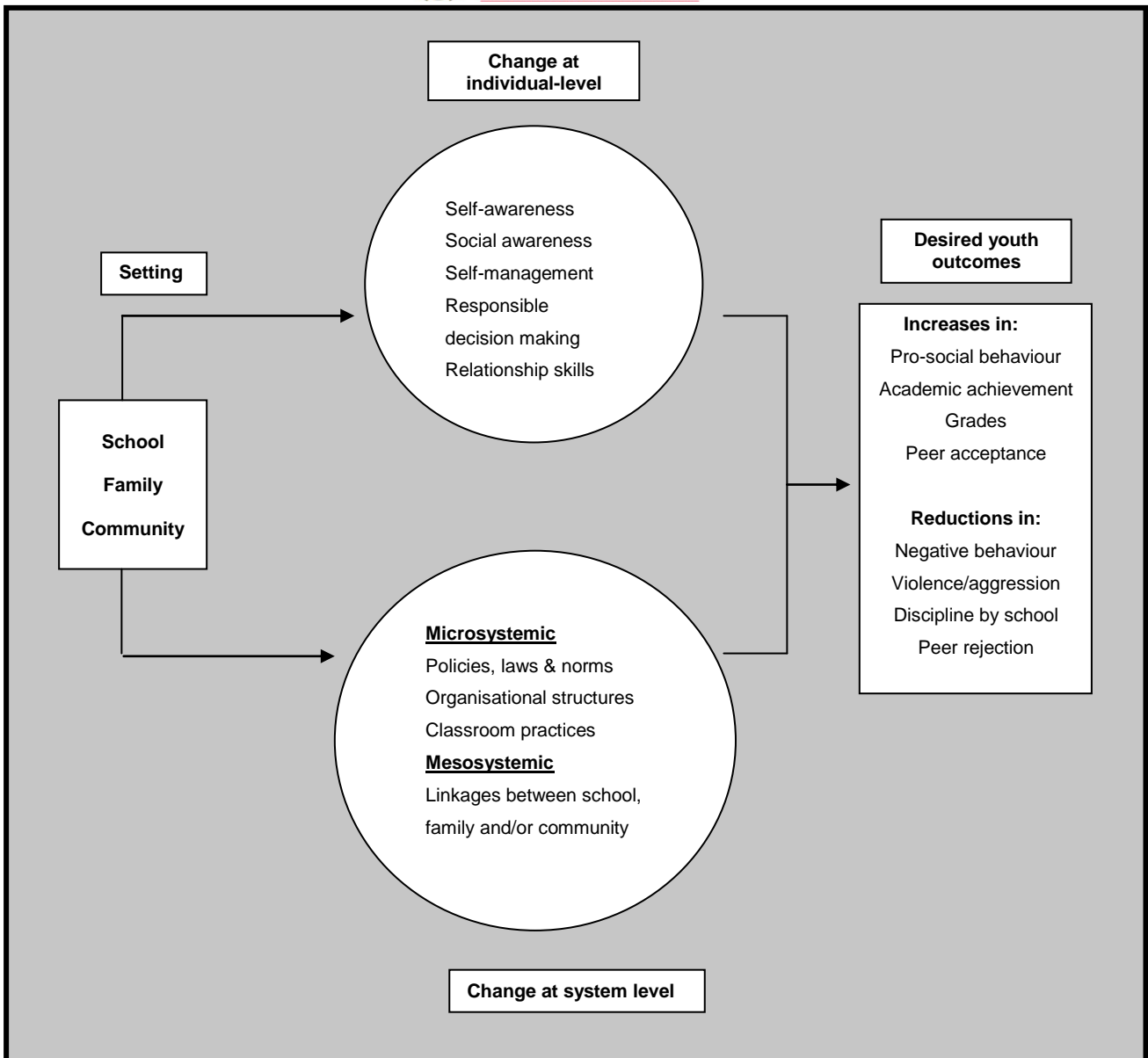
(Source: Judd, 2006. p. 3)

Smith and Sandu (2004) state that the motivation for a positive approach to the prevention of violence in schools draws upon a model of human functioning that, rather than attempting to repair psychological dysfunction, attempts to promote optimal levels of development. Therefore, they suggest that because of the multiple pathways through which aggressive and violent behaviour can develop and the many factors that can contribute both to promoting or preventing violent behaviour, effective school-based strategies should be comprehensive, broadly applied and developmentally focused. These efforts also should occur across multiple contexts, including school, home and community, to be optimally effective (Smith & Sandu, 2004).

2.5.2 Social systemic change

Positive youth development theory challenges researchers and educators to recognise the importance of improving the major social systems – home, school and community – that can affect young people. Attempts at systemic change are generally represented by programmes seeking to improve aspects of a school’s psychosocial climate (Wilson, 2004), to enhance the family environment so that young people can be connected to pro-social adults through mentoring relationships and after-school programmes (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007) and to build connections between families, schools and communities (Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor & Zeira, 2004). The preliminary findings of universal prevention programmes indicate that young people benefit in several ways from positive youth development programmes, acquiring more positive behaviours and significantly improved school performance (Durlak & Weissberg, 2005).

The purpose of the current study was to explore how schools and families at the mesosystemic level forge links to address and prevent adolescent violence in the school setting. The mesosystemic level links the two microsystems – school and home – to support positive youth development and well being more effectively. Durlak and colleagues (2007) developed a conceptual framework which could guide researchers and educators to promote social change that should result in positive youth development (Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki & Weissberg, 2007). Figure 2.2 illustrates this conceptual framework, showing how the promotion of competencies at the individual level of change, in combination with changes at the system level, can lead to the desired youth development outcome.



(Source: Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki & Weissberg, 2007, p.270)

Figure 2.2: A conceptual framework for change at the system level

The framework emphasises the importance of the setting for interventions, the focus of the intervention in terms of change at the individual or system level and the types of outcomes to consider (Durlak et al., 2007).

The settings for intervention – school, family and community: interventions are typically made in three different contexts – school, family and community. These distinctions are important for assessing outcomes, as interventions vary in their scope and goals across these contexts. Empirical evidence suggests that promoting social and emotional competencies should eventually result in a more positive developmental

path for young people. Depending on the specific goal of the intervention, young people should do better in school, demonstrate more pro-social behaviour, have more effective peer and adult relationships and have fewer negative outcomes (Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik & Elias, 2003)

The focus of the intervention in terms of change at individual or system level: by working directly with young people to promote different competencies, some interventions emphasise change at the individual level. However, environmental influences and changes must also be considered. Research shows that youth development is optimised in settings that support and reinforce competencies, and that provide youth with opportunities to use their newly acquired skills (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003). This means that in addition to working directly with individual learners, schools should attempt to create change at a social system level. Many learners do not have support from their homes, families or community environments, or are not connected to multiple pro-social adult or peer models. Therefore, if schools are to provide environments more conducive to personal learner growth and development, this often requires changing the existing structures. Change in the school system may include changing the existing policies, laws, and social norms, modifying organisational practices and routines, and creating positive mesosystemic linkage among school, family and community systems (Durlak et al., 2007).

The types of outcomes to consider: the framework (Figure 2.2) distinguishes among the many different outcomes that may result from violence prevention programmes. Depending on the programmes implemented, immediate outcomes may include positive changes in personal, social and academic areas (e.g. more pro-social behaviour), and/or a reduction in the negative outcomes in these same areas (e.g. less peer rejection or aggression) (Durlak et al., 2007). According to Durlak and colleagues (2007), it is difficult to change social systems, such as schools and families. School-wide change takes time and requires the support of school leaders and the involvement of a sufficient number of school staff members and families to modify the broad social system (Durlak et al., 2007).

The young people should not be overlooked as important contributors to system change. As discussed earlier, youth engagement is one of the four principles of

positive youth development. Young people need a variety of opportunities and meaningful roles to contribute to their world, through relationships with adults – parents and educators (Judd, 2006).

Larson (2000) comments that, although positive approaches to prevention of violent behaviour in schools take many forms and occur over multiple settings, the empirical evidence suggests that establishing a sense of connectedness between youth and elements of their environment, including peers, family, school and community, is vital for successful outcomes (Larson, 2000). A growing body of research suggests that young people who feel connected to their schools through involvement in school activities, who perceive school as meaningful and their teachers as supportive, are less likely to be involved in negative and destructive behaviours (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002).

2.5.3 Mesosystemic linkage between school and home

A general conclusion in several reviews of positive youth promotion is that there is a need for a more comprehensive prevention approach which should include families and caregivers (Christie, Nelson & Jolivette, 2004; Tobin & Sprague, 2000; Van Acker & Wehby, 2000). Epstein & Sheldon (2006) note that empirical evidence suggests that most families care about their children and want them to succeed. Equally, teachers and school staff members want to involve the learners' families but many of them do not know how to do so (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). In a review of effective programmes for positive youth development, Catalano and colleagues (2002) note that many prevention programmes operate in a singular domain (e.g. school, family or community) with most implemented in schools (88%). An interesting finding is that over half (60%) of the effective violence prevention programmes include families or a parenting strategy component, supportive of social-ecological approaches to violence prevention and positive youth development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002).

Having parents and other family caregivers collaborate with school staff members in the design and implementation of violence prevention programmes is important for ensuring that the programme accurately reflects the needs and concerns of the community (Reese, Vera, Simon & Ikeda, 2000). Prevention efforts which involve

families provide a critical opportunity to address youth in the context that has the most influence on their development. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) and others suggest, taking a person-in-context approach to violence prevention allows for a more complete understanding of the development and prevention of aggression in youth (Reese et al., 2000).

2.6 COLLABORATIVE FAMILY-SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS

Numerous empirical studies have demonstrated significantly that the establishment of productive, constructive, collaborative relationships between parents and school staff members is essential for maximising a learner's potential. Developmentally speaking, appropriate involvement continues to be associated with positive learner outcomes across the primary and secondary school years (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005). Studies examining high-performing schools in low-income areas, found that parents were deeply involved in their children's schooling (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

2.6.1 Family-school collaboration defined

Cowan and colleagues (2004) state that a common definition of the term collaboration is working together towards a common goal or set of goals. Family-school collaboration is a reciprocal dynamic process which occurs among systems (e.g. families, communities) and/or individuals (e.g. parents, educators, administrators, psychologists) who share in decision making toward common goals and solutions related to learners (Cowan, Swearer & Sheridan, 2004, p. 201). Inherent in this definition is the notion that the parents and school staff members involved in collaboration, pool their resources to create a co-operative interdependent relationship. The collaboration process is guided by a primary emphasis on specific co-operatively predetermined outcomes for learners, with mutually established academic and behavioural goals (Minke, 2000).

2.6.1.1 Partnering with families in education: a modern approach to collaboration

The above definition of family-school collaboration is partly derived from the characteristics of a partnership philosophy for interacting with families in educating

their children. This philosophy represents the current standard for the way that parents and families can be included as members of the education system and recognises the role parents can play in providing educators with critical information about the home system. If schools were to adopt this philosophy, it would give parents equal status with the school regarding critical activities and decision making related to their children's education. A partnership allows parents and educators to work together to improve the education system and to work towards preventing future problems, resulting in benefiting all learners (Cowan, Swearer & Sheridan, 2004).

2.6.2 Key elements of family-school collaborative partnerships

Family-school partnerships are collaborative relationships and activities involving school staff members, parents and other family members of learners at that school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual respect and trust, and shared responsibility for the education of young people. The noted researcher Epstein's (1995, 2001) model of family involvement is one of the models most often quoted, and also often used as a standard benchmark for describing a school's progress with developing successful family-school relationships. Epstein (2001) contends, and numerous researchers concur, that though learners are the main actors in their education, the family, school and community play extremely important supporting roles (Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Macgregor, 2006).

These three major contexts are seen as overlapping spheres of influence, where the learner is located in the middle of the model. Epstein's six types of parent involvement include assisting families with parenting and child-rearing skills; establishing effective communication between home and school; improved recruitment of parents to volunteer to be actively involved in supporting school activities; promoting the involvement of families with their children's' homework activities; including families in participating in school decisions and governance, and finally, co-ordinating community resources and services to support family and school activities (Epstein, 1995). Epstein's framework of the six types of involvement guides the development of comprehensive partnership programmes. Each type of involvement raises key challenges which must be solved to reach all families and produce positive results (Epstein, 2001; Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn & Van Voorhis, 2002). Based on this research evidence, it is apparent that school staff members should

examine their current practices with parents and learners. Research emphasises that schools should reach out to all parents and initiate efforts to involve families in learning activities, school programmes and school-related decisions (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006). However, according to Christenson (2002), a basic consideration when establishing effective family-school collaboration is that the barriers to creating successful family-school relationships should be identified, acknowledged, understood and systematically removed (Christenson, 2002).

2.6.3 Barriers to effective family-school collaboration

In reviewing the recent literature, a disturbing research finding is that the views of schools about families are often still based on the deficit model, which regards parents and their children in terms of having particular needs since they lack particular desirable virtues. Therefore teachers and other school staff members feel they are charged with providing skills and knowledge to compensate for this lack of attributes. Thompson (2001) believes that this view can lead to paternalistic practices with the result that the views of parents and their children are neither sought nor valued (Thompson, 2001).

Different schools display different levels of interaction. Schools working on a deficit model will limit their efforts to one-way communication, which is usually ineffective since no level of parental involvement can develop. Most schools encourage levels of participation through the representation of only a small number of parents serving on parent associations, or fundraising committees. Fewer schools achieve full productive partnerships which encourage and develop “shared, different but equally valued roles in the process of schooling for teachers, principals and families” (McConchie, 2004, p. 3). Empirical evidence suggests that the following issues may act as barriers to building effective family-school collaboration (Macgregor, 2006).

2.6.3.1 Home and family factors

There are differences among families, and between families and school staff members in socio-economic status, education level, communication styles, language, culture, ethnicity and even perspectives and expectations. These differences have been empirically identified as factors which may become potential barriers to effective family-

school collaboration (Laosa, 2005). Hoover-Demsey and colleagues (2005) maintain that family involvement practices are not so much about income as they are about the available resources – such as time, energy and knowledge (Hoover-Demsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005). The following factors have been empirically identified as possibly acting as barriers to effective parent involvement.

Low socio-economic status: a vast number of urban parents in South Africa live in poverty which can cause high stress factors, such as unemployment, poor mental and health care, limited access to professional support systems and a general lack of school-related knowledge and skills. All these factors can play a part in keeping families from active participation and collaboration with schools (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005). Many studies indicate that a family's lack of basic necessities and resources (such as childcare and transportation) can be a major barrier to school participation (Ashby, 2006; Epstein, 1995; Lewis & Forman, 2002). Parents with a low socio-economic status or with memories of being former learners themselves who felt disenfranchised (Darch, Miao & Shippen, 2004) or marginalised (Mills & Gale, 2004) by the school community, often continue to have negative perceptions of family-school collaboration as they raise their own children. Many researchers have addressed the idea that schools should first meet the needs of families if they want to empower families to participate in collaborative activities with the school (Amatea, Smith-Adcock & Villares, 2006; Bemak & Cornely, 2002; Salas, Lopez, Chinn & Menchaca-Lopez, 2005).

Parent education/skill level: a parent's lack of education or skills (academic or social) can greatly influence their willingness to participate in family-school collaboration (Ashby, 2006; Mills & Gale, 2004). Parents who feel they have inadequate skills or education are also less likely to become involved if they think their efforts will not positively influence their children's schooling (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005). They may also feel the partnership may make them look inadequate alongside the well-educated teachers (Mills & Gale, 2004). This may be one more reason why parent involvement decreases dramatically as children progress to secondary school (Deslandes & Bertrand, 2005). Hornby (2000) refers to the tendency for parents with a low socio-economic status to believe that teachers perceive them as "less observant, less perceptive and less intelligent than teachers." However, he reminds us that parents know their children better than anyone else and that they possess a wealth of

information which can be a great help for schools in educating their children (Hornby, 2000. p. 7).

Lack of time: almost all the studies in literature reviews on family-school collaboration identify time as a major barrier to the extent that families collaborate with schools (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005; Joshi, Eberly & Konzal, 2005; Mills & Gale, 2004). The reality in South Africa, as in many parts of the world, is that the majority of parents, both mothers and fathers, work and moreover that many children live in single-parent families, making it difficult for parents to be actively involved with schools, especially during regular school hours (Hornby, 2000). The findings from these studies suggest that school staff members ought to be more flexible about the times when they are available, and should have more frequent contact with parents.

Race/ethnicity and culture: South African schools serve a diverse ethnic learner population. The call for true collaboration with families from different cultures requires school staff members to know the cultural aspects of the way each group perceives the schooling process. It can be a problem for many parents when communications to home are presented only in English, or the parents may also have very different, even sometimes contradictory beliefs about appropriate family-school collaboration (Salas, Lopez, Chinn & Menchaca-Lopez, 2005).

2.6.3.2 School factors

Epstein (1995) maintains that there are still too many schools where school staff members do not understand the learners and their families, and where families do not understand their children's schools. Often these misunderstandings result from differences in communication styles, methods and procedures, but they can be aggravated by any of the family-related barriers already discussed. Epstein (1995) comments about school staff members' motive for contacting parents, that teachers' complaints about a learner are frequently the only reason that teachers contact parents directly. Such negative approaches may lead to parental distrust and a fear of schools (Epstein, 1995). The following school factors may act as barriers to parent involvement.

Method of communication: a school's method of communicating with parents may create barriers to family-school collaboration. If the communication is nothing more than a written document sent home, family involvement is generally limited to assisting with transporting learners, attending functions and occasional help in the classroom. These one-way notices fall into another category of communication barriers, namely the invitation, or lack of invitation, to participate (Joshi, Eberly & Konzal, 2005). As Hoover-Demsey and colleagues' (2005) literature review states, not all families need encouragement to become involved, but when invitations are specific and appropriately given, they are an important motivator, suggesting to parents that participation is welcome, valuable and expected (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005).

School climate: many of the studies Hoover-Demsey and colleagues (2005) reviewed indicate that when schools have a welcoming and positive attitude towards parents, improvements are recorded in learner academic achievement and behaviour (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005). Parents must also be able to understand what is being asked of them, as they may be willing to help but may not know how to get involved (Salas et al., 2005). Learners in secondary schools also see many teachers daily and it can be difficult to establish a trusting, respectful rapport with all those teachers (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Literature reviews also suggest that many parents prefer frequent, informal methods of communication, although many schools continue to adopt formal one-way communication methods (Amatea, Smith-Adcock & Villares, 2006).

Lack of trust, respect and unclear teacher-parent roles: the perceptions of the role of the teacher and that of the parent in the education of young people, often stand in the way of effective family-school collaboration. Some parents believe that education is the sole responsibility of the school, which can prevent parents from sharing their ideas and opinions (Darch, Miao & Shippen, 2004). Hoover-Demsey and colleagues (2005) claim that role construction is a powerful motivator of parent involvement and should be clearly communicated in well-designed prevention programmes. Parent efficacy, or a belief that their involvement will make a difference for their child, can be hindered by school practices which do not overtly welcome and respect the unique skills and strengths parents have to offer (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005).

Inadequate family/teacher training: effective family-school collaboration is difficult because very few teachers and families are adequately trained to interact effectively

within a collaborative framework (Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005; Hornby, 2000). Numerous studies have found that teachers often lack the training and subsequent knowledge of how to work with today's diverse learner population and their families (Joshi et al., 2005; Lewis & Forman, 2002). Deslandes and Bertrand (2005) argue that without adequate knowledge, understanding and communication, the barriers to effective family-school collaboration will remain. Parents also need training to work collaboratively with schools, because many parents do not know what schools expect of them or how they might contribute to their child's schooling.

2.6.3.3 Community factors

Schools are important institutions which need the support of the community. However, the community's culture and previous experience regarding school and education may influence how parents, learners, teachers and school staff members feel about education in general and about parental involvement in particular. Including the community in the home-school-community partnerships also recognises the resources available in the community, which could benefit children, young people and their families in the educational process (McCord, Wisdom & Crowell, 2001).

Adams and Christenson (2000) maintain that although researchers have begun to examine multilevel factors individually, there is still a need for studies that integrate analyses of multiple settings, enabling us to look at the combined and relative influences of home, school and community factors on violent adolescent behaviour (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Issues that act as barriers to effective collaboration need not necessarily be only negative. In fact, they can and do present opportunities to change practices in a way that will increase understanding between families and educators. Overcoming these barriers often leads to changes in school practices, allowing the school to reach out to families and establish new roles and responsibilities for families (Christenson, 2002).

2.6.4 Fostering positive family-school collaboration: a systems-ecological perspective

Slater (2004) argues that globally there is consensus that a new social construct is needed between families and schools – one that is built on collaboration and that is

partnership-oriented –in the efforts to prevent school-based violence. Collaboration involves more than simply working together and “profound parent involvement means sharing leadership which means sharing knowledge, responsibility, and most difficult of all – power” (Nichols-Solomon, 2001, p. 35). An understanding of the practices, beliefs and attitudes of all the parties participating in establishing positive family-school collaboration, is essential to building positive, productive working relationships.

The shift to systems thinking – defined here as a holistic or ecological approach to considering the family-school influences on adolescents' school performance and positive development – is emerging as a promising practice (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Systems thinking represents a major change in philosophy for many educators and parents, especially those who regard schools and teachers as solely responsible for education outcomes (Christenson, 2002). Operating from a systems-ecological perspective, school staff members should assess the reciprocal influences in a learner's many environments (e.g. home, school, peer group and community) and emphasise the contributing factors rather than a single cause for the learner's antisocial or aggressive behaviour.

This approach redefines school success as the product of what school staff members and parents do to support and guide young people (Adams & Christenson, 2000; Epstein, 2001). Systems thinking about young people's school performance and behaviour recognises that school staff members and schools alone cannot help learners achieve their full academic, social and emotional potential. Parental involvement has to be a significant part of any discussion about efforts to prevent violence as well as sharing responsibility for the implementation of prevention programmes. Systems thinking also includes the learners, therefore the degree to which school staff members and parents are ready and willing to involve learners in decision-making processes and encourage their active participation, will influence the way that home and schools work together (Macgregor, 2006; Smith & Sandu, 2004).

Systems-ecological and developmental theory provides the framework for organising the reciprocal influence between home and school. When learners have behavioural problems or antisocial difficulties at school, blaming the home or school as the cause of the problem is futile. Rather, as Ysseldyke and Christenson (2002) suggest, educators and parents should identify the contributing factors and how the educators

and parents can jointly support the learner with overcoming the problem (Ysseldyke & Christenson, 2002).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, recent empirical evidence suggests that, unlike the traditional problem-focused approaches to violence prevention, a positive approach to school violence is preventive, solution-driven and systemic in its efforts. A common theme in positive approaches to the prevention of violent adolescent behaviour is to establish a sense of connectedness between young people and elements of their environment, including family, peer, school and community (Smith & Sandu, 2004). A growing body of research indicates that youth who feel nurtured, supported and accepted in these contexts are less likely to engage in negative, antisocial behaviour at school and are better able to cope with a wide range of adverse conditions, including those that usually promote the development of violent behaviours (Furlong, Pavelski & Saxton, 2002; Smith & Sandu, 2004; Small & Memmo, 2004).

Children and youth do better at school when they have the support and opportunities to learn from their two primary contexts of development – home and school (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). If schools are to address effectively the problem of school-based violent adolescent behaviour, they have to develop collaborative relationships with parents and learners, based on mutual trust and respect (Davies, 2000). By coming together in the context of home-school-community collaboration, stakeholders can bring together various resources and strategies to support the safe and caring school environments that can play a vital role in preventing antisocial or violent learner behaviour (Adelman & Taylor, 2006). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) maintain that although schools are located in communities, and families live in neighbourhoods, there is often little connection among these groups. Nevertheless, all these entities affect one another, for good or bad.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Empirical evidence suggests that effectively addressing adolescent violence at school would require the school and school staff members to work actively towards creating and sustaining positive family-school collaborative relationships (Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Epstein, 2001; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005). School staff members should consider the prerequisites

for effective partnerships, namely establishing a positive approach and attitude towards the role families should play as well as establishing a welcoming atmosphere or climate that would promote participation and interaction between families and educators in the particular school context. Approach, attitude and atmosphere are the “backdrop” for successful and effective collaboration (Christenson, 2002, p. 42). As Slater (2004) and others suggest, effective school improvement, including creating safe and secure learning environments, is anchored in collaboration among school staff members, learners and their families (Slater, 2004).

I concur with Christenson's (2002) suggestion that “it is time to raise the bar for all children’s performance in schools: creating family-school partnerships is a viable way to enhance academic achievement and positive mental health of youth. With effective leadership, families and educators can be partners and co-promoters of child and adolescent outcomes” (Christenson, 2002, p. 42).

In summary, the empirical evidence suggests that positive and negative behaviour both have their roots in multiple interpersonal contexts. In general, the findings show that young people who are involved in contexts which provide positive resources and activities, who reported positive connections to multiple important others (i.e. parents, peers and community) and who were adequately monitored and controlled, were not only less likely to be involved in risky or violent behaviour, but also more likely to actively engage in positive behaviour.

Finally, the general consensus among researchers from their respective ecological and developmental systems perspectives, stresses the need to engage collaboratively all individuals and institutions in the community in the service of young people. As Lerner and colleagues (2002) stress, promoting the positive development of young people means that “all sectors of society – and, most centrally, young people and their families – must be active, productive, and collaborative partners” (Lerner, Taylor & Von Eye, 2002, p. 4).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two gives the theoretical framework and empirical foundation for this study. In this chapter the research design and methodology are discussed. The research design consists of the application of theoretical approaches; the role of the researcher; the specific design; the research context or site selection; the description of the research population and selection strategies; the instruments or formats used; ethical and legal considerations; data collection, data documentation and data analysis procedures. This chapter concludes with a description of the strategies employed to validate the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the study, which should enhance the trustworthiness of the research project.

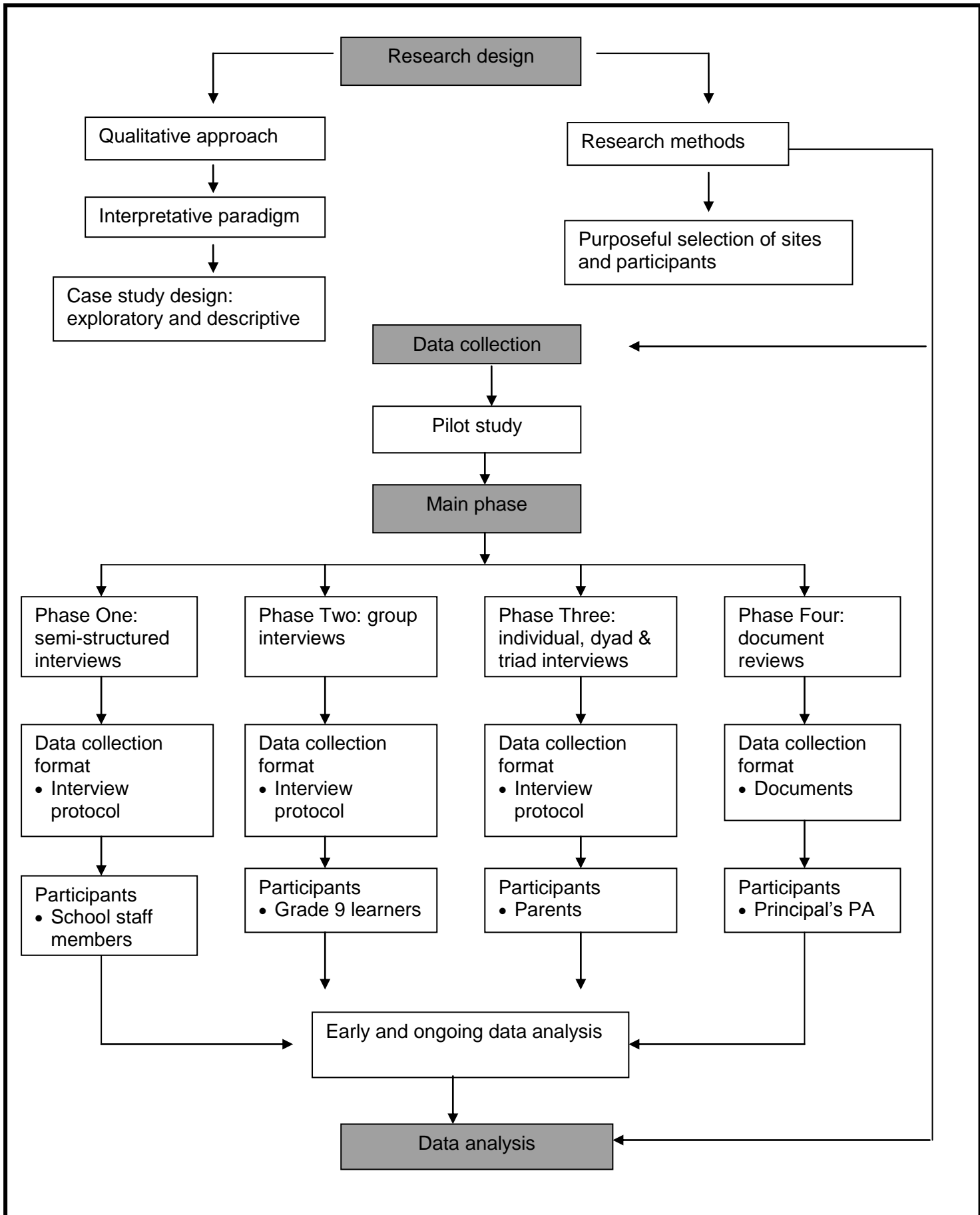
3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The specific research design selected for this study was an exploratory and descriptive case study of a qualitative nature, aimed at providing an in-depth description of the case. As Creswell (2002) states: “A case study is a problem to be studied, which will reveal an in-depth understanding of a case or bounded system, which involves understanding an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2002, p. 61).

The case investigated is the collaborative nature of the violence prevention efforts employed by the school staff members, learners and their families at two urban secondary schools in Johannesburg, South Africa. I believe the case study design was the most appropriate design so as to facilitate the research process from which I needed to obtain valid and reliable results. An overview of the research design of this qualitative study is illustrated in Table 3.1 overleaf and then discussed in detail.



Table 3.1: Research design and methodology





3.2.1 A qualitative approach

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate to answering the questions of “how?” and “what?” as opposed to “why?” (Creswell, 2006). Qualitative researchers seek to answer to how social experience is created and given meaning. By contrast, quantitative research emphasises the measurement and analysis of causal relationships among variables, not processes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 11).

Qualitative research is also naturalistic as it researches social phenomena in their natural settings. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state: “Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempt to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 2). Qualitative research is exploratory in nature since it indicates the way forward for further research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

According to Polkinghorne (2005), “a primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experiences as it is lived and constituted in awareness” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.138). Using language as a tool (face-to-face communication), the researcher can investigate these experiences in depth, revealing meanings which are not otherwise observable and which cannot be gathered by using survey or other data collection strategies (Morrow, 2005). Qualitative research is therefore appropriate when one needs to present a detailed and in-depth view of a phenomenon. This was the case with this study, in which I wanted to know how the school staff members collaborate with the learners and their families, and what they do to collaboratively address adolescent school-based violence in their prevention efforts.

In summary, there were two main reasons for situating the research in a qualitative theoretical framework. Firstly, I was interested in conducting research in a qualitative manner because I wanted to view the role and value of collaborative partnerships among the school staff members, learners and their families from their own perspectives. Secondly, the research question I wanted to answer fits the interpretative framework. It deals with research posited from the perspective of the participants and how they interact with one another in the school environment to address school-based learner violence. I wanted to gain first-hand knowledge of their perspectives, and I

hoped that the resulting data analysis from individual interviews, dyad and triad interviews, group interviews and document reviews would shed new light (whether positive or negative) on this phenomenon.

3.2.2 A sociological interpretative research paradigm

All qualitative researchers are philosophers guided by highly abstract principles. These principles combine beliefs about ontology (What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?) (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). These beliefs shape the way that the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it. The researcher's ontological, epistemological and methodological premises may be termed a paradigm or an interpretative framework, a "basic set of beliefs that guides action" (Guba, 1990, p.17). All research is interpretative; it is guided by the researcher's set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied. As an interpretative researcher, I pursued an analysis of the information by focusing on the understanding of the research participants as it pertains to the existing collaborative efforts towards preventing school violence. The main question, which the research was designed to answer with the aim of resolving the research problem, was:

How do school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent violence in urban secondary schools?

The research question "how do" is exploratory and descriptive, rather than prescriptive. This requires a theory-building approach (inductive) rather than an approach to testing a theory (deductive) (Perry, 1998). Furthermore, I wanted to understand the participants' experiences in context (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.19). The context of this research study is the collaborative family-school efforts to prevent adolescent learner violence in the school environment. A case study design was used as the format for presenting the case, which further builds on the qualitative paradigm.

3.2.3 An exploratory and descriptive case study design

Merriam (1998) lists case studies as one of the four main research methodologies under the umbrella of qualitative research. She states that the three main characteristics of a

case study is its particularistic, descriptive and heuristic nature (Merriam, 1998).

Particularistic refers to the fact that case studies focus on a particular event or phenomenon. A case study may be a programme, an event, an activity or a set of individuals bounded in time and place, as defined by the researcher (Creswell, 2002). In this case study it was the latter, namely the Grade 9 learners, their parents and the school staff members in a specific shared context, the school, who were the set of individuals who shared their experiences and opinions with me. The case study provided a detailed description of the themes, and my interpretation of the case, which may be called “lessons learnt” (Lincoln & Guba (1985) in Creswell, 2002, p. 277). The case I chose to investigate was to illustrate the role that collaboration plays among the school staff members, learners and their families in their efforts to prevent school violence.

The second characteristic of a case study is its descriptive nature, which facilitated intensive descriptions and an analysis of data resulting from multiple data sources, as well as providing an in-depth understanding of the nature of the phenomenon being studied. Gillham (2000) views the use of multiple sources of evidence as a “key characteristic of case study research” (p. 2) because “all evidence is of some use to the case study researcher; nothing is turned away” (p. 20). Yin (2003, pp. 13-14) concurs that the case study enquiry relies on multiple sources of evidence, where data should converge in a triangulating fashion. I collected data by means of individual interviews with the school staff members, group interview sessions with Grade 9 learners and individual, dyad and triad interviews with their parents, as well as reviewing specific school documents germane to the strategies for preventing school violence. The qualitative data gathered from these data collection methods were used in a complementary, developmentally and triangulate fashion, adding to the scope and breadth of the study.

The third characteristic of a case study is its heuristic nature, which allows the reader to gain insight into the phenomenon being studied (Merriam, 1998). In terms of this study, this facilitated my understanding of the extent and nature of the collaborative strategies for violence prevention as well as the problems faced by the schools and families with building trusting and respectful relationships, and it also gave me the opportunity to relate their successes.

All of these characteristics were consistent with the purpose of this research and gave me opportunities to gather data, and to describe and present the participants' feelings, perceptions and opinions about forming collaborative partnerships in their efforts to prevent school violence.

The descriptive nature of qualitative research adds to the literature by building rich, thick descriptions of complex situations (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006) such as adolescent violent behaviour in the school context. To this end, I collected and captured accurate descriptive details of how the school staff members, learners and their families deal with school-based violence in a collaborative fashion. I then analysed and described the patterns related to the phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006, p. 373). Accordingly, the design deemed appropriate for the current study was an exploratory and descriptive qualitative case study design.

3.3 METHODOLOGY

Research methods refer to the ways that one collects and analyses data. These methods have been developed for acquiring knowledge by reliable and valid procedures. Correct and authentic instruments must be used in order to come up with supportive evidence (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

The research methods employed for this study included firstly the role of the researcher, as I played an integral part in this qualitative case study research. Secondly, as this was an exploratory and descriptive case study design, interview protocols were developed for the interview sessions to gather data from the perspectives of the participants taking part in the study (Bryman, 2008, p.385). The data collection was completed by reviewing and analysing specific school documents pertaining to the school's strategies for violence prevention, including the School Prospectus; School Code of Conduct; Grade 9 Life Orientation Curriculum and the Occupational Health and Safety Policy. All the data were integrated and summarised qualitatively.

3.3.1 The role of the researcher

In contrast to more quantitative-oriented approaches, in which the enquiry is guided by the researcher's (outsider's) perspective, the aim of qualitative research is to capture

the participant's (insider's) view (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005). The open-ended nature of data collection influences the role of the researcher and the participants in qualitative research.

First, as the researcher I was the primary instrument in data collection, so the quality of the data was highly dependent on my skills in observing, interviewing and analysing the data. Second, my interpersonal skills were critical to entering the natural settings and gaining the trust of the participants. Qualitative methods depend upon the researcher's ability to process information, respond sensitively to social cues and adjust the research design as the data are interpreted and new issues emerge. Therefore, the subjectivity of the researcher is viewed as a resource to be leveraged rather than a source of unwanted bias and invalidity that must be minimised (Meyers & Sylvester, 2006). As suggested by Nastasi and Schensul (2005), to address my subjectivity I recorded my experiences and reactions during the data collection process and continually examined my own biases, the context and the phenomenon questioned, prior to and during the enquiry (Nastasi & Schensul, 2005).

Establishing a trusting, collaborative and empowering relationship with participants was my challenge. Determining my researcher roles and limits was a matter of establishing an ethical foundation about these issues. My aim was to maintain a systematic enquiry, demonstrating integrity while interacting with the participants, and balancing what sometimes felt like tension between the two.

I started establishing the researcher role at the first contact with the participants, when the purpose of the research was explained and their voluntary participation requested. My main role was that of interviewer during the interviews and moderator in the group interview sessions. I prepared well in advance to have a firm grasp of the issues being discussed and tried to be sensitive and responsive to any evidence contradicting my own personal preconceived notions (Yin, 2003). Being aware of my own worldview and biases, I conducted follow-up participant checks to ensure that my researcher subjectivity did not dominate so that the participants' perspectives could be fairly represented (Morrow, 2005). By stating my own stances, motivations and biases, the research gained a level of honesty which contributed to the trustworthiness (rigour) of this study (Morrow, 2005).

3.3.2 Description of research population and selection strategies

Polkinghorne (2005) argues that using the term “sample” in qualitative research can be misleading, as a sample implies a population to which findings should be generalised. Instead, he prefers the term “selection”, implying the purposeful nature of choosing the research participants and sources of data (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139).

3.3.2.1 Purposeful selection criteria

Qualitative research uses non-probability sampling as it is not aimed at producing a statistically representative sample or at drawing statistical inferences, as is the case with quantitative probability sampling. For a purposive non-random sample, the number of participants is less important than the criteria used for selecting them. The characteristics of individuals are used as the basis of selection, most often to reflect the diversity and breadth of the sample population. As Patton (2002, p. 244) argues: “There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample size depends on what you want to know; the purpose of the inquiry; what’s at stake; what will be useful; what will have credibility and what can be done with the available time and resources.” A sufficiency of data rather than the number of participants drives the selection process. Qualitative researchers often use the criteria of redundancy of data or theoretical saturation to determine the sufficiency of data. Redundancy or data saturation occurs when, on importing new data into the analysis, no new findings of note are generated (Morrow, 2005).

3.3.2.2 Site selection

Qualitative researchers identify theoretical concepts which are likely to be important to the study and then identify a setting where it is likely that data relevant to the problem will be readily available. Using more than one setting allows different perspectives to emerge. The researcher’s conceptual framework for the study and the existing knowledge base on the topic guide the initial sampling selection, but the sampling strategy is constantly rethought (Gibbs, Kealy, Willis, Green, Welch & Daly, 2007).

Linking the existing empirical evidence which suggests that there are various forms of violence in the majority of schools in South Africa (see Burton, 2008: South African

Human Rights Commission, 2006) with the eco-systemic perspective that underpins this study (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morrison, 1998), I purposefully selected the two urban secondary schools situated in the community where I reside. According to Durlak and colleagues (2007), the nature of adolescent violence can be linked to the community in which the school is situated (Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki & Weissberg, 2007). An interesting phenomenon related to the selected school sites is that although these two schools are situated within a 15-kilometre radius from each other, their learner populations come from vastly different socio-economic and geographical areas, also representing a different ethnic composition of learners.

School One is a co-educational, English-medium public secondary school situated in a middle to lower income residential area. Many of the learners are also transported by bus from more informal settlement areas. The Prospectus of this school states regarding discipline that the school has adopted a policy of zero tolerance to all breaches of discipline and good behaviour by learners (see Appendix A1 for extract from School Prospectus).

School Two is an English-medium, co-educational private community-based school situated in an affluent residential area. As part of the school's mission statement, learners are recognised as individuals and are taught to think creatively and critically, so as to reach informed opinions. The school believes that the healthy, nurturing and attractive country ambience instils an awareness of and sensitivity to the community and the ecological environments (see Appendix A2 for extract from School Prospectus). The differences between these two schools, although they are situated in such close proximity to each other, yielded insightful data into the factors affecting the collaborative nature of the violence prevention strategies.

3.3.2.3 Participant selection

Exploratory and descriptive case studies use methods closely resembling survey designs. Researchers enter the field with a predetermined set of variables for selecting a sample, so there is little need for immersion in the field. Diversity is assumed by selecting participants from different population groups and/or different settings. There is no attempt to return to the field to explore further any issues which may arise during the

analysis, which is largely restricted to listing a range of experiences. Nevertheless, these studies may indicate the need for further research to explore interesting findings. The limit on data collection is often practical and situational, but the researcher has to obtain the best possible sample and data. Constraints on achieving saturation are a legitimate reality of research and are best acknowledged by describing the limitations of the study (Green, Willis, Hughes, Small, Welch, Gibbs & Daly, 2007, p. 545).

Purposive sampling allows the selection criteria to evolve as data collection and analysis proceed. In purposive sampling, the researcher selects participants who fit a specific criterion of interest. The iterative process of selection, data collection and analysis allows the investigator to explore fully the study's guiding research questions.

- **Purposive sampling frame**

Purposive sampling frames are typically informal and based on the expert judgement of the researcher or on some available resources identified by the researcher. In purposive sampling, a sample frame is "a resource from which you can select your smaller sample" (Mason, 2002, p.240). After obtaining permission from the Gauteng Department of Education, I purposefully selected the two school sites for the reasons discussed earlier. I obtained written informed consent from the Principals and the Boards of Governors at both schools to conduct my fieldwork at the two selected school sites (see Appendix B1-4 for copies of letters).

The population units of analysis for this study included selected school staff members, Grade 9 learners and parents. I used a combination of purposeful sampling strategies to select information-rich cases for in-depth study. The selection strategies included criterion sampling (where participants are selected who meet some or all the predetermined criteria) and snowball sampling (where participants suggest other suitable potential participants). The goal was not to generalise to a population, but to gain insight into the phenomenon by purposefully selecting individuals for data collection, in order to maximise understanding as well as being willing to participate (Creswell, 2002).

The focus of selection is not the individuals but their accounts of an experience. The validity and trustworthiness of qualitative research is related to the selection of viable

sources which promote a deepening of the understanding of the experiences being studied. For this study, the focus was on selecting participants who could offer different perspectives on the collaborative nature of the violence prevention strategies at their schools.

- **Pilot study: Principals' interviews**

A two-pronged approach was taken to the data collection process. First a pilot study was conducted, consisting of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the Principals at both school sites. The Principals were selected because they are the heads of the institutions and have extensive knowledge of their schools, specifically the school's disciplinary procedures, mission and vision. They are also the link between the school staff members, the Board of Governors and parents. The purpose of this pilot study was to refine the interview guide as well as to build rapport with them. I conducted these interviews sequentially, starting with School One (see Appendix C1 for Interview Protocol).

- **Main phase: participant selection criteria**

Determining the selection criteria and rationale for including participants was the first important decision I had to make. At both school sites I needed to recruit school staff members to participate in the in-depth interviews, Grade 9 learners to participate in the group interview session and parents to participate in the individual, dyad and triad interview sessions, respectively. In the selection process, I used the following general criteria as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 34) to identify the most suitable individuals from the three population units of analysis (school staff members, learners, parents).

- **Relevance to conceptual framework and research questions:** the literature review (Chapter Two) and the eco-systemic theoretical framework suggest a holistic and comprehensive approach to conducting research on school violence. I needed to identify suitable participants from all three population units of analysis at both school sites, as they all form part of the subsystems in the bigger school system.

- **Potential to generate rich information:** the school staff members, learners and parents were selected because they could contribute to the collation of “thick” descriptions about the collaborative nature of the school-based strategies for violence prevention (Merriam 1998, p.212).
- **Analytic generalisability:** the participants were selected on the basis of providing a variety of perspectives to give insight and understanding, rather than serving as representatives of the general population.
- **Potential to generate believable explanations:** the participants should be knowledgeable about the collaborative efforts to prevent school violence at their schools so as to give convincing accounts (in the sense of being true to real life) of the research problem. To this end, I selected participants who could effectively articulate their experiences in English or Afrikaans; were willing to participate in the interview or group interview sessions and were willing to share with me their thoughts and emotions about their experiences.
- **Ethical implications:** the sample strategy had to be ethical. All the potential participants were informed about the purpose of the study; the potential benefits and risks; the voluntary nature of their participation as well as the ethical nature of my relationship with them (e.g. equalisation of power, building respect and trust, strict confidentiality and anonymity). All the participants who volunteered to participate also had to be willing to sign the written informed consent form.
- **Feasibility of sampling plan:** potential participants had to be easily accessible; have the time and resources to participate and be able to cope with the actual circumstances under which the data collection took place (e.g. after hours, at the school venue, lengthy interviews or group interview sessions, review of transcripts, possibility of follow-up sessions, emotional impact of participation).

- **Recruitment of school staff members**

I personally recruited the participating school staff members at both school sites. This involved a ten-minute presentation to these staff members. The presentation consisted of a brief description of the background, rationale and aims of the study. An open

invitation was then extended to any interested Grade 9 school staff members to volunteer their participation. Four school staff members were selected at each school, based on the predetermined criteria from the group of volunteers (see 3.3.2.3 Participant selection criteria). I contacted them telephonically to arrange a time and school venue where I could conduct the interviews. I also issued the informed consent form to each participating staff member (see Appendix D1 Informed Consent forms and D1.1 for biographical detail of school staff members).

- **Recruitment of the Grade 9 learners**

I originally planned to conduct three focus group sessions with six selected Grade 9 learners, based on predetermined criteria (see 3.3.2.3 Main phase: participant selection) at both sites. However, because of the practical and logistical issues involving the availability of learners after school hours, a decision was made to conduct group interview sessions with a class of Grade 9 learners during the Life Orientation periods at both school sites. Accordingly, at both schools a class of Grade 9 learners was identified on the basis of these predetermined criteria.

I held information sessions with both classes to request their voluntary participation. During these information sessions, I explained the purpose, rationale and aim of the study. Each learner was given an information letter and informed consent forms (learner and parent) to take home (see Appendix D2 and D2.1 for examples of Informed Consent forms). I urged the learners to discuss my request with their parents and informed them that they could only volunteer if their parents consented to their participation. I collected the learner and parent consent forms before conducting the group interview sessions. At School One, twenty-two (N=22) and at School Two, sixteen (N=16) learners consented to participate (see Appendix D2.2 for summary of Learner Profile).

- **Recruitment of parents**

An information letter explaining the purpose of my research was sent home to all the parents of the Grade 9 learners at both school sites. Parents were invited to indicate whether they would be interested in and willing to participate in this study on a voluntary basis. Those who showed interest were requested to complete an informed consent

form and return it to the school office in a sealed envelope (see Appendix D3 for example of Informed Consent Form). I personally telephoned each of the parents who volunteered and selected six parents from each school site, based on the predetermined criteria (see 3.3.2.3 Participant selection criteria).

Once again, there were practical issues about co-ordinating a time that suited the parents' schedules for holding the focus group sessions. To overcome this problem, I conducted one triad mini-group session (3 parents), one dyad (2 parents) and one individual interview with the selected volunteers (N=6) at both schools, respectively (see Appendix D3.1 for the biographical details of the participating parents).

It was essential to be explicit about the choices I made when selecting the different samples, because this enhanced the interpretative power of the study by ensuring that the scope and the limitations of the analysis were clearly specified. The issue of the limitations of the research as a consequence of sample bias was countered by the use of different methods of data collection, namely individual, dyad and triad interviews, group interviews and the document review (Tuckett & Stewart, 2004) (see Appendix E for Fieldwork: Time Management).

3.3.2.4 Ethical and legal considerations

Several ethical considerations may arise when collecting qualitative data. Dilemmas may centre on the conceptualisation of the research questions, informed consent, confidentiality and the collaborative relationship between researcher and participants (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora & Mattis, 2007). Therefore, it is essential for anyone who is involved in research to be aware of the general agreements about what is required from and proper in scientific research, including the researcher and participants.

- **Informed consent**

It is important to develop an appropriate informed procedure for obtaining consent for each investigation, as situations differ considerably in each specific research process (Strydom, in De Vos (Ed.), 2002, p.66). I obtained written informed consent from the Gauteng Department of Education, the Principals and Governing Bodies of both the selected schools as well as ethical clearance from the Faculty Research Ethics

Committee at the University of Pretoria prior to starting my fieldwork (see Appendix B for copies of letters).

Before I started my fieldwork with the selected participants (as described in section 3.3.2.3 Participant selection) all of them had completed and signed the written informed consent forms (see Appendixes D1-3 for examples of informed consent forms). Each participant was given a copy of these signed consent forms for their records.

- **Confidentiality and anonymity**

Confidentiality is an agreement with a person or organisation about what will be done to safeguard their information. Anonymity will ensure that these participants cannot be identified or that the information obtained from them will not indicate which individuals or organisations provided the data (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p. 293). Anonymity was achieved by the use of pseudonyms for those who participated in the interviews and group interview sessions. As the researcher, I was responsible for keeping the data anonymous and confidential, and also for analysing and publishing the data in ways that ensure confidentiality, for example by not attributing quotations to specific speakers and by encouraging the participants in the group interview sessions to keep what had been discussed confidential.

- **Legal considerations**

The Grade 9 learners are on average between 14 and 17 years old and are therefore legally regarded as minors as well as belonging to the group described under the law, as “vulnerable” in the research context. Consequently, I needed to obtain written consent from one of their legal guardians/parents as well as from them. The rights and safety of learners are also legally protected by the Child Care Act 1983 (Act 74 of 1983) and the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996). These Acts are intended to protect the physical and psychological integrity of learners in South African schools and I adhered to these guidelines during my investigation.

A serious ethical consideration which I had to contemplate before and during my research project was to ensure that the participants were at no risk of harm – physically, psychologically, legally or socially – by participating in the research. Minimal risk is

defined as: “The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated ... are not greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests” (Society of Adolescent Medicine, 2003, p. 403). As the focus of the current study was on the collaborative nature of the violence prevention strategies and not on the nature, trend or prevalence of the violent acts happening at school, I did not anticipate that the participants, including the learners, could be exposed to more than minimal risk during the course of my investigation.

Maintaining a balance between scientific responsibility and participant welfare continues to be a difficult ethical challenge. The current legal and professional guidelines (see the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists, 1992; Child Care Act, 1983; South African Schools Act, 1996; the Constitution of South Africa, 1996) are silent on whether a researcher has the responsibility for reporting or referring adolescent research participants to parents or the appropriate authorities when a problem has been revealed during the course of research. Empirical evidence also suggests that adolescents who consent to participate in research studies may be less likely to disclose personal information if they know that their disclosure may result in a breach of confidentiality (Society of Adolescent Medicine, 2003). These issues underscore the broader need for guidelines which would more specifically address the ambiguities surrounding the issues of imminent harm as it relates to preventive health research on adolescents (Lothen-Kline, Howard, Hamburger, Worrell & Boekeloo, 2003). For example, reporting suspected child abuse, threats of violence or certain illegal conduct, might be a legal requirement, not an ethical decision.

To accommodate these issues, I decided to identify the local mental health and social service resources for adolescents and their families in the local community in which I conducted my research prior to requesting the informed consent of the participants. I also felt morally obliged to advise the participants that if I discovered potential threats of violence or abuse in the course of my investigation, I would recommend that they should seek help from these professional organisations. I informed the learners, parents and school staff members of the limitations of confidentiality, including the statutory obligations to report suspicion of abuse during the initial information sessions.

Confidentiality and anonymity were respected and adhered to during and on completion of my study. I did everything possible to protect the participants from any physical or emotional harm and discomfort, and personally upheld high levels of professional integrity and ethics.

3.3.3 Data collection methods

Data collection is an ongoing relational and reflective process that includes researcher and participants (Hall & Callery, 2001). It is reflective in that it requires the researcher to engage in critical self-reflection. The researcher discusses his or her personal experiences and values and how they influence what he or she finds. It is relational in that it requires researchers to be aware that individuals, as well as artefacts, are embedded in social worlds (Hall & Callery, 2001). As Hall and Callery (2001, p. 257) explain: “When we speak of data collection as reflexive and relational, we are referencing the impact of researcher-participant interactions on the construction of data and to power and trust relationships between researchers and participants.”

3.3.3.1 Pilot study: in-depth, semi-structured interviews

As discussed earlier, the main goal of conducting the pilot study with the Principals at the two schools was to get background information about the status of collaborative efforts at their schools, to build rapport with them and to test the appropriateness of the interview questions. The pilot interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and the data incorporated in the final data analysis. I reviewed the original interview protocol and adapted and refined the questions.

- **Refinement of the interview protocol**

The semi-structured interview guide was used during the individual in-depth interviews as well as in the dyad, triad and group interview sessions. The interview guide consisted of two sections. The first section contained biographical information, which the participants and I completed together. The second section contained the topics and open-ended questions based on the following research questions:

- **How does the school climate impact on the collaborative efforts among the school staff members, learners and parents to address the prevailing forms of violence?**
- **What is the nature and prevalence of learner violence and victimisation in urban secondary schools?**
- **What do school staff members, learners and parents perceive as the major factors contributing to either promoting or preventing adolescent violent behaviour?**
- **How do school staff members, learners and parents develop their existing capacity, knowledge, skills and resources to address school-based violence?**
- **How do school staff members, learners and parents collaboratively deal with violence at secondary schools?**
- **What can schools in general do to address school-based learner violence?**

The interview protocol was designed to investigate the perspectives of the participating school staff members, learners and parents on the collaborative nature of their strategies to prevent school violence. The interview guide was divided into five main themes, namely

- School climate and culture
- School violence: nature and prevalence
- School violence prevention strategies
- Family-school collaboration
- Conclusion

Collecting the data by using this thematic interview protocol simplified the preliminary data analysis process. A growing body of literature on school-based violence identifies the need to explore the social context of behaviour (Burton, 2008; Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000). Moreover, in-depth interviewing typically involves the use of a semi-structured format to gather thorough accounts of individual participant's experiences, thoughts and perceptions about the target phenomenon. After completing the pilot study, the Interview questions were refined and adapted (see Appendix C2 for revised Interview Protocol).

3.3.3.2 Main data collection: a four-phase sequential method

In the current study I followed a four-phase sequential process for data collection. Each phase was conducted concurrently at both school sites. In each phase I collected data from different sources, using multiple data collection methods.

- **Phase One: in-depth, semi-structured interviews – school staff members**

Interviewing is one of the most popular qualitative data collection strategies and is the key source of data for case studies. The qualitative research interview is a place where knowledge is constructed from the direct interaction between the interviewer (researcher) and the interviewee (participant) (Polkinghorne, 2005). Although the process of conducting a qualitative interview varies from one study to another, researchers should follow several steps in collecting interview data, such as selecting the interview type, formulating the interview questions, conducting the interview, transcribing the interview and debriefing the interviewees (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Arora & Mattis, 2007, p. 309). I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the four purposefully selected staff members at both school sites. Before starting the interview, I gave the interviewees information about the format of the interview, the duration as well as how I would use the data and discussed again what their informed consent entailed (Meyers & Sylvester, 2006).

Fagan and Wise (2000) point out that skilled interviewers build rapport by asking non-threatening questions early in the interview, using the language of the interviewee, and following the pace of the interviewee. They also avoid “yes/no” questions, multiple questions combined into one, coercive questions and leading questions. I used the Interview Protocol to give direction to the interview, and interview probes to increase the comprehensiveness of the information. The questions were focused on the school staff members’ experiences, feelings, opinions and perceptions of each topic under discussion. The following questions were included in the interviews: introductory questions to help the participant feel more comfortable; specific questions about the research topics; closing questions asking the participants to add any information that they might feel was relevant; a description of the next step in the research process (e.g. follow-up interviews, participant checks), and expression of thanks to the participant for her/his time and involvement in the study (Suzuki et al., 2007, p.311). After completing

the interview session, I reassured the interviewees that they would each receive a transcript of the interview and assured them that they would have a choice during the transcript review process to decide whether or not they wished to exclude certain material (Suzuki et al., 2007, p. 312).

These one-hour interview sessions were conducted sequentially over a five-month period because of the participants' time constraints (see Appendix E for Fieldwork: Time Management). Each individual interview was recorded on audiotape, transcribed verbatim and reviewed by the participant (see Appendix D1.2 for extract of transcribed interview). The participants' checks enhanced the credibility (internal validity) and confirmability (audit trail) of the study (Bryman, 2008, pp. 376-380). I also found it helpful to set aside time immediately after each interview to reflect on and record what had been learned in the interview, by jotting down the emotional quality of the interview as well as comments about the interpersonal interaction. I also followed up any new information not covered in the interview guide by adding new questions (see Appendix F for extract from Field Notes).

- **Phase Two: group interview sessions – Grade 9 learners**

As discussed earlier (see 3.3.2.3 Recruitment of Grade 9 learners) a decision was made to conduct group interviews with a class of Grade 9 learners at each of the respective schools, owing to the practical and logistical issues regarding the availability of six Grade 9 learners who could participate in three focus-group sessions after school hours. These group interview sessions were conducted during the Life Orientation periods. Bryman (2008, p. 473) states that the distinction between the focus group method and the group interview is not clearly specified and the two terms are frequently employed interchangeably. He suggests that the focus group method adds to the focused interview the element of interaction with groups as an area of interest and is more focused than the group interview.

Literature on focus groups also differs regarding the proposed number of participants in a group. For example Krueger (2000) recommends six to nine members. However, Morgan (1997) contends that fewer than six participants make it difficult to sustain a discussion but more than 12 members make it difficult for the moderator. Krueger (2000) suggests that focus groups should be small enough for everyone to have their

voices represented but yet big enough to capture a range of voices. Various authors also differ quite substantially on the number of groups which should be conducted – ranging from three to 14 (see Morgan, 1997; Bryman, 2008). Bryman (2008, p. 477) suggests that time and resources will play a role and he refers to Calder (1977) who suggests that when the researcher can anticipate the responses from the next group, there are probably enough groups already, thus the point of data saturation has been reached (Calder, 1977 in Bryman 2008, p. 477).

In view of the number of participants (N=22 and N=16) and based on the above guidelines, I divided each class into four groups, consisting of between four to six learners per group. I used random purposeful sampling to divide the participants into the four groups, using the alphabetic class lists (see Appendix D2.3 for sampling process). According to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28), random purposeful sampling “adds credibility to sample when potential purposeful sample is too large”. A number was allocated to each participant to indicate the group to which he or she belonged. (For example, A1 means participant one from Group A.) All four subgroups participated during each group interview session. Each subgroup had an opportunity to act as the main group in discussing the various themes. The participants from the other three groups could interact and contribute continuously in the discussions (see Appendix D2.4 for classroom seating arrangement).

As Krueger and Casey (2000, p. 5) note: “The purpose of focus groups is to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which people can share ideas, experiences and attitudes about a topic.” I believe that I achieved this purpose by dividing the bigger group into smaller subgroups, which gave momentum to the discussions and led to a natural interplay of debate and interaction among the whole group, without some members dominating the discussion. The interactive nature of these group sessions led to the refinement and justification of the issues discussed, providing a deeper insight into the issues and context in which these discussions took place. The group environment also provided an opportunity for an explicit discussion of differences in opinions as they emerged in the group, which is one of the advantages of the focus group method (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). As Patton (1990, pp. 335) suggests, the focus group discussion “provides some quality checks on data collection in that participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other that weed out false or extreme views,” in this way adding to the credibility of this study. At School One I conducted

three sessions of 20 minutes each over a two-week period. At School Two, however, I only conducted one session of 60 minutes with the Grade 9 class group. I am satisfied that I reached data saturation at School One but I feel that the one-off session at School Two limited the comprehensiveness of the data. Nevertheless, the highly interactive and spontaneous nature of the discussions yielded sufficient insight into how the learners viewed the various topics discussed.

My preliminary data analysis, carried out immediately after the transcription of the oral recordings, supported my initial notion. Based on the limited scope of this exploratory and descriptive case study design, there was no need for me to return to the field to follow up the issues raised during the discussions. Each group interview session was transcribed verbatim and each participant received a copy of the transcript to review and comment on. The participant checks enhanced the credibility (internal validity) and confirmability (audit trail) of the study (Bryman, 2008, pp. 376-380), as a number of learners added more written comments to the issues discussed.

- **Phase Three: individual, dyad and triad interviews – parents**

As discussed previously (see 3.3.2.3 Recruitment of parents) because of practical time constraints in finding a suitable time to conduct focus group sessions with the six parents who volunteered to participate in the group sessions, I applied various interview methods with these parents. The first interview session consisted of a mini-group session, involving a triad interview with three parents from each school, respectively. I met these parents for one hour and used the semi-structured interview guide to facilitate the discussions. These triad interview sessions were followed up by individual semi-structured interviews with another parent from the group of parents who volunteered to participate in the study, from each school respectively. At School One, however, I conducted an additional individual interview as only two of the three participants actively contributed to the discussion during the triad interview as the third participant was late and arrived only towards the end of the session. The interviews with the parents were concluded by conducting a pair or dyad interview, consisting of a mother and father combination, from each school respectively (Ireland, 2003).

Utilising these different methods of interviewing and conducting these sessions over a period of three months gave me the opportunity to incorporate specific questions about

the issues raised by previous participants, allowing participant checks to be built into the interview guide. These smaller groups also gave each participant the opportunity to express a more personal view about the various topics discussed and led to lively and in-depth debate. The richness of the data contributed to the thick and detailed description of the issues and allowed a thorough triangulation of these multiple sources to cross-check information, thus promoting the validity or trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2002).

- **Phase Four: document review**

Data collection was concluded by reviewing the school documents and written procedures as they pertained to the collaborative nature of the school violence prevention strategies. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 277) define documents as referring to “any written or recorded material other than that was not prepared specifically in response to a request from the inquirer”. I requested school documents that would be germane to the research purpose and could contribute to answering the research questions (Merriam, 1998). I used the research questions and Interview Protocol to review the written documents with the specific aim of verifying the perceptions and opinions expressed by the school staff members, learners and parents regarding the topics discussed (see Appendix G for extract of Document Review Worksheet). The documents that I reviewed at both school sites included the following:

- The School Prospectus
- The School Code of Conduct
- Grade 9 Life Orientation Curriculum

School One also has an Occupational Health and Safety Policy which I reviewed. By contrast, School Two does not have such a document. The content analysis of this “mute evidence” (Hodder, 1998, p. 110) helped with the triangulation of the empirical data collected from conducting the individual, dyad, triad and group interview sessions (Patton, 1990).

Using multiple data sources and data collection methods in a triangulating fashion assisted with gaining a better understanding of the collaborative nature of the school violence prevention strategies. Including the views of different population units of

analysis (school staff members, learners and parents) as well as reviewing the written policies, provided a balanced and multi-faceted enquiry, resulting in different viewpoints which enhanced the entire study (Bryman, 2008).

3.3.3.3 Field notes

Making field notes during the data collection process served to document my thought processes, philosophical position, decision-making rationale and construction of meaning in the research process and illustrated the researcher-participant relationship. As such, the field notes are already the first step towards analysing the data. Keeping a record of my own observations performed a number of important functions, as suggested by Conroy (2003) namely:

- I recorded the non-verbal aspects of the interviews and group sessions that are not evident from the transcribed audio-recordings, such as tone of voice, body language and environmental distractions;
- This record helped me to outline my understanding, interpretations and decisions regarding the data collection process;
- It gave me an opportunity for reflection and self-evaluation to help me minimise subjectivity and bias;
- I could record my ideas and insights, and identify emerging data patterns during the research process; and
- It was incorporated as a form of analytic memo-keeping during the data analysis (Conroy, 2003, pp. 20-27).

The numerous field notes I made during this study represented important elements of my observational, methodological and analytical thoughts (Groenewald, 2004) (see Appendix F for extract from Field Notes).

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Hartley (2004) asserts that data collection and analysis are “developed together in an iterative process” which can be a strength as they allow the development of a theory which is grounded in empirical evidence (Hartley, 2004, p. 329). Data analysis means a search for patterns in data, which are then interpreted in terms of a social theory or the

setting in which these patterns occurred. After this, the researcher moves from the description of a historical event or social setting to a more general interpretation of the meaning. As Patton and Appelbaum (2003) confirm, “the ultimate goal of the case study is to uncover patterns, determine meaning, construct conclusions and build theory” (Patton & Appelbaum, 2003, p.67).

In the current study, initial data analysis started immediately after receiving the first data and continued throughout the four-phase data collection process. At the end of the data collection and after a period of withdrawal from the field for reflection, I engaged in what many researchers term the “grand analysis” (Whitley & Crawford, 2005, p. 112). This grand analysis attempts to synthesise all the data into a thick description. Various methods are commonly used to aid these processes, most of which are variants of the same theme, namely “content analysis” (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004, p. 105).

3.4.1 Data analysis method: qualitative content analysis

Qualitative content analysis is the analysis method of choice in qualitative descriptive and exploratory studies, as was the case in the current study (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004). Bryman (2008) defines qualitative content analysis as “an approach to documents that emphasises the role of the investigator in the construction of the meaning of and in texts. There is an emphasis on allowing categories to emerge out of the data and on recognising the significance for understanding the meaning of the context in which an item being analysed (and the categories derived from it) appeared” (Bryman, 2008, p. 697).

The primary purpose of the inductive approach to qualitative content analysis is to allow the research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by more traditional and structured methodologies such as grounded theory. The inductive approach is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data, where the analysis is guided by specific objectives (Mayring, 2000). In the current study, my objectives for analysing the raw data were as follows:

- To condense the extensive and variety of raw data into a brief, summarised format

- To establish clear links between the research objectives and the summarised findings derived from the raw data, and
- To ensure that these links would be transparent (able to demonstrate to others) and defensible (justifiable), given the objectives of the research.

Qualitative content analysis involved systematically condensing the massive amount of raw data into a comprehensible description without losing the complexity inherent in the original responses. Mayring (2000) mentions that one of the great advantages of qualitative content analysis is that it can be combined with other qualitative analytical procedures.

3.4.1.1 Analytical strategy: constant comparative analysis

Constant comparative analysis is a commonly employed form of content analysis that converts the extracted data into systematic categories, facilitating the identification of patterns, themes, variations and relationships (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton 2002). Originally developed for use in the grounded theory methodology of Glaser and Strauss (1967), which itself evolved out of the sociological theory of symbolic interactionism, this strategy involves taking one piece of data (e.g. one interview, one statement, one theme) and comparing it with all others that may be similar or different in order to develop an understanding of the possible links between various pieces of data (Thorne, 2000).

Naturalistic enquiry and interpretative description are methods which depend on a process of constant comparative analysis to develop ways of understanding human phenomena in the context in which they are experienced, as was the case with the current study. As a qualitative researcher, my analytical style leans towards the interpretative/subjectivist style rather than the technical/objectivist style. The initial codes and categories used for analysing the transcribed texts and documents were derived from the research questions, the interview protocol and theoretical frameworks, as well as emerging from the data during the analysis process. I continually compared and contrasted the data collected from the different data sets. Ryan and Bernard (2000) argue that “constant comparison can help researchers to discover themes in text” (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 776). Comparison goes hand in hand with interpretation.

3.4.2 Data management and documentation

A crucial process in data analysis is the management and documentation of the data. The purpose of analysis is to bring meaning, structure and order to the data.

- **Data documentation**

The vast amount of data collected (namely, 10 individual semi-structured interviews (school staff members); four group interview sessions (learners); six semi-structured interviews (individual, dyad and triad interviews with parents) and school policy documents (School Prospectus, Code of Conduct, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Life Orientation Curriculum) were documented as described below.

After the transcription process it was necessary to organise the data into easily retrievable sections. Each data set was given an identification code, which included the date, the context and an anonymous identifier (pseudonym). All transcribed interviews were stored electronically on a memory stick. Paper copies of each transcription were kept in a master file. A complete list of data sources was compiled and used as reference throughout the analysis. The data were categorised according to the specific data sources (school staff members, learners, parents and school documents) for each of the two school sites. This helped with keeping track of the progress made and with providing a holistic description of the entire research process and the findings at the end of the study (see accompanying CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools, Files 1-9).

- **Unit of analysis**

The preparation phase started by selecting the unit of analysis, which may be a word, sentence or theme. According to Graneheim and Ludman (2004), the most suitable unit of analysis is a whole interview or an observational protocol because it is large enough to be considered a whole and small enough in the context of the meaning unit, during the analysis process. The units of analysis in the current study were each of the individual, dyad, triad or group interview sessions and each separate school policy document. The various units of analysis were documented and managed as follows:

Interviews: each interview was tape-recorded digitally, transcribed verbatim and formatted to create a uniform data storage system. The transcription process gave me an opportunity to become immersed in the data and to get a feel for the cumulative data as a whole (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p. 312). I made back-up copies of all the data to keep them safe (Patton, 2002, p.441) (see Appendix D1.2 for extract from transcribed interview & CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in secondary schools, Files 1 and 5: Interview Transcripts).

School policy documents: all the relevant school policy documents (School Prospectus, School Code of Conduct, Occupational Health and Safety Policy and Life Orientation Curriculum) were collected from both the schools and filed according to the research questions and Interview Protocol Themes (see Appendix G for extract from School Document Review Worksheet & CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools, File 9: Document Review).

Field notes: a separate file was kept in which I recorded the field notes made during the data collection process. These observations (latent content) were included as part of the data analysis summaries. The aim of including latent content is to report on the non-verbal communication (e.g. silences, postures, sighs) during the interview sessions (Burns & Grove, 2005), which contributes to the richness of the data (see Appendix F for extract from Field Notes).

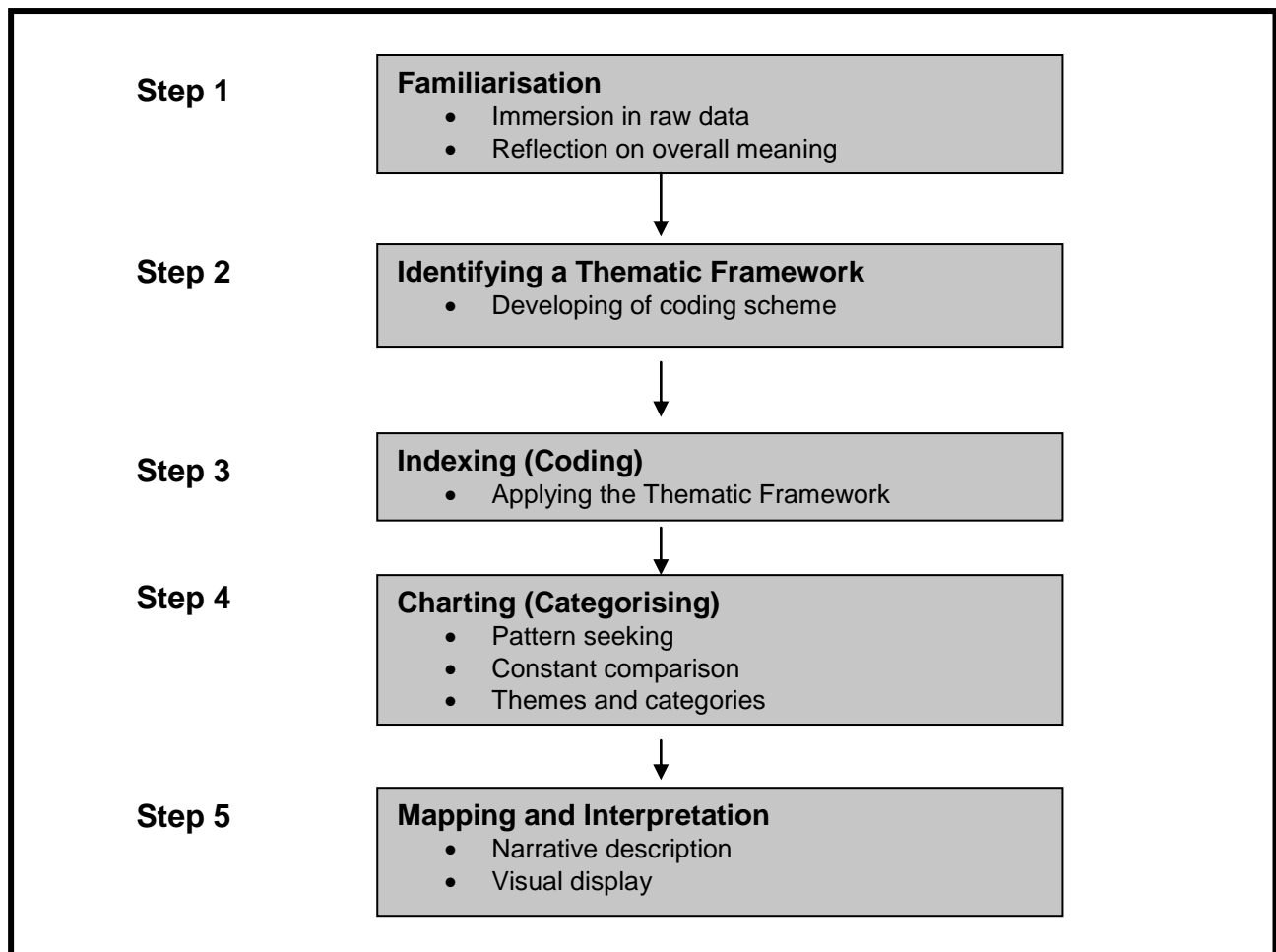
3.4.3 Data analysis process: Framework Approach

The importance of giving a clear account of the analytical process is a recurrent theme in the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Bryman, 2008). Therefore, to give a transparent account of the analytical process, I analysed the data manually by following the specific qualitative analytical steps of the “Framework Approach” as described by Ritchie and colleagues (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003, p. 219). This approach developed a hierarchical thematic framework which was used for classifying and organising the data according to the key themes, concepts and emergent categories (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003). The main features of the Framework Approach that assists the systematic analysis of data include the following:

- It allows emergent ideas and concepts to be captured so that analysis remains grounded and ensures that the data are not forced to fit preconceived categories.
- It is flexible so that new ideas and insights can be accommodated.
- It records and displays reduced and synthesised data in such a way that they can be traced to their original form (audit trail).
- It permits searches and comparisons within and between data sources.
- It ensures that the entire data set is systematically and comprehensively retrieved and analysed, and
- It allows transparency so that the reader can review the analytical procedures (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003, p. 220).

The Framework Approach (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003, pp.219-262) was employed and adapted in the analysis process. This approach is presented graphically in Table 3.2 and then discussed in detail.

Table 3.2: Protocol for data analysis



(Source: Ritchie & Spencer, 2003, pp. 219-262).

3.4.3.1 The five steps of the Framework Approach

Although the general approach to analysis in the Framework Approach is inductive, this form of analysis allows the inclusion of *a priori* issues as well as emergent concepts. The transcribed data were analysed to determine the key themes by following the five steps of the Framework Approach (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003, pp.219 – 262).

- **Step 1: Familiarisation with data**

Organising and documenting the data start the process of familiarisation. To immerse myself in the data, I listened to the tape recordings and read and re-read the transcriptions. The interview transcripts were formatted in a way that provided for a wide right-hand margin in which I could make notes and write the codes. I read through each data set several times to gain an overall understanding of all the content (Creswell, 2003). As I became familiar with the data, I jotted down initial ideas and marked segments of interest (Huberman & Miles, 2002, p. 312).

- **Step 2: Identifying a thematic framework (coding scheme)**

During the first familiarisation step, I gained an overview of the data and also started the process of abstraction (formulating general descriptions) and the conceptualisation of the key issues. I identified and made judgements about the importance, relevance and meaning of the key issues, concepts and themes in terms of which the data could be examined and referenced (the thematic framework). The Interview Protocol and the research questions guided my initial identification of key issues (*a priori* issues). I compared and combined these key issues with the emergent issues and analytical themes arising from the recurrence of particular views or experiences raised by the participants, to develop a coding scheme or thematic framework.

The process of developing a coding scheme started by analysing the two pilot study transcripts. This initial coding frame was then applied to two more transcripts from each school site to verify the applicability of this framework. The Thematic Framework that was applied to the systematic coding of all the transcripts and school documents consisted of the following five themes:

- Theme 1: School climate and culture
- Theme 2: Violent learner behaviour
- Theme 3: Violence prevention strategies
- Theme 4: Family-school collaboration
- Theme 5: Suggestions for addressing school-based violence

The end product of this stage was a detailed index of the data, which labelled the data into manageable chunks for subsequent retrieval and exploration (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003) (see CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools, Files 2 & 6 (Coded Interviews) and File 9: Document Review).

- **Step 3: Indexing (Coding)**

Indexing or coding is the process of applying the Thematic Framework to the data, using numerical codes to identify specific pieces of data, which corresponded to the various themes. The Thematic Framework was systematically applied to the data in its textual form (Ritchie, Spencer & O’Conner, 2003).

Codes are the labels used to identify a particular concept, theme, idea or behaviour in the data. Coding involves breaking down, labelling, comparing and organising data in order to group them into similar categories. This process is subjective, but by adopting a system of annotating the textual data by assigning direct participant quotes to specific code sections, the analysis was grounded in real evidence and the process made visible and accessible to others (Hsich & Shannon, 2005).

After coding the data obtained from the two pilot interviews (interviews with the Principal of each of the two schools), I systematically coded each transcript or document in a sequential manner. The process started by coding the transcripts of the two schools’ staff members followed by the learners’ transcripts and then the parents’ transcripts from both schools. I completed the coding process by reviewing the school document policies from both schools as they related to the themes. The coding process involved assigning a code phrase which accurately described the meaning of the text segment line-by-line in each transcript (Hsich & Shannon, 2005) (see Appendix H1 for extract of

coded transcript & CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools, Files 3 & 7: Clustering/ Code Families).

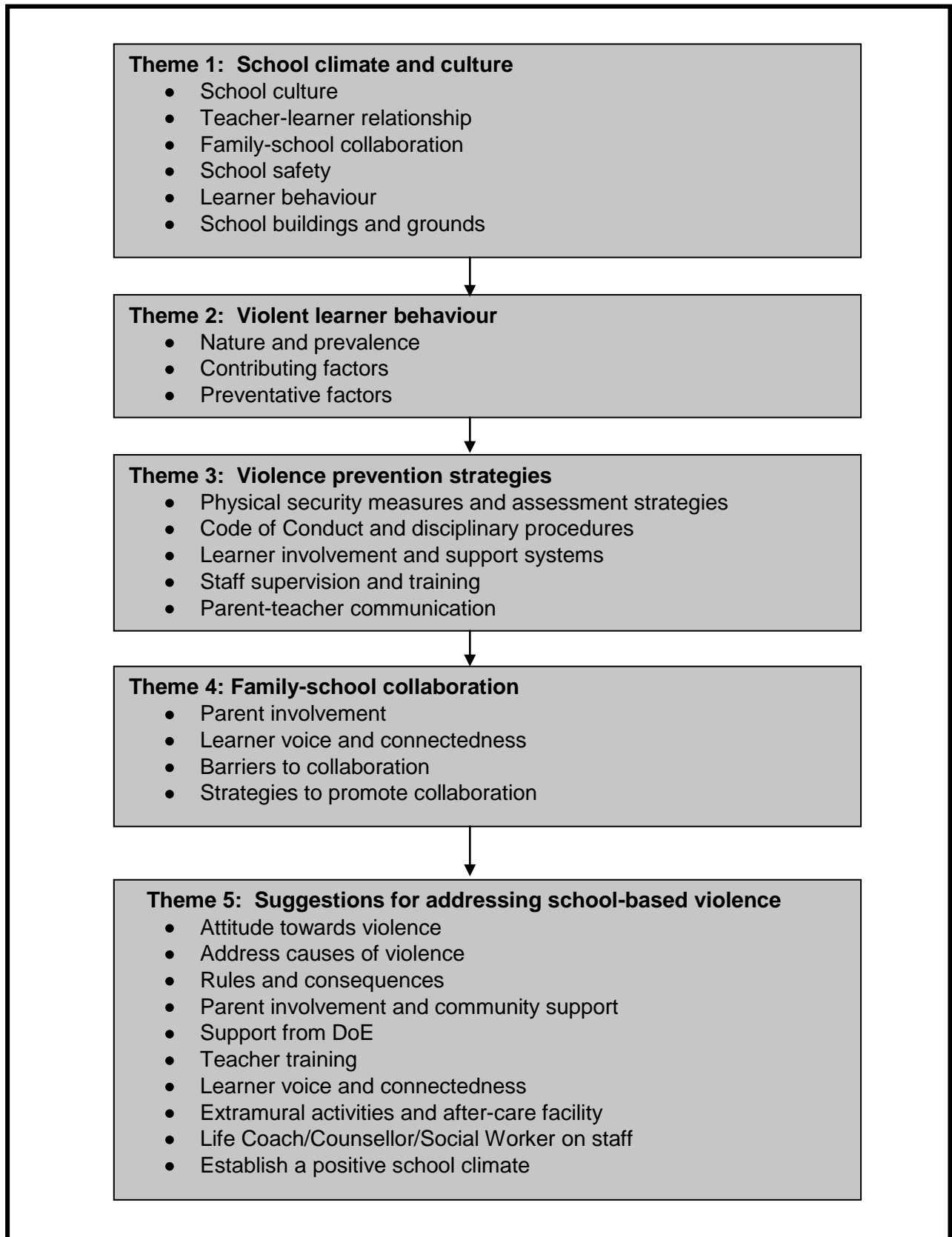
- **Step 4: Charting (Categorising)**

Charting or categorising involves using the headings from the Thematic Framework to create charts of the data so that one can easily read across the whole data set. I compiled the charts thematically for each theme across all respondents from both school sites. The purpose of creating categories is to provide a means of describing the phenomena, to increase understanding and to generate knowledge. When formulating categories by means of inductive content analysis, the researcher interprets the content to reach a decision about what should be put in the same category. Each category is named by using content-characteristic words. Subcategories with similar events and incidents are grouped together in categories and categories are grouped together in main categories or themes (Hsich & Shannon, 2005) (see Appendix H2 for example of Theme Chart and CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools, Files 4, 8 & 9).

- **Themes and categories**

Having applied the thematic framework to all the units of analysis (transcripts and school documents) I now re-arranged or grouped the data according to the thematic content to build up a picture of the data as a whole, and to allow comparative analysis by considering the range of opinions, attitudes, perceptions and experiences for each issue or theme. The main goal of content analysis is to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering the patterns in the data. Each theme was used as the basis for the arguments that would answer the research question. It was important to provide dialogue which supported the themes and to collect quotes from the interview data which served as authentic evidence to be used in the descriptions of the themes (Creswell, 2002, p.275). The findings were the results that I obtained from analysing the data. The main themes and categories deduced from the data are graphically displayed in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Thematic framework (code families/categories)



- **Step 5: Mapping and interpretation**

Mapping involves searching for patterns, associations, concepts and explanations in the data, aided by a visual display (Pope, Ziebald & Mays, 2000). The overall analysis of the data entailed interpreting the themes and patterns throughout the research project as a whole. A key aspect of this process was the continuous analysis and reflection upon the data collected (Creswell, 2002). Data were charted into the Thematic Framework and the charts used to define and illustrate concepts, views and experiences of the participants. The Thematic Framework was used to summarise, interpret and explain the research findings.

- **Narrative description and visual display**

Interpretation means taking into account the possibility that the reader or another researcher might interpret the findings differently. The interpretation of the data entailed reviewing the charts and my research notes; comparing and contrasting perceptions, accounts and experiences; searching for patterns and connections; and finally seeking for explanations for these internally within the data (Pope, Ziebald & Mays, 2000). By means of a rich, detailed description of the case study, I not only show the level of support the data provided for my preferred interpretation, but also allow the reader to make his/her own interpretation about meaning and significance (Patton, 2002, p. 438).

Interpretation involved a balancing act between my own perspective and “letting the text talk” (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004, p. 111). The Thematic Framework was used to summarise, interpret and explain the research findings. The categories and themes were used to construct a narrative description and visual display of these findings. The detailed and descriptive portrayal of the findings of the study was summarised in a manner which supported the fulfilment of the purpose of the study by linking the findings to the research questions and the theoretical framework, and comparing the research findings with those of previous studies.

3.5 QUALITY CRITERIA

As with any type of research, the validity and reliability of a qualitative study must be established if the results of the research are to be meaningful to others. Graneheim and

Ludman (2004 p. 109) state: “Research findings should be as trustworthy as possible and every research study must be evaluated in relation to the procedures used to generate the findings.” They add that in the tradition of qualitative content analysis, the use of concepts related to the quantitative tradition, such as validity, reliability and generalisability, is still common. However, they suggest that one should apply the concepts linked to the qualitative tradition when reporting the findings of studies using qualitative content analysis. These concepts – credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability – should be viewed as intertwined and interrelated aspects of the trustworthiness of the study (Graneheim & Ludman, 2004, pp. 109-111).

3.5.1 Credibility

The first question concerning the credibility or internal validity of the current study was how well the data and processes of the analysis addressed the intended focus of the study (Patton, 2002). Utilising the following triangulation options assisted with ensuring the credibility of the findings:

- **Triangulation of data collection methods:** making use of different data collection methods, namely individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews; dyad and triad interviews, group interviews and school policy document reviews, confirmed the consistency of findings.
- **Triangulation of data sources:** by relating the opinions and perspectives of different stakeholders at the schools, namely the school staff members, learners and parents, and including the mute evidence from the school policy documents, increased the possibility of shedding light on the research questions by relating the data to different perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002).

To seek validation of my interpretations and findings, I made use of “member checking” (Bryman, 2008, p.377). Checking the findings with the case study participants is a valuable part of the analysis as it can enhance validity. Each participant received a transcript of his/her interview to review and comment on. These comments were included in the analysis process. In addition, the analysis of data is enhanced by reference to the existing literature and using this to raise questions about whether my findings are consistent with or different from existing research (Hartley, 2004, p.330).

3.5.2 Transferability

Transferability or external validity is problematic in qualitative research because as Merriam (1998, p.208) points out: “In qualitative research, a single case or small non-random sample is selected precisely because the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of many.” To enhance the possibility of the generalisability of the findings in this study, I used what Merriam (1998, p.212) describes as “rich, thick descriptions”. In other words, I provided enough description for readers to determine how closely their situations match the research situation, and hence whether the findings can be transferred.

3.5.3 Dependability

From a qualitative perspective, reliability or dependability is not based on outsiders getting the same results, but on their concurring that, given the data collected, the results make sense. In other words, the results are dependable and consistent (Lincoln & Guba, 1985 in Bryman, 2008). Lincoln and Guba (1985) note that, as a parallel to establishing reliability or dependability in quantitative research, qualitative researchers should adopt an “auditing” approach (in Bryman 2008, p.378). To this end, I kept complete records of all the phases in the research process (i.e. selection of sites and participants, field notes, interview transcripts, data collection and analysis decisions) in an accessible manner (e.g. as appendices, digital audio files, MSWord documents and on CD-ROM) so that the records could be peer reviewed to show that proper procedures had been followed.

3.5.4 Confirmability

The interpretative nature of qualitative studies implies the subjective involvement of the researcher as the main data collection instrument. Confirmability or verifiability means ensuring that although complete objectivity is not possible, I have shown that I acted in good faith by not allowing my personal values and theoretical inclinations to sway the research and the findings derived from it. Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Bryman, 2008) suggest that establishing confirmability should be one of the objectives of auditors. After completing my preliminary findings, I requested a stakeholder from both the schools to review and comment on the research findings (See Appendix H3 for extract).

3.5.5 Researcher bias

As I am not an impartial bystander when it comes to violent learner behaviour in the school context, I had to express my personal views at the outset of the study to enhance its internal validity or credibility. As a mother and educator, I am deeply concerned about the well being and safety of my own two sons in particular, and that of other young people in general. So I have a vested interest in and personal motivation for finding solutions to the continuing violence negatively affecting our youth in our country's schools. Being aware of this bias, I took every precaution to maintain objectivity during the collection and analysis of the data, to ensure that I would represent the project findings fairly and accurately.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Collecting and analysing qualitative data, if done properly, is systematic and rigorous, and therefore labour-intensive and time-consuming. Fielding (1993) contends: "Good qualitative analysis is able to document its claims to reflect some of the truth of a phenomenon by reference to systematically gathered data" in contrast to "poor qualitative analysis is anecdotal, unreflective, and descriptive without being focused on a coherent line of inquiry". Therefore at the heart of good qualitative analysis lie the skill, vision and integrity of the researcher (in Pope, Ziebald & Mays, 2000, p.116).

This chapter discusses the justification for the research design, which is a case study and has a qualitative, exploratory and descriptive nature. The methodology for collecting, managing, documenting and analysing the data is described to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. The next chapter explains the application of the data analysis process and describes and interprets the main findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS: DESCRIPTION AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the current study was to explore and describe how the school staff members, learners and parents at two urban secondary schools collaborate to address learner violence. The research findings are summarised in a manner that supports the purpose of the study by linking the findings to the research questions and also to the five major themes that emerged from the analysis of the collected data, as described in the previous chapter. Interpreting the research data entailed grouping data together logically to make sense of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe this process as “lessons learnt” (in Creswell, 2002, p. 277).

This chapter begins with a brief description of the two school sites selected. Merriam (1998, p.5) states that a case study has to report on or give a description of the context of the study. Next I give an overview of the categories and themes that emerged from the data analysis in a tabular format. I include references to direct quotes by the participant to illustrate my understanding of the messages the participants wanted to communicate about the collaborative nature of their efforts to prevent school violence. This is followed by an analysis and synthesis of the main research findings. The chapter concludes by discussing and interpreting the main research findings by means of relating the results to the research purpose, the socio-ecological theoretical framework and the existing knowledge base on collaborative strategies for violence prevention in urban secondary schools.

4.2 CONTEXT OF STUDY: SCHOOL SITES

Qualitative research seeks to understand human behaviour as a holistic experience, in a particular setting and from the viewpoint of those in that setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This study was intended to acknowledge and capture the opinions held by and in the different groups, namely school staff members, Grade 9 learners and parents,

which comprised the school community of the two selected school sites. Creswell (1998, p. 13) explains: “Qualitative research is an intricate fabric composed of minute threads, many colors, different textures, and various blends of materials.” I sought to weave many strands together so as to make sense of the collaborative nature of the violence prevention strategies in creating such a “fabric” (Creswell, 1998, p. 13). Merriam (1998, p. 5) describes the product of qualitative research as “richly descriptive” and my role was to respect the range of views and yet weave together a meaningful whole, in this way constructing a further interpretation of the social world of the schools.

4.2.1 School One

School One was established in 1993. The motto of the school is “*Rus in urbe – Peace in the community*”, and its vision is “to prepare [name omitted] High School learners to positively engage in our diverse and dynamic world” (School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 1). The school is a section 21 co-educational English-medium public secondary school, situated in an urban area of Johannesburg. The school is governed by the School Governing Body (SGB), consisting of the Principal, 9 parents including the chairperson, three educators, a bursar and learner representatives (senior council members of the Representative Council of Learners, or RCLs, as elected). The premise for management at and admission to the school is based on the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), the Bill of Rights (Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996) and Gauteng Department of Education Circular 29 of 2007 on admission (School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 2).

The school accommodates about 1 000 learners of whom the majority ($\pm 95\%$) are African children. The members of the RCL are elected in accordance with the Department of Education's regulations and the RCL comprises two learners, a male and female, from each class. The role of the RCL is seen as one of voicing the learners' opinions, maintaining contact with the staff members, and community involvement with the ideal of bringing all the various aspects of the community together (School Prospectus, 2009a, pp. 4-6).

The school has adopted a policy of zero tolerance to all breaches of discipline and behaviour of the learners. Parents are requested to ensure that their children obey the rules of the school, as contained in the School Prospectus, and the Code of Conduct.

Offences are dealt with as stated in the Schools Act (Provincial Gazette Extraordinary October 2000 No. 144) in an official disciplinary hearing with the School Governing Body (SGB). They distinguish between the following offences:

- **Schedule 1:** serious misconduct that may lead to suspension, i.e. seriously threatening, disrupting or frustrating teaching or learning in a class, and
- **Schedule 2:** serious misconduct that may lead to expulsion, i.e. engaging in theft, or otherwise acting dishonestly to prejudice another person, committing assault, being in possession of narcotics or drugs or maliciously damaging property.

(School Prospectus, 2009a, pp. 8-9)

The school buildings and grounds are well maintained by the SGB and secured by a palisade perimeter fence, guards are stationed at the entrance gate and a CCTV monitoring system operates inside the building. The school has an Occupational Health and Safety Policy (2005) which is the guiding document used by the Health and Safety Committee. This committee meets at least once a month and its responsibility is to make recommendations to the Principal on any matter affecting the safety of pupils and school staff members at the school. The school has a school-based Reaction Team for controlling any emergency or evacuation procedures. There have been only a few incidents at the school, where learners acted in an overtly aggressive way. It is a well-managed school where the staff members strive to engage learners in academic, sporting and cultural activities in a safe teaching and learning environment.

4.2.2 School Two

School Two was established in 2001 and accommodates about 390 learners. The motto of the school is "*Alis vola propriis – Spread your wings*" and its vision is "to send forth well informed, educated young men and women with a balanced outlook on life, conversant with modern technology, respectful of the rights of others and who, in all things, have an unquenchable thirst for excellence" (School Prospectus, 2009b, p. 2) It is an English medium, non-denominational, co-educational, private community-based school, situated in an urban area of Johannesburg. Innovative modern teaching methods are used, grounded in a traditional education programme. The school staff members believe that the healthy, nurturing and attractive country ambience instils an awareness of and sensitivity to the community and the ecological environs. Pupils are

recognised as individuals and taught to think creatively and critically. The school fosters the development of self-confidence, understanding, tolerance and adaptation to change. A broad and holistic curriculum is followed and includes cultural, technological, business and life skills training, languages and extramural activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop a strong work ethic and the small class sizes (maximum of 27 per class) allow teachers to give attention to individual learners. Academic support is available to learners in every subject. The school encourages each learner to participate in as many activities as possible, and it offers a wide range of co-curricular activities.

The school is governed by a Board of Governors, which works closely with the Headmaster who is an *ex officio* member of the Board. The Headmaster is assisted by an executive staff complement of four, each responsible for a key area of the school life – Co-curricular, Academic, Administration and Financial. There is an active Parents' Association represented by a committee which liaises with the Board and the school staff members. The school expects the parents, learners and educators to work together in partnership to ensure that the school is properly governed and that discipline is maintained. Learners are regarded as representatives of the school and as such should uphold the values of the school, namely honesty, courtesy and respect for themselves and others.

There are various levels of disciplinary procedures at the school, namely counselling the learner/verbal reprimand; counsellors/Headmaster's/Academic detention; counselling the learner and parent(s)/official written warning; suspension and expulsion. The categories of offences and possible actions include the following:

- **Category 1 offences:** warn the first time, take action the second time. These offences include books left a home, non-attendance of extramural activities or behavioural misconduct, such as insolence, foul language or disruption of lessons.
- **Category 2 offences:** the learner must be reported to the Grade Tutor immediately. These learners will either be put on daily report, and/or given a detention, and/or be given a letter to be sent home to the parents. Offences include cheating, fighting or bullying, intimidation and behaviour harming the image of the school.
- **Category 3 offences:** the learner must be sent to the Grade Tutor immediately, who will consult the relevant Deputy Head: Pupil Affairs. Then a decision will be

taken about the suspension/isolation of the learner. The Grade Tutor must inform the parents of the offence. Once all the evidence and facts have been collected, the Headmaster will notify the Board of Governors and they will make a final decision. These offences include assault, cheating in exams, verbal assault, sexual activity, theft and possession of weapons.

The school does not have a written Occupational Health and Safety Policy. The school offers excellent facilities and believes that its well-trained and committed staff members make it the school of choice, inspiring all to soar to new heights.

4.3 DESCRIPTION OF THEMES

It is important to give an authorised account of the process I employed to analyse and interpret the data. As explained in Chapter Three, Section 3.4: Data Analysis, I followed the qualitative analytical steps of the Framework Approach (Ritchie, Spencer & O'Connor, 2003). I did constant comparative analysis to convert the data into systematic categories which facilitated the emergence of the five themes. Each theme was used as the basis for the argument to answer the research questions. I included the participants' direct quotes to provide authentic evidence for describing the categories and overarching themes. As Merriam (1998, p.5) explains: "These quotes and excerpts contribute to the descriptive nature of qualitative research." These themes and categories with reference to illustrative quotes are displayed in Table 4.1 overleaf.

Table 4.1 Description of themes and categories

Research question: How do school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent violence in urban secondary schools?		
Theme 1: School climate and culture		
Six categories emerged from discussing the role their school's climate plays in their collaborative efforts to prevent violence.		
Categories	Participants' illustrative quotes	
	School One	School Two
1.1 School culture	MV ¹ , pp. 23-24 ML3, p. 2* ML3, p. 3 ML4, p. 3 MPJ, p. 1 School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 5	BC ² , p. 2* BA2, p. 9 BPN, pp. 1-2* School Prospectus, 2009b, p.1,2,4
1.2 Teacher-learner relationship	MH, p. 6 ML5, p. 4	BC, p. 4 BB, pp. 1-2 BA3, p. 3* BA1, p. 1* BA2, p. 2* BPM, p. 12*
1.3 Family-school collaboration	MV, p. 2* MPJ, p. 16* School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 5	BT, p. 7 School Prospectus, 2009b, pp. 5-6
1.4 School safety	MV, p. 7	BA4 & BA3, p. 6
1.5 Learner behaviour	MV, pp. 5-6* School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 9 Code of Conduct, 2009a, p. 6	BC, p. 3 Code of Conduct, 2009b, pp. 2-3
1.6 School building and grounds		
Theme Two: Violent learner behaviour		
Three categories emerged from the data:		
Categories	Participants' illustrative quotes	
	School One	School Two
2.1 Nature and prevalence		BPN, p.20
2.2 Contributing factors	MV, p. 16* MV, p. 11* ML5, p. 39* ML1, p. 66 MPH & MPG, p. 40 MPD, p. 16* MPR, p. 9* MKa, pp. 13-14* MPR, pp. 10-11 MPJ, p. 8* ML18, p. 46* ML16, p. 42* ML2, p. 47 ML19, p. 65* ML19, p. 47	BR, pp. 26-27* BPN, p. 54*
2.3 Preventative factors		



Theme 3: Violence prevention strategies

The following six categories emerged:

Categories	Participants' illustrative quotes	
	School One	School Two
3.1 Physical security measures and assessment strategies	ML4, p. 13* MPR, pp. 12-13* Code of Conduct, 2009a, pp. 20-24 Occupational Health and Safety Policy, 2005, p. 2; pp. 4-7	
3.2 Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures	ML13, p. 37* Code of Conduct, 2009a, pp. 6-7; pp. 14-19; pp. 19-21	Code of Conduct, 2009b, p. 2; pp. 2-3; pp. 13-14
3.3 Learner involvement and support systems	Code of Conduct, 2009a, p. 8; p. 6 RNCS, 2007, pp. 202-203	Code of Conduct, 2009b, p. 2 IEB, Life Orientation Assessment Syllabus, 2007, P. 2 RNCS, 2007, pp. 202-203
3.4 Staff supervision and training	MV, pp. 18-19	BA4, p. 14
3.5 Parent-teacher communication	MPH, p. 6 Code of Conduct, 2009a, p13,p.15	BR, p. 18*

Theme 4: Family-school collaboration

The following four categories were discussed:

Categories	Participants' illustrative quotes	
	School One	School Two
4.1 Parent involvement	MV, pp. 30-31 MK, p. 14 ML5, p. 59* ML7, p. 59* MPJ, p. 16*	BD2, p. 29 BA4, p. 31 BB1,p.31 BA2, p. 36 BA2, p. 39* BPN, p. 22* BPT, p. 32
4.2 Learner voice and connectedness	ML4, p. 21 ML5, p. 21 ML11, p. 27* ML11, p. 28* MPJ, p. 24	BA2, p. 2 BA3, pp. 2-3 BD2, p. 3 BA1, p. 5 BA2, p. 9 BPN, pp. 1-2 BPM, p. 3 BPN, p. 5 BPN, p. 6
4.3 Barriers to collaboration	MV, p. 27 MKb, p. 2 ML1, p. 19 ML5 & ML10, p. 61 ML17, p. 61 MPR, p. 28 MPR, p. 29 MPJ, p. 17 MPJ, p. 19 MPD, p. 12 MPD, p. 23	BB, pp. 19-20 PPM, p. 26 BPT, pp. 34-35
4.4 Strategies to promote collaboration		BC, p. 28 BPM & BPN, p. 31



Theme 5: Suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence

Ten categories emerged from the data.

Categories	Participants' illustrative quotes	
	School One	School Two
5.1 Attitude towards violence	MV, pp. 34-35 MPR, pp. 34-35	BR, p. 29
5.2 Address causes of violence		
5.3 Rules and consequences		
5.4 Parent involvement and community support	MPH & MPG, p. 39 MPH, p. 42 MPG & MPH, pp. 44-45 MPR, pp. 35-36 MPd, p. 28	BB, pp. 28-29
5.5 Support from DoE	MJ, p. 26	BR, p. 30
5.6 Teacher training	MPH, p. 42	
5.7 Learner voice and connectedness	ML1, pp. 15-16 ML1, p. 20 ML9, p. 62 ML5, p. 20	
5.8 Extramural activities and after-care facility	MPH & MPG, pp. 24-25 MPH, p. 42 MPJ, p. 21 MPJ, p. 24	BR, pp. 28-30
5.9 Life Coach/Counsellor/Social Worker on staff	ML2, p. 65 ML5, p. 67 ML11, p. 29 MPd, pp. 26-27 MPS, p. 30 MPD, pp. 26-27	BR, p. 11 BR, p. 27 BPM & BPN, pp. 43-44 BPM, BPN & BPA, pp. 50-52
5.10 Establish positive school climate		BC, p. 32

¹ Vignette: Participant MV (pseudonym) pages 23-24
² BC = participant; p = page
* Participants' quotes are displayed in 4.4: Analysis and synthesis of main findings. Other quotes are available on the accompanying CD-ROM (CD-ROM, Data Analysis Applications: Charting, Files 4 and 8).

4.4 ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF MAIN FINDINGS

Working through each transcript and the relevant school documents in detail assisted me with identifying the major themes. In this section I summarise the main research findings, as they relate to the emergent five themes. The findings at School One are summarised for each theme, followed by those at School Two. Each theme is concluded by synthesising the findings from both schools. Please note that I have only included examples of the participants' illustrative quotes because including all the relevant quotes would fall beyond the scope of this chapter. However, all the quotes are contained in the detailed description of the categories and themes on the accompanying CD-ROM. (CD-ROM: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools: Data Analysis Applications: Charting, Files 4 and 8).

4.4.1 Theme One: School climate and culture

➤ School One

The consensus among the school staff members, learners and parents was that enhancing the security measures and good discipline structures, combined with a leadership which took a more liberal approach, had a positive impact on the overall school climate. The school staff members stated that the learner diversity and school size (approximately 1 000 learners) were major challenges to managing learner behaviour. The diverse cultures, religions and beliefs created inter-cultural tension that sometimes resulted in aggressive or violent behaviour. The intensive media coverage of violent racial incidents at other schools sometimes added to the racial tension among the learners at their school. As one educator explained:

Although they are safe in this environment we must never under-estimate the fact that we have a melting pot at the secondary school ...[]...You have children who under normal circumstances would not be getting along, who are now sharing the same academic space and that I think is the main reason why we are having instances of bullying and verbal threatening taking place on school property because you have different cultures, different languages, different beliefs, all caught up in a little secluded space and they now have to get along (Interview MV, pp.5-6).

The School Prospectus (2009a, p.9) states that the school has adopted a policy of “zero tolerance” to all aspects of poor discipline and bad behaviour among the learners. Therefore any transgression is dealt with immediately and the school staff members regard good class discipline as the cornerstone for building open and trusting relationships with the learners. Some teachers, however, find it difficult to accommodate the very diverse group of learners and sometimes feel threatened by them.

The learners describe the relationships among themselves as good, but idle threats could make them feel scared. Sometimes the learners felt that the school climate was negative because of disruptive learners, peer pressure and rumours about their school having naughty, disrespectful learners. As one learner explained:

I feel that the atmosphere at the school is quite negative sometimes. Because most of the time this school, (name omitted), is like stereotyped in a way because most of the people outside of our school say – okay, if it is about (name omitted) they think okay, (name omitted), corruption, whatever, naughty students, not a nice school to be at. But then actually (name omitted) is not that bad because we have got a lot of things going on at (name omitted) (Interview ML3, p. 2).

The parents and school staff members felt that there was little parental involvement at the school. The school staff members believed that the parents were not aware that they were stakeholders in their children’s education. As one educator stated:

When you look at the parents it is a great concern of mine... []...this school is not a crèche... []...this is one aspect that is lacking (Interview MV, p. 2).

Another parent said in this regard:

I think it is very important that the family and the school work in partnership, which is not always the case and currently not the case in general (Interview MPJ, p. 16).

The parents described the school as having a culture which fostered interaction among the learners, educators and parents, and they felt that their children were happy and secure at the school. The learners, although wanting more independence, would like to see their parents involved to some extent in their school life.

➤ **School Two**

The parents and learners were happy at the school and described the school as a family inside a very caring community. As a community-based school, the majority of the families had known one another since their children had attended the two primary sister schools in the neighbourhood, and felt that this added to the sense of security. As one educator explained:

...we have always prided ourselves in just the whole business of traditional values along with innovative teaching and we have a uniform, we have

respect for and a pride in our new school. It is community-based so not only are the children known to us, as members of staff, but many of the families know each other so that adds a great deal to the sense of security within the school (Interview BC, p. 2).

The school placed a great deal of emphasis on holistic education by combining academic studies with many extramural cultural and sport activities. The learners believed the positive school climate contributed to good learner integration and they said there was a good spirit of camaraderie among the learners and school staff members. The Grade 12 councillors and the Grade Tutors contributed immensely to creating a good support system for the learners and there was a feeling of mutual respect among the learners, teachers and parents. Overall the school climate was described as relaxed and positive. The parents viewed the staff members as playing a huge role in creating a positive and caring school atmosphere. The learners described their relationship with the school staff members as good and trusting, and they felt that they could talk to any teacher about anything. One parent stated:

I think it is a positive atmosphere as far as the whole thing of violence and that sort of thing goes... []...I think one of the biggest things in the college's favour is the role that the councillors play... []... Well the councillors are like our old prefect system. There are about eighteen of them, they all have very specific roles – for example for new pupils they have a mentor, there is a culture of mutual respect. I find that the councillors are very respectful of the younger children even though they are kind of also policing them, they do give detentions, that sort of thing, but there is no form of initiation or belittling people... []...I think that staff are very supportive of, we do not resolve things through fighting, we resolve things through sitting talking, and they perpetuate that through lessons, through their interaction with the children and then they have the grade tutor system which is the other thing which I think is very positive. That is the teacher who is in charge of the entire grade, they start with the children in Grade 8 and they go all the way up to matric and they become the kind of sounding board... []...As a parent you have got that constant – the same person that you deal with when there are issues, particularly around emotional issues, behavioural issues, that kind of thing (Interview BPN, pp. 1-2).

The very personal and caring relationships the teachers have with the learners are attributed partially to having small classes (maximum of 27 learners). The school staff members believe in multidimensional involvement where the teachers interact with the learners and the learners interact with one another. The majority (about 80% – 90%) of the learners are involved in various after-school activities which are supervised by the staff members and supported by the parents. This they feel promotes positive social interaction among the school staff members, learners and parents, contributing to open communication, and creating a sense of family.

The school staff members, learners and parents commented that the small community in which the school was situated contributed to good parent-teacher collaboration and community involvement. Most of the families lived in close proximity to the school and knew one another at a social level. One parent commented:

You know I think there is a culture of caring, I think there is and there always has been right from the very beginning because we are a small community school everybody knows each other. The teachers know the kids well and I think there is a culture of caring and I think it does filter down (Interview BPM, p. 12).

The good security measures at the school as well as the feeling that the staff members and learners can trust each other add to the learners feeling of being safe at school. The ethos of the school encourages learners to conduct themselves in a manner that demonstrates self-discipline and the staff members expect the learners to uphold the dignity of their peers, and to take pride in their school (Code of Conduct, 2009b, p.3). The school staff members stated that the learners acted in a very caring way towards their peers and attributed this partly to the fact that many of them had grown up on smallholdings where they had to care for their animals. Their belief was that the learners had a different mindset from that of other city children, since they were more aware of other's needs and therefore acted in a caring way towards their peers. The learners stated that they had not experienced any discrimination or serious bullying and felt that the seniors looked after the younger ones. As they explained:

Yes, I think it is good because like the teachers they tell us that we can come to them if we have any problems of bullying or anything else so yes, we can trust them with anything (Interview BA3, p. 3).

Well the school takes things seriously. If there is a problem then there are plenty of people that you can go to and deal with it (Interview BA1, p.1).

There is freedom of speech so you are able to talk to whomever about anything that you are having troubles with (Interview BA2, p.2).

The parents believed that the positive and warm school atmosphere resulted in good learner behaviour. The school buildings were modern and the learners had access to spacious and well-maintained playing fields and state-of-the-art extramural facilities, which all contributed to a safe and happy school environment. A synthesis of these findings is illustrated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 Synthesis: School climate and culture

School One	School Two
School culture	School culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fosters interaction among learners, parents and school staff members Diverse learner population – culture, religion, beliefs Mostly positive atmosphere – disruptive learners, peer pressure & rumours about naughty, disrespectful learners can make it negative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> School seen as a family Community-based school Caring community Relaxed and positive atmosphere Good learner interaction Mutual respect among learners and staff members
Teacher-learner relationship	Teacher-learner relationship
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Huge learner diversity – culture/ religion/beliefs Big school – 1 000 learners Not very personal relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Holistic education: academic/culture & sport Good camaraderie Small school – 390 learners Grade tutors very supportive Personal & caring relationships Multidimensional involvement – teacher/learner and learner/learner Trusting relationship
Family-school collaboration	Family-school collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parental involvement lacking Parents not aware they are stakeholders in their children’s education Parents do not socialise much 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caring community Families know one another well 80%-90% learner involvement in extramural activities – supervised by staff members and supported by parents Positive social interaction Open communication creates a sense of family
School safety	School safety
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discipline policy of zero tolerance Good physical security measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethos – promotes self-discipline and expects learners to uphold dignity of their peers and to take pride in their school Good physical security measures Trusting teacher-learner relationship
School building and grounds	School building and grounds
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Well maintained Secure layout 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modern and well maintained Spacious sport fields State-of-the-art extramural facilities

4.4.2 Theme Two: Violent learner behaviour

➤ School One

The most prevalent type of aggressive learner behaviour at School One, is bullying. Bullying among the boys generally takes the form of fist-fights, intimidation, pushing/shoving or name-calling. Girls tend to bully verbally or spread rumours and gossip about one another. Theft of personal belongings as well as smuggling in illegal substances (drugs and alcohol) and weapons can also cause problems. Table 4.3 is a summary of the nature and prevalence of learner violence at School One.

Table 4.3 School One: Nature and prevalence of learner violence

Nature	Prevalence	School staff	Learners	Parents
▪ physical fighting - fist fights - usually boys	twice a month	•	•	•
▪ boys carrying knives	Regularly	•		
▪ verbal bullying - mainly girls	Weekly	•	•	
▪ gossiping - mainly girls		•	•	
▪ drug dealing	Regularly	•	•	•
▪ drug use		•	•	•
▪ alcohol use			•	•
▪ cigarette smoking			•	
▪ bullying - gender issues - verbal bullying - cultural tension	Weekly	• • • •	• • • •	• • • •
▪ theft / stealing	Regularly		•	
▪ assault - on teacher - on other learner	once a year	• •		• •
▪ pushing / shoving	Regularly			•

The school staff members, parents and learners agreed that family-related factors contributed the most to aggressive learner behaviour. Cultural and historical factors, peer-related factors and school-related factors could also trigger aggressive or violent behaviour. Table 4.4 contains a summary of the various factors the participants suggested could contribute to violent behaviour among learners.

Table 4.4 School One: Contributing factors to violent behaviour among learners

School staff	Learners	Parents
<p>➤ Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • low self-image • substance abuse (drugs, alcohol) • low EQ <p>You can trace this back. In many of the cases there is a shout for help. Either, "I do not know who my father is and I am acting out" or "I am on some sort of substance and I am acting out" or "I am not being accepted by my peers and I am acting out". There is always a reason (Interview MV, p. 16).</p>	<p>➤ Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners not taught to show respect 	<p>➤ Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner's background
<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poverty • absent working parents • no adult/parental supervision • no adult role-model • physical abuse • bad parent-child relationship • low education level of parent • no proper parental guidance <p>I try and treat people with respect so that they can see it modelled, because I think in many cases you find that the children do not have the role models at home (Interview MV, p. 11).</p>	<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learner's upbringing – not taught how to behave • unapproachable parents <p>Well Ma'am I think it is because it is the way they were raised in a way, like they were never taught on how to behave with other friends or how to react so they just decide okay, or I do not know what is going through their minds but then it is like they are not thinking straight or they were not taught how to think or how to react so they just turn to violence (Interview ML5, p. 38-39).</p>	<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • child's upbringing • family violence • no parental supervision in afternoons at home – evil time • divorce • lack of discipline/parental control • materialistic issues – poor or rich • no stable home life • parents work till late • children live with grandparents • no adult/parent figure • no parental guidance • absent working parents– no parent-child interaction • today's parents less involved in children's upbringing • no family unit <p>Somewhere around of course they have got to try and make sure that the family unit is there, that the children can speak to their parents as well. In too many instances the child is staying with their grandmother or something like that because the parents have split up or else the child is supposed to be staying with the mother but the mother does not have a job so the child gets palmed off to the grandmother and in some instances it is convenient that the grandmother lives in this area which is (name omitted) High School area and mother lives in Polokwane or something like that (Interview MPD, p. 16).</p>

➤ Cultural and historical factors	➤ Cultural and historical factors	➤ Cultural and historical factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inter-cultural tension • Black culture – unapproachable parents <p>I think maybe it is because of let us say black cultures. Sometimes you are not supposed to...most of them are not free to talk to their parents... [...]...They (learners) are afraid of their parents sometimes (MKa, pp. 13-14).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in Black culture – children not free to speak to parents – afraid of them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • societal influence – politicians condone violence as means to an end – apartheid struggle • politicians' public statements about violence/crime <p>Firstly we are talking of societal factors, factors around the society which has an impact and influence on the particular individual being aggressive and those factors could be what are actually happening around in terms of aggression. What you read in the newspaper in terms of aggression. Do you come across statements that actually encourage violent activities and violent actions? Do you come across activities or do you come across instances where people gain as a result of having engaged in a violent activity? So those things they have an impact and influence on a person. Because for instance if one relates to way back in 1984/'85 and the like when we were at the peak of the struggle in the country, the country was violent and as a result of that in 1994 we went for elections so at the back of our mind anybody will say if you engage in a violent activity you will end up with this (Interview MPR, p. 9).</p>
➤ School factors	➤ School factors	➤ School factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no participation in sport • teacher belittles/labels learner • uninvolved parent • enclosed school building – no space to release energy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • girls not frisked by male guards • girls smuggle in illegal stuff for boyfriends • teachers not on duty in the mornings • learners make school unsafe by smuggling in illegal stuff – drugs/alcohol/weapons 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school environment discourages, or encourages or overlooks aggressive and violent activities • uninvolved parents • parent apathy – leave everything to the school
➤ Community factors	➤ Community factors	➤ Community factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners exposed to community violence 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unsupervised children – exposed to community criminality <p>A lot of these children again they come home and there is no adult figure, no parent figure so where is your guidance coming from? You know you see the youngsters or I would say between 20s and 30s sitting there drinking doing their own thing and that is the sort of thing that they are being exposed to (Interview MPJ, p. 8).</p>

➤ Media / TV impact	➤ Media / TV impact	➤ Media / TV impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners copy media/TV violence • copy violence in movies – think it's cool – fight to get what you want <p>I think that most kids are violent because it mainly comes from the media when they watch TV they show that when you fight you get whatever you want so then they so respond to that... (Interview ML18, p. 46).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • media violence • violent computer games • emulation of TV violence – no guidance
➤ Peer factors	➤ Peer factors	➤ Peer factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer pressure • peer rejection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • peer pressure – acting differently in school from acting at home • disagreement between two learners – turn to “speeches” • “speeches” - pushing/swearing turns into physical fighting • victim retaliates against bully • pressurised by group to fight • need to be tough • boy/girl relationship tension – copy movies – fight to get what you want <p>School violence starts when two people disagree, that is how it all starts, when they disagree, then it turns into like we call it speeches. So after that it turns into violence... []...It is like people pushing each other and then swearing at each other (Interview ML16, p. 42).</p> <p>Sometimes it is impossible to stop school violence because you earn respect through being strong in the school. Like if they know you can punk them they will never talk to you, they will never push you around or do anything but if you become someone who is just weak... (Interview ML19, p. 65).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • victim retaliates against bullying

Regarding the prevention of adolescent violent behaviour, the school staff members suggested that if parents would motivate their children to participate more in sport and extramural activities, the learners would have a positive outlet for their energy and frustration which could help to prevent learners from acting aggressively. It also seemed that the learners who participated in sport and extramural activities were the ones who excelled academically as well as being the leaders. Unfortunately only 10% of the learners at School One participated in sport and after-school cultural activities. The learners suggested that if more were done to teach them how to show respect for one another's cultures, this could prevent cultural tension, which could result in violence. The parents suggested that the learners should have adult supervision in the afternoons as that was the time when they got into trouble.

➤ **School Two**

The school staff members at School Two stated that alcohol abuse and verbal bullying (i.e. name-calling, homophobic bullying, interdenominational verbal abuse, peer group associated bullying) were the most prevalent forms of aggressive learner behaviour. The learners and parents concurred that various forms of verbal bullying were the biggest problem. Table 4.5 summarises the nature and prevalence of learner behaviour at School Two.

Table 4.5 School Two: Nature and prevalence of learner violence

Nature	Prevalence	School staff	Learners	Parents
▪ alcohol abuse	regularly	•		
▪ physical fighting – fist fights among boys	sometimes	•		
▪ verbal bullying between boys	sometimes (especially in junior grades at beginning of year – pecking order established)	•		
▪ verbal bullying – among girls –cat fights	regularly	•	•	•
▪ bullying – name-calling	often	•	•	•
▪ homophobic bullying	regularly	•		•
- bullying – peer group associated	sometimes	•	•	•
▪ interdenominational (religious) verbal abuse	sometimes		•	
▪ intimidation	sometimes			•
▪ drug use	sometimes			•

The school staff members mentioned that they perceived individual factors, family-related factors, the role of the school as well as the impact of the media as contributing to aggressive learner behaviour. The learners stated that they perceived individual factors and the violence depicted in the media as contributing mostly to learners acting in a violent way. The parents regarded cultural and historical factors, community and family-related factors as contributing most to how the learners behaved at school. Table 4.6 summarises the factors that the participants at School Two perceived as contributing most to learner violence.

Table 4.6 School Two: Contributing factors to violent behaviour among learners

School staff	Learners	Parents
<p>➤ Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anger • lack of security at home • low self-esteem • no proper self-discipline • victim – can set up patterns of behaviour • hormonal changes in teenagers • problems with anger management 	<p>➤ Individual factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking steroids and other substances – these aggravate aggression 	<p>➤ Individual factors</p>
<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wealthy families – learners afford recreational drugs • divorce • absent fathers • working mothers • no proper disciplinary structure • bad parent-child relationship • parental attitude to alcohol use – they condone it or don't care • parents' way of dealing with problems – is reflected in children 	<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problems at home • bad parent-child relationship 	<p>➤ Family factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • economic pressures • divorce
<p>➤ Cultural & historical factors</p>	<p>➤ Cultural & historical factors</p>	<p>➤ Cultural & historical factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • violent society – only isolated incidents of school violence made public; daily issues not reported • living with a secondary post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome • violent country – filters down to how children behave
<p>➤ School factors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • correlation between behaviour at school and at home • children too shielded from the reality of life <p>I think the way which adults deal with problems reflects on the children in a huge way, a huge way (Interview BR, pp. 26-27).</p>	<p>➤ School factors</p>	<p>➤ School factors</p>

➤ Community factors	➤ Community factors	➤ Community factors
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •bystander behaviour •societal violence •robberies at home •stressful lifestyle – traffic/stressed parents <p>We have this underlying current. You know just our children driving into school each morning are bombarded with horrific driving and parents under stress because now this road has been closed or that pothole there and parents are under stress because of their time...and the kids arrive at school with mom or dad having gone like this and then they are supposed to go and learn and I do not believe that – effective learning cannot take place (Interview BPN, p. 54).</p>
➤ Media / TV impact	➤ Media / TV impact	➤ Media / TV impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •TV/cartoon network/war images on TV news – huge impact <p>I think television has huge impact on it. I think the fact that children at the age of two or three are watching cartoon network where we have people fighting and shooting and I think it puts thoughts into their minds that that is how it is dealt with. If you look at the greater scheme of things war in Iraq impacts on the children so this is how we solve things, we take out the gun, we stand there and we shoot. I think there is lot of aggression within children these days (Interview BR, p. 26).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • watching violence on TV/on news channels • violent play-station games 	
➤ Peer factors	➤ Peer factors	➤ Peer factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exclusion from peer group <p>I think especially your disadvantaged children, I think have a lot of anger and I think it is part of their upbringing where they – you know it is like we have it here where you have peer groups and those groups stick together and no one is allowed to come into the group or leave the group, I think it is more so there where it is a case of having to survive and the only way we survive is by putting people into their place and how do we do that? We sort them out with violence (Interview BR, p. 27).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •peer pressure – a huge problem

Strategies for good school discipline and monitoring systems are seen as the best preventive measures as well as good parent-teacher communication and parental support. Being a small school also helps the school staff members to address problems immediately. The good learner interaction, spirit of camaraderie and participation in team sport give the learners a sense of belonging, resulting in good social interaction. The learners also stated that they could trust their teachers and communicate openly with them, but that they (the learners) needed to act with more tolerance and be trained to be self-disciplined. The parents stated that more family time, good parent-child communication, participation in extramural activities and parents' liaising with one another regarding the whereabouts of their children was the best preventive measures against violence. A synthesis of these findings is illustrated in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 Synthesis: Learner violence – contributing and preventive factors

Major contributing factors to aggressive learner behaviour	
School One	School Two
1. Family factors	1. Individual factors
2. Cultural and Historical factors	2. Family factors
3. Peer factors	3. Cultural and Historical factors
4. School factors	4. Community factors
Preventive factors	
School One	School Two
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • participation in sport • supervised after-care facility • respect for diversity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good school discipline & monitoring systems • good parent-teacher communication • parental involvement & support • policy of no tolerance for bullying/violence • good learner interaction/camaraderie • a sense of belonging • sport & extramural participation • tolerance & self-discipline • more family time • trusting family relationship • trusting teacher-learner relationship • good parent-child communication • parent-parent liaison

4.4.3 Theme Three: Violence prevention strategies

➤ School One

According to the school staff members, upgrading the physical safety measures at the school (i.e. palisade perimeter fence, CCTV & security guards), the enclosed layout of the school building as well as issuing learners with access cards had a positive effect on the learners' behaviour. However, the participants stated that the learners were still exposed to violence in their communities and were also very creative in bypassing these security measures. A SWOT analysis was conducted yearly, the police and fire brigade evaluated the safety aspects of the school and these recommendations were incorporated into a 5-year development plan. The parents agreed with the school staff members that the security measures, enclosed school building and security guards made the school safe. One parent stated:

Yes, look firstly we have employed the security company, (name), which actually ensures that there is absolute security around the school, patrols; they are always on the alert for whatever can happen. Two, is there is a CCTV which monitors the entire school in terms of what is actually taking place. Three, in the morning learners are bodily searched before they enter the school. Now of course the idea is to prevent many things, drugs entering, substances entering the premises, you know dangerous objects like you know guns, knives, pangas and the like. So basically we engage in that. And then of course also that we take disciplinary measures (Interview MPR, pp. 12-13).

However the negative side to all these security measures is that the learners have no outlet for their energy and frustration, which may contribute to aggressive behaviour. The learners stated, however, that the access card system did not prevent learners from smuggling in illegal stuff as the guards did not conduct thorough searches. Although they complained to the school staff members, nothing had been done about it. One learner commented:

Well for me I do not think it can make me feel safe because you see what is happening, people go through with illegal things and there is nothing happening. Are you saying that you are going to be safe just because a person walked through and the security checked but then he did not find what

the person had, are you going to feel safe just because the security checked and then by that time the person have something but the security checked. Are you going to feel safe because of that? I say you should just have faith in yourself because if you are just scared, if you do not have faith in yourself nothing is ever going to work for you to feel protected (Interview ML4, p. 13).

The Code of Conduct (2009a, pp. 20-24) clearly stipulates the safety regulations to which the school should adhere. The characteristics of a safe and responsive school are described in the Occupational Health and Safety Policy (2005, p.2) as well as stating the responsibilities of the Health and Safety Committee. The Code of Conduct (2009a) acts as a guideline and contains the disciplinary procedures that the staff members can employ for various offences. Grade 8 learners and any other new learners as well as their parents are informed about the School's rules and regulations as contained in the Code of Conduct.

The learners complained that the Code of Conduct was too cumbersome and they would also like the opportunity to discuss the content and voice their opinion about certain rules they disagreed with. As one learner argued:

Ma'am I think with the Code of Conduct it is not right, they should make up rules with together with us. Then we can decide on the rules we want. That is why we break the rules because there are things in there that we do not agree with then we still do it then that is why Ma'am (Interview ML13, p. 37).

The parents however stated that that the Code of Conduct was very clear and that parents and learners were well informed about the school rules and disciplinary procedures. The Code of Conduct (2009a, pp. 6-7) was implemented to promote positive discipline and stipulates clearly that a policy of "zero tolerance" regarding unacceptable learner behaviour is maintained to keep general order and discipline. When asked about learner involvement and the support systems available to assist them, the school staff members said they thought the school councillors (RCLs) played a highly successful role in preventing learner violence. However, the learners thought that many of the RCLs were ineffective in stopping fighting and bullying, because many learners were chosen to become school councillors not on the basis of having good leadership qualities but on the basis of their popularity. The learners added that some of

the RCLs also undermined the school rules by participating in illegal or inappropriate behaviour.

School One follows the Revised National Curriculum Statement (Grades 7-9) (Schools) (RNCS, 2007a) for Life Orientation which covers the following five Learning Outcomes: Health Promotion, Social Development, Personal Development, Physical Development and Movement, and Orientation to the World of Work. The school staff members and parents said they thought that the Life Orientation Curriculum adequately dealt with moral and teenage problems. However, some parents were dissatisfied with some of the Life Orientation educators.

A great deal of emphasis is placed on ongoing staff training and on working together as a team. The staff members mentioned that they shared best practice among themselves but some teachers did not think that some staff members prepared well enough for their lessons, which could result in learners becoming unruly and disruptive in the next class. The parents responded that on the whole the teachers were well trained and that they addressed any problem immediately, so that problems did not get out of hand. The school staff members deeply appreciated the role the School Governing Body (SGB) played, but felt that parental support was lacking. The parents perceived the school staff members as very proactive in keeping parents informed but stated that communication could be more thorough. The parents agreed that there was open communication between the school and parent body. The channels of communication available to parents and learners are clearly stated in the Code of Conduct (2009a, p. 13) as well as the expected learner behaviour and parent accountability (Code of Conduct, 2009a, p. 15)

➤ **School Two**

The school staff members and parents agreed that the physical security measures were adequate but the easy access to the entrance gate, the open plan design of the school, as well as the lack of security measures at reception made the school vulnerable. School Two does not specifically stipulate the safety regulations in the Code of Conduct (2009b) nor does it have a written Occupational Health and Safety Policy.

School staff members, learners and parents concurred that the rules, regulations and consequences were clearly stated in the Code of Conduct (2009b) and that the learners were well aware that incidents of bullying or any other behavioural misconduct would be taken seriously at their school. The Code of Conduct (2009b) is the point of reference and is reviewed yearly. The Code of Conduct (2009b, p. 2) states that it is an essential document for the successful running of the school and that it is based on democratic principles and fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination, non-violence, equity and participation. The Code of Conduct (2009b, pp. 8-9) clearly describes the expected conduct of the learners as well as the school's discipline policy (Code of Conduct, 2009b, pp. 13-14).

The school staff members stated that the Grade 12 councillors played a very important role in the daily running of the school. The school has a mentoring scheme in place where each Grade 8 learner and any other new learners are assigned a Grade 12 learner to act as mentor for the year. A specific Grade Tutor staff member is also allocated to each grade, who remains with his/her specific group until Grade 12. The Grade Tutor assists learners through the transition phases and provides postural and discipline guidance. A Deputy Head acts as Head of Pupil Matters and oversees all matters concerning the learners. The school staff members stated that an informed parent was a well-equipped parent. One educator explained:

I think it is essential that parents are kept in the loop with regards to everything that is happening in schools. I think it is essential that schools inform parents on changes of systems, changes in structures, upcoming trends, for example there is Facebook, mix-it, you know the dangers of those things. We are in touch with it, we see the kids every day, we know that the kids are sitting on mix-it and they are meeting at Monte Casino and doing things that they should not do because we hear it from within the school. Now I think it is essential that we have those one-on-one meetings with parents where we inform them. I also think it is essential for parents to come together as a forum within the school and say you know what my child was invited to a party, can we get a little communication list going of telephone numbers. I think it is essential that you have that connection between the parents and the schools, purely because an informed parent or an informed school is an equipped parent and an equipped school. The bottom line is that if the parents are not told they are not going to know. Children at this age do not

talk. They do not talk to their parents, they shut down and so we get to hear and that is why it is very important that we inform the parents (Interview BR, p. 18).

The Life Orientation Curriculum deals with important skills for coping with bullying and peer pressure and there are opportunities for learners to complete a number of certificates (for example, Child Line, First Aid or Community Service) as part of the curriculum, which gives them an opportunity to contribute to their community. The school follows the RNCS (2007b) Curriculum but also follows the Independent Examination Board (IEB) Life Orientation Assessment Syllabus (2007b). Some suggestions have been made for covering the more difficult outcomes in a practical and manageable way. The parents reiterated the important role that the Grade 12 councillors, mentors, Grade Tutors and Head of Pupil Matters played in getting learners involved in the school as well as supporting the learners. The learners concurred that 99% of the Grade 12 councillors were really good and supportive, and they acknowledged that they could rely on the support of their councillors, teachers and Head to assist them. The principles, rights and responsibilities of the learners are stipulated in the Code of Conduct (2009b, p. 2) which states that each learner is regarded as an individual to be nurtured in a context of teamwork and mutual reliance. The school promotes positive learner involvement in academic, sport and cultural activities.

The school staff members said they did not rely much on external training because their close interaction with the learners gave them a good understanding of the level that the learners had reached and the Deputy Heads and Head held a meeting once a week where they discussed issues and concerns. These concerns would be relayed to the Grade 12 councillors who would monitor the learners' behaviour. However, there was a perception that some of the younger staff members could be rather insensitive and needed more training in dealing with teenage issues. The learners agreed that they had sometimes felt that some of the staff members were being very unsympathetic towards them. The school staff members, learners and parents said they were satisfied with the good teacher supervision at the school.

The school staff members always wanted to elicit parental support as they believed this support was essential for correcting any behavioural problems. They responded that

good parent-teacher communication was an important part of monitoring learner behaviour. The fact that 30% of the learner population had siblings at the school contributed to good parent-teacher relationships as the school staff members came to know the families well. The parents concurred, stating that because about 60% of the Grade 8's had been together in the two primary sister schools, going to the High School was a natural progression. The good interaction between the High School and the two primary sister schools made the parents feel very comfortable about their children joining the School, as the same values and rules applied at all three schools. The Board of Governors, Parent-Teacher Forum and school staff members worked closely together. A synthesis of these findings is illustrated in Table. 4.8.

Table 4.8 Synthesis: Violence prevention strategies

SCHOOL ONE	SCHOOL TWO
Physical security measures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate access card system faulty enclosed school building – no playing area during break: adding to learner aggression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adequate entrance gate access/lack of security at reception area – security risk open plan school building – vulnerable
Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> policy of zero tolerance to misconduct act as guideline clear but cumbersome learners want to give more input 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus on democratic principles act as guideline clear learners satisfied – can voice their opinions
Learner involvement and support systems	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RCL – councillors – school staff members and parents regard as very successful – learners regard as playing an ineffective role Life Orientation Curriculum contributes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 12 councillors – school staff members, parents and learners very happy about successful role Grade Tutor, mentors & Head of Pupil Matters contribute greatly sense of belonging spirit of camaraderie Life Orientation Curriculum contributes
Staff supervision and training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff members share best practice some teachers not well prepared for lessons – learners disruptive in next class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff members' close interaction with learners gives them a good understanding younger teachers act insensitively towards teenage learners – need more training
Parent-teacher communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appreciative of SGB parental support lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> appreciative of Board of Governors parent-teacher relationship & communication good good parental support & involvement

4.4.4 Theme Four: Family-school collaboration

➤ School One

The school staff members cautioned against parental interference versus parental involvement. They said that only parents of learners in the junior grades and those whose children achieved well at school, were involved. Many parents did not attend teacher-parent information evenings and only a few parents supported the sport activities. The school staff members believed that the reason the teenagers did not want their parents involved at school was to keep them in the dark about their behaviour at school. The staff members said they found it difficult to build positive teacher-parent relationships as parental support was lacking. However they felt strongly that learners achieved better when parents were involved in their children's education.

The learners responded that they did want their parents involved but they (the learners) wanted to decide to what extent their parents should be involved. The learners stated that their parents' role should be to support and guide them. They believed they would be better equipped to withstand peer pressure if their parents had a trusting relationship with them. They commented that it was the parents' responsibility to approach them (the learners) and to openly discuss and advise them on how to handle possibly difficult issues. The learners explained:

Well Ma'am in a way they are our parents because if our parents were not able to teach you self-respect or able to teach you on how to handle yourself and money then teenage girls would not be going to all the men and asking for money like you know – like if your parents would provide for you or you tell them mom I have got such a problem. I mean you do not have to turn to older men to solve your problems and if your parents – okay my parents are overprotective about me, which I do not mind, other people they buy them clothes, they give them money. I mean if your parents are not questioning that then what kind of parent is that (Interview ML5, p. 59).

Another added:

The thing about the teenage pregnancy and the dating it all boils down to how much your parents trust you and how they made you grow up because I

mean if your parents know that they taught you well enough to not go and do drugs and even with the peer pressure because they taught you that under pressure you can do this and this and say no. If your parents taught you how to control yourself then teenage pregnancy would not be an issue and trust between the parents and the child would not be an issue which means parents will allow you to date but they will know that you know your limits and your standards (Interview ML7 p. 59).

Although the parents said they recognised the importance of working in partnership with the school, they admitted that there was very little family-school collaboration at their school. The majority of the families said they did not socialise therefore they did not know one another or even many of the parents of their children's friends. One parent argued:

I think there should be more of a partnership between parents and the school and the children and (name omitted) described it beautifully. She actually had a pot with three stands and a lid and she said that is the teacher, the parent and the child and if they do not all work together it is going to fall over and it is a very good point and I fully believe in that. If you only have the parent and the child working and not the school you have a problem. If you only have the school and the parent and not the child or vice versa, so I think it is very important that the family and the school work in partnership, which is not always the case and currently not the case in general (Interview MPJ, p. 16).

The school councillors (RCLs) are perceived as the official voice of the learners. The school staff members said they thought most learners were uncommitted, especially regarding after-school activities such as team sport. One educator stated that one reason why learners did not participate in after-school activities was that they did not get enough recognition for their participation or achievements. On the whole, the learners said that they would not report incidents at school as they did not trust all the staff members. They also had the perception that the school staff members would construe it as disrespectful if they did air their opinions. They suggested that the school should organise more social activities where they could interact in small groups, so that they could get to know one another and express their true feelings about the school. As one learner explained:

I feel like this whole learner/educator thing is viewed very differently, people who are expected to behave in a certain way around teachers whereas we are not like – at the same time we are not being ourselves, we are not allowed to say what we really feel because we will be seen as disrespectful or we are just trespassing or stuff like that Ma'am (Interview ML11, p. 27).

The learner suggested:

I think if like the school had like more social activities around then that will allow individuals in groups to talk about how they really feel about being in the school and their views about the school, what they want to change about the school (Interview ML11, p. 28).

The parents stated that if the school created more avenues for the learners that would allow them (the learners) to socialise and trusted them to be more responsible, this would give the learners an opportunity to voice their feelings in a responsible way. The school staff members said that because families lived in a very materialistic world, the parents were forced to work long hours to give their children financial security which could result in absent parents, and also in lack of a secure family life as children might live with their grandparents. These circumstances could lead to a breakdown in the discipline structures and the parents expecting the school to provide their children with a good education. They stated that other factors could act as barriers to family-school collaboration, such as the family lifestyles (e.g. community violence, single working parents, shift workers); parents' level of education (e.g. feelings of inferiority, language barriers); use of public transport (e.g. safety, cost and availability); teacher-parent communication (e.g. teachers unable to reach or communicate with parents, disinterested parents); and cultural background (e.g. unapproachable parents, no trusting/open parent-child relationship).

The parents listed the following factors that could act as barriers to family-school collaboration: parent-child relationship (predicting the extent of parent involvement); inferiority complex (uneducated parents felt intimidated by school staff members); language barrier (not being able to communicate in English); school-parent interaction and communication (e.g. unwelcoming staff members at reception, public transport problems, lack of time) and parent apathy (diverse learner population – not a close-knit school family). As a Section 21 school, the School Governing Body (SGB) is part of the

management team and responsible for maintenance, safety and security and for managing the school finances. However, only 1% of the parents are involved in these activities.

To promote family-school collaboration, the school communicates regularly with the parents via smses, e-mail messages and weekly newsletters. They also try to schedule meetings at times that would accommodate most parents. The staff members suggested that more should be done to train parents to become active stakeholders in their children's education. The learners said they felt it was the school's responsibility to support the child-parent relationship and the learners and parents stated that if the school organised more social events, families would be more involved in the school.

➤ **School Two**

The school staff members believed that open and good communication was vital to any parent-teacher relationship and felt that most parents had established good rapport with the school staff members. Parental support varied, depending on the type of school activity (e.g. parent-teacher evenings: 80%-90%; Saturday sports: 50%-60% and evening functions: 40%-50% attendance). They stated that the school-parent connection was very important because an informed parent and informed school would result in an equipped parent and equipped school, especially in a secondary school, as most teenagers did not inform their parents what was going on at school. The learners regarded the role of their parents as being supportive but they (the learners) wanted to decide the extent of this involvement. Parents should trust their children and allow them the independence to act responsibly. One learner commented:

I think that it depends on whether or not – there is a lot of trust that is involved so your parents need to trust you to know that you will tell them when something is extremely wrong and you cannot handle it (Interview BA2, p. 39).

The parents stated that they thought the school was very supportive of the triangular relationship (learner, parent and teacher). They added that the communication between teachers and parents and bringing in the child were excellent. The parents acknowledged that their children wanted greater independence but believed that they

needed to know that their parents were there to support them. The school has an open door policy and many parents know one another well because the school is small and many children have attended school together since primary school. One parent explained:

I think for me the school is very much wanting the parents to be part of things that happen to the child, it is not a case of what happens at home is at home, what happens at school is at school, I think they are very pro the whole triangle of the pupil, the parent and the school, and that the triangle does not function effectively if one of those partners are not engaged in that. I think that is the ideal, I think obviously there are a lot of times that part of that triangle is missing whether the child is disengaged or whether the parents are kind of abdicating their roles to an extent for the school to take over, but I think on the whole that is what they are wanting and I find the communication between teachers and parents and then bringing the child in, in my experience has been excellent (Interview BPN, p. 22).

The school staff members initiate open communication with the learners and believe the positive learner-teacher relationship results in creating a sense of family, which builds the learners self-esteem, creates a spirit of camaraderie and gives the learner a sense of belonging. The school offers a variety of cultural and sporting activities, which give the learners the opportunity to develop their leadership skills as well as to express their different abilities and attributes. The Head, Board of Governors, the Head Boy and Girl, the Grade 12 councillors as well as representatives of each grade, interact regularly and these learners are given the opportunity to debate issues, voice their concerns and make suggestions. The learners described their relationship with the school staff members as good and trusting but they thought some teachers could be more considerate sometimes. The learners said they felt comfortable with and accepted by their peers and that they trusted the more senior children and Grade 12 councillors and mentors to look after them.

The parents stated that they believed there was a culture of mutual respect among the learners and there was no form of initiation or belittling of other people. The Grade 12 councillors contributed immensely to the feeling of camaraderie but the parents had a difference of opinion about the success of the Grade 12 mentoring system. They agreed that the success of the mentoring system depended on the leadership abilities of

the specific mentor, and suggested that these learners should receive more training and should be monitored and guided in their role as mentors to the junior children. The parents believed that the Academic Support Programme (ASP) assisted the learners with having a good relationship with the school staff members. The supervised after-school facilities as well as the fact that the majority of learners were involved in various extramural activities built camaraderie and good interaction.

The school staff members described the following factors as possible barriers to family-school collaboration: lack of time and busy lives (of parents); the developmental stage of the adolescent learner (wanting more independence); changing family dynamics (child not relaying information to parents); work commitment (both parents working); parent apathy (pay huge school fees so school should be responsible for educating their children) and busy teachers (heavy work-load, so no energy to initiate talks with parents). The learners reiterated that they wanted their parents involved but they also wanted some independence from them, therefore they wanted an opportunity to decide to what extent they would like to have their parents involved. The parents stated that the major factors that could act as barriers to family-school collaboration were lack of time or business commitments; divorce; the developmental stage of the adolescent and the ethos of younger parents (less involved in their children's lives).

The school staff members created various avenues for promoting family-school collaboration. These included a specific channel of communication (Grade Tutor →Deputy Head→ Head); a cocktail evening at the beginning of the year for new parents; a Parents' Charter explaining the expectations of the school; a Parent-Teacher Forum, and the Board of Governors. Parents were also encouraged to attend sport and cultural events and to assist with running the Tuck Shop and help at sport events. A few mothers had started a Parent Forum, where parents could come together and discuss their concerns about raising teenagers. The aim was to encourage communication among the parents and to learn to know one another. The parents thought it was a huge advantage that so many parents had attended primary school together as they had already formed solid friendships. There was good interaction among the parents and they looked out for one another's children. The parents said they perceived the school staff members as very open and willing to assist the learners and their parents. A synthesis of these findings is given in Table 4.9.



Table 4.9 Synthesis: Family-school collaboration

SCHOOL ONE	SCHOOL TWO
Parent involvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only parents of junior learners and were achievers involved • parental support lacking • difficult to build good teacher-parent relationship with majority of parents • learners want parent involvement but also want to decide to what extent • learners see parent role as being supportive and guiding them • trusting parent-child relationship – better equipped to withstand peer pressure • majority of parents do not socialise therefore family-school collaboration lacking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • good and open communication: key to parent-teacher relationship • most parents established good rapport with school staff members • parent support varies depending on type of activity: info evenings (80%-90%)/Saturday sport (50%-60%)/evening functions (40%-50%) • school-parent connection: vitally important – teenagers do not relay info to parents • learners see role of parents as supportive, but learners need independence • parents experience school as pro triangle (learner/parent/teacher) • open door policy • parents know one another well: small school/being together in prep school
Learner voice and connectedness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners uncommitted – not many participate in extramural activities/team sport • learners do not report incidents – do not trust all teachers • learners felt they could not express their feelings as this would be construed as disrespectful 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school staff members initiate open communication with learners • freedom of speech: learners' perception • positive learner-teacher relationships: create a sense of family • sense of family: builds learner's self-esteem/creates spirit of camaraderie/gives sense of belonging • learner involvement in cultural and sport activities: socialise/develop leadership skills/express different abilities and attributes to academics • good interaction: SGB/PTF/Head/Head Boy and Girl – opportunity to debate issues • learners experience relationship with staff members: good and trusting but teachers need to be more considerate sometimes • parents experience culture of mutual respect among learners • no initiation/belittling of junior learners • Grade 12 councillors'/mentors' contribution: create feeling of camaraderie among learners • Grade 12 mentors: need more training • Academic Support Programme (ASP): assists learners to have good relationships with staff members



Barriers to collaboration	
School staff members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • materialistic society: working parents – absent/learners living with grandparents – breakdown of discipline structures/no secure family life • family lifestyle: family violence/single working parent/shift workers/unsupervised children • parent's level of education: basic level/mother tongue • use of public transport: work long hours/live far from home • teacher-parent communication: teachers struggle to reach parents – false telephone numbers • cultural background: black culture – unapproachable parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • time and busy lives: parents busy • developmental stage of learner: early adolescents do not want parent involved • changing family dynamics: adolescents want independence – do not relay info to parents • work commitment: both parents working – no time for involvement • parent apathy: pay huge school fees so school is responsible for child's education • busy teachers: heavy workload so no energy to initiate talks with parents
Learners and parents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parent-child relationship: depicts the extent of parent involvement • inferiority complex: parents feel intimidated by school staff members • public transport: problem with attending functions/meetings • language barrier: not able to communicate in English • school-parent interaction and communication: school not doing enough to involve parents/parents find reception unwelcoming • parent apathy: today's parents less involved in children's education • diversity of learners: school not a close-knit family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners want more independence: will tell parents when to be involved • time/business commitment: full-time working mothers • divorce: in denial of effect on children • developmental stage of adolescent: need more independence • ethos of younger parents: not as nurturing and involved in children's lives as older parents
Strategies to promote collaboration	
School staff members	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Governing Body (SGB): very active and involved • scheduling of meetings: to accommodate working parents • school-parent communication: regularly via sms/e-mail/weekly newsletter • learner reports: handed out at parent-teacher information evenings – better attendance • parent training: need to train parents about their role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • channel of communication: Grade Tutor→Deputy Head→Head • cocktail evening at beginning of year: information evening for new parents • parent charter: explains school's expectations • parent-teacher forum (PTF) has direct access to Board of Governors • parents encouraged to attend sporting and cultural events • weekly communication: sms/e-mail/weekly planner/newsletter • mothers work in tuck shop/help with sport • suggest more training for parents: re adolescents
Learners	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support child-parent relationship: school's responsibility • school should organise more social functions 	



Parents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school ought to reach out more to parents: organise more opportunities for parents to interact many barriers exist: parents still not becoming involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> good weekly communication: sms/e-mail/ weekly planner/newsletter parent forum initiatives: encourage communication among parents moms army: volunteers – assist other families in times of need parents know one another: have been together since prep school

4.4.5 Theme Five: Suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence

➤ School One and School Two

The participating school staff members, learners and parents from both schools made various suggestions about how to address school-based violence. A summary of these findings is given in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10 Summary: Suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence

SCHOOL ONE	SCHOOL TWO
Attitude towards violence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> school's responsibility to reach out to communities and address the societal issues that can result in violence school needs parents and community to be involved in addressing violence role of schools: educators of community need to look at nation's culture, values and morals in relation to what is acceptable behaviour South Africa needs strong leaders who condemn violence need a national education campaign regarding the consequences of violence need to establish a rehabilitation process for bringing offenders back into society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> perception that government perpetuates lawless society perception that there are no consequences for criminal or violent acts
Address causes of violence	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools, parents and communities ought to address factors that promote learner violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> violent society is the norm – violence seen as an acceptable way of life violent communities – children exposed to them exposure to violence on TV/media societal problems: income disparities/diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds – lead to behavioural problems



Rules and consequences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools have to enforce existing rules consistently – consequences for actions schools should have system in place to prevent violence and ensure rules are obeyed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> schools need firm and manageable discipline structures simple rules, easy to understand: implemented and transgressions should have definite consequences
Parent involvement and community support	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> parents have to be stakeholders in their children's upbringing and education parents should show love and support to their children and ought to know what they are doing parents should take responsibility for rehabilitation of child if need be, with assistance of community development workers constant communication and engagement between school, parents and community development workers to assist children parent-child relationship must be based on mutual respect parental education and training: parents must be willing to learn if any parent education initiative is to work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> lack of media censorship: adds to adolescent experimentation with alcohol/sex private school children: too shielded from realities of life trusting parent-child relationship: is cornerstone in preventing learner violence trusting parent-child relationship: child can rely on parental support and guidance
Support from Department of Education (DoE)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DoE unable to support and guide schools in their violence prevention initiatives –its staff members have never been teachers DoE: no hands on involvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DoE: ties the schools' hands – not allowed to expel learners DoE: should give schools more support and power DoE: should address problems contributing to learner violence DoE: should employ Life Coaches at all schools – available to pay attention to individual learner's problems
Teacher training	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> younger generation teachers: not upholding the same standards as older teachers some teachers: not prepared to get involved with learners' problems – do not support or assist learners teachers should be willing to: build personal relationships with learners and work together as a team role of education: teachers should strive to make a difference in a learner's life teacher training: need more in-house training on how to assist and support learners 	

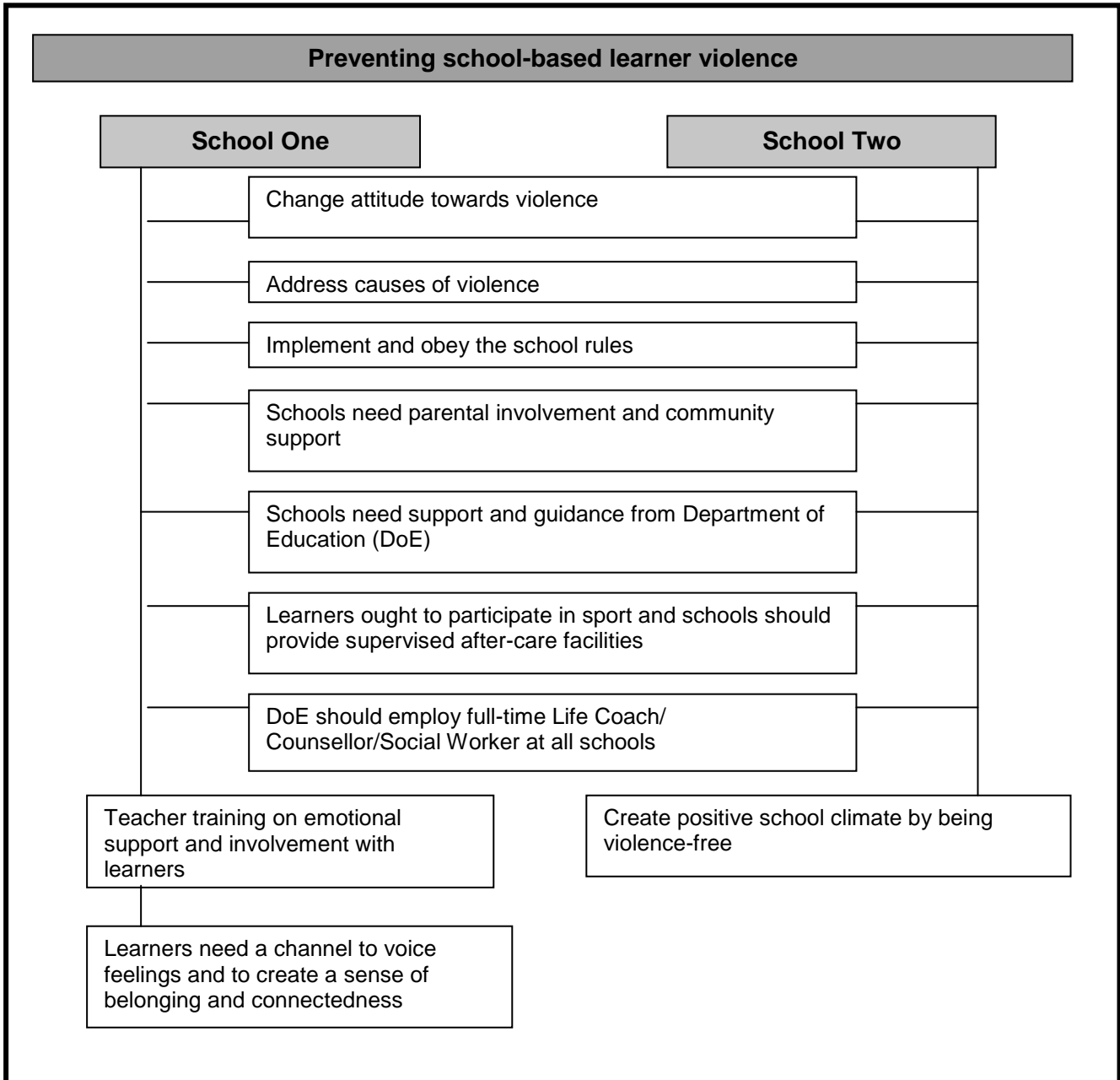


Learner voice and connectedness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learners want to take responsibility for their own actions: change their own behaviour to improve school safety • learners afraid to speak up: labelled/do not want to hurt friends • learners want to act as link between learners and staff members: need system where learners can report anonymously • need more social activities so that learners can interact/get to know one another 	
Extramural activities and after-care facility	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of learner participation in sport and extramural activities: learners not committed/lack of parental support and motivation/unaware that children do not participate/dangers of using public transport prevent participation • school needs after-care facility/recreational hall: adult-supervised activities/keep learners busy in afternoons till parents get home • after-care facility: parents volunteer and local businesses fund the facility • after-care facility: allows learners to socialise and take responsibility for actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • after-care facility and extramural activities: opportunity for learners to socialise/interact and be kept safe • supervised extramural activities: limit learners' exposure to community violence/drugs • holistic approach to education: all learners should be encouraged to participate in sport and cultural activities • sports field: various life skills taught/outlet for energy/frustration/opportunity to shine other than in academic studies • team sport: teach learners to work together/social balance
Life Coach/Counsellor/Social Worker on staff complement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • schools should employ Life Coach/Counsellor on staff complement: assist learners and parents to communicate with each other • need support group at school: learners be able to talk about feelings and emotions • need impartial and trained person on staff complement to assist and advise learners • DoE: should provide a Life Coach/social worker to each school on a permanent basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time Life Coach at schools: desperate need • Life Coach: assist learners/teach life skills to cope with demands of life • Life Coach/Counsellor: available for learner and teachers – safe place/ off-load in confidentiality • Life Coach: educate learners about bystander mentality • Life Coach: parents, learner and school staff members live in a secondary post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome (economic pressures/violence/ robberies/divorce) – children need a trusted ear to listen to them
Establish a positive school climate	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a positive school climate: schools need to be free of disruptive or violent incidents • Addressing and preventing school violence should be a priority at all schools

A synthesis of the suggestions that the participants at Schools One and Two made is shown in Table 4.11 overleaf.



Table 4.11 Synthesis: Suggestions for preventing school-based learner violence



4.5 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN FINDINGS

In this section I discuss and interpret the main research findings by relating these results to the research purpose, the theoretical framework and the existing knowledge base on collaborative strategies for preventing violence in the school context.

4.5.1 Linking the findings to research purpose, theoretical framework and existing knowledge base

The present study employed an ecosystemic perspective to explore and describe the role that collaboration plays among school staff members, learners and parents in preventing school-based learner violence (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Von Bertalanffy, 1968). As Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model suggests, child and adolescent development occurs as a complex interplay between the child or adolescent and the many environments with which they interact (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Lindstrom (2006) argues that it is imperative for school violence intervention and prevention efforts to aim at changing both the individual and the context in which the individual acts. Osher and colleagues (2004) comment that a growing body of literature on school-based violence prevention identifies the need to explore the social context of behaviour (Osher, Van Acker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer & Quinn, 2004). The social context of the school affects academic as well as behavioural outcomes (Reynolds & Teddlie, 2000).

4.5.1.1 School climate and culture

When asked about the overall school climate, the majority of the participants at School One and School Two described the school climate as positive and secure. The participants at School One attributed this positive school climate to the enhancement of the physical security measures, strict discipline structures and a more liberal leadership, whereas the participants regarded School Two as a family inside a very caring community, resulting in a positive and relaxed school atmosphere. The analysis and research by Adelman and Taylor (2006) suggest that a proactive approach to developing a positive school climate requires careful attention to the following:

- Enhancing the quality of life at school, especially in the classroom, for learners and school staff members;

- pursuing a curriculum that promotes not only academic but also social, and emotional learning;
- enabling school staff members to be effective with a wide range of learners, and
- fostering an intrinsic motivation for learning and teaching (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, p. 9)

This analysis is supported by Bronfenbrenner's (2005) Ecological Theory, which describes the school as a microsystem within which the adolescent learner spends a considerable time interacting with teachers and peers in a reciprocal manner to help construct this microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Learners spend many years as a member of this small society. The school exerts a tremendous influence on the learners' socio-emotional development and the school environment increases in size and complexity as the learner interacts with a greater number of culturally diverse people. Adolescents' social behaviour becomes weighted more strongly towards peers and the wider community. Secondary school learners are more aware of the school as a social system and might be motivated either to conform to it or to challenge it (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefde & Davis-Kearn, 2006). The main differences between School One and School Two are in the school climate and culture. Factors contributing to these differences include the size of the schools, the diversity of the learner populations, the extent of parental involvement and the disciplinary policy structures.

School One accommodates approximately 1 000 learners, coming from very diverse cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as well as a vast number of learners living outside the feeder area of the school. School Two is a smaller (390 learners) community-based school where the majority of learners come from the two sister primary schools, live in close proximity of the school and share similar cultural, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds. At School One, the result of these factors is that learners experience a lack of personal support and interaction with the school staff members. The school staff members and parents regard parental involvement as lacking and in general there is no effective family-school collaboration. To ensure the safety of the large and diverse learner population, a policy of zero tolerance to learner misconduct and poor discipline is followed, supported by various physical security measures (i.e. palisade fencing/security guards/CCTV monitoring/access cards/enclosed school layout). These measures contribute to a relatively safe and secure school environment but can lead to frustration among the learners as they have no physical outlet for their

energy. The learners also stated that they needed more opportunities to voice their feelings and concerns.

School Two, at the other end of the continuum, places a great deal of emphasis on holistic education by combining academic studies with many cultural and sporting extramural activities, in which the majority of learners participate, supported by many parents. This positive, caring school atmosphere promotes good learner interaction and camaraderie: there is a feeling of mutual trust and respect among the learners, parents and school staff members. The majority of parents are involved in their children's education and support school-related activities and functions. The ethos of the school is to promote learners' self-discipline and the school expects learners to uphold the dignity of their peers and to take pride in their school. The school staff members, learners and parents view the school as a family where they know one another personally as they also interact at a social level.

These findings confirm the findings of numerous researchers into school climate, namely that the size of the school, its location, the ethnic distribution and discipline policy all play a role in the incidence, type and severity of aggressive learner behaviour (see Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman, 2000). The "personality" of the school as it relates to the school climate may also contribute to antisocial behaviours in youth (McEvoy & Welker, 2000; Tobin & Sprague, 2000; Welsh, Stokes & Greene, 2000). Sprague and Walker (2005) argue that just as schools can be part of the path of violence, they can also provide a positive school climate that fosters supportive and effective bonds with their learners and parents which in turn can result in positive youth growth and development (as seems to be the case particularly with School Two).

4.5.1.2 Violent learner behaviour

DeVoe and colleagues (2005) describe school violence as a specific category of youth violence. It is classed as any behaviour that is intended to harm, physically or emotionally, persons in a school and their property. This includes threatening with or without a weapon, fighting, stealing and damaging property, bringing to school or using a weapon at school, gender violence and bullying (DeVoe, Peter, Kaufman, Miller, Noonan, Snyder et. al., 2005).

At neither of the selected school sites were serious acts of assault (physical or sexual) reported. The most prevalent type of aggressive learner behaviour was bullying. At School One, bullying among boys usually occurs in the form of fist-fights, intimidation, pushing/shoving or name-calling. The girls tend to use verbal bullying as well as spreading rumours or gossiping. Theft of personal belongings, dealing and using drugs and alcohol, smoking cigarettes and smuggling in weapons (such as knives) does occasionally occur. At School Two alcohol abuse and verbal bullying in the form of name-calling, homophobic remarks, inter-denominational verbal abuse and bullying associated with the peer group are the most prevalent forms of aggressive learner behaviour.

These findings are in line with international (see Furlong, Orpinas, Greif & Whipple, 2005; Olweus, 2001) and national (see Leoschut & Burton, 2006; Liang, Flisher & Lombard, 2007) trends confirming that bullying is a serious problem in schools today. The origins of bullying are often complex and empirical evidence highlights the importance for educators to select an intervention that has the best fit for their school ecology (see Furlong et al., 2005).

The defining feature of the Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) is that it takes into account the physical environment and its relationship to people at individual, interpersonal (relationships), organisational (i.e. school) and community levels. The philosophical underpinning is the concept that behaviour does not occur in a vacuum. The underlying assumptions are that behaviours, such as antisocial or pro-social learner behaviour, are influenced by interpersonal, social, cultural and physical environment variables and that these multiple levels of influence range from individual to public policy. Consequently, one has to address these variables at multiple levels to understand and change behaviours (Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Using the Social Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), the factors perceived by the participants at School One and School Two as possibly contributing to or preventing aggressive learner behaviour, are depicted in Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 respectively.



SCHOOL ONE

1. FAMILY FACTORS

- upbringing
- family violence
- divorce
- poverty
- bad child-parent relationship
- low education level of parent
- lack of discipline/control
- unstable home life
- no adult role model
- absent working parents

2. CULTURAL & HISTORICAL FACTORS

- intolerance of diverse cultures
- black culture = unapproachable parents
- apartheid legacy – violence pays
- political leaders too tolerant of crime and violence

3. PEER FACTORS

- peer pressure
- peer rejection
- boy-girl relationship
- mob mentality
- emulating TV violence

4. SCHOOL FACTORS

- no participation in sport
- enclosed school building
- teacher belittles/labels learner
- smuggling illegal substance/weapons
- guards/staff not on duty
- parent apathy

SCHOOL TWO

1. INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

- anger management problems
- low self-esteem
- no proper discipline
- lack of security at home
- hormonal changes
- the victimised retaliate

2. FAMILY FACTORS

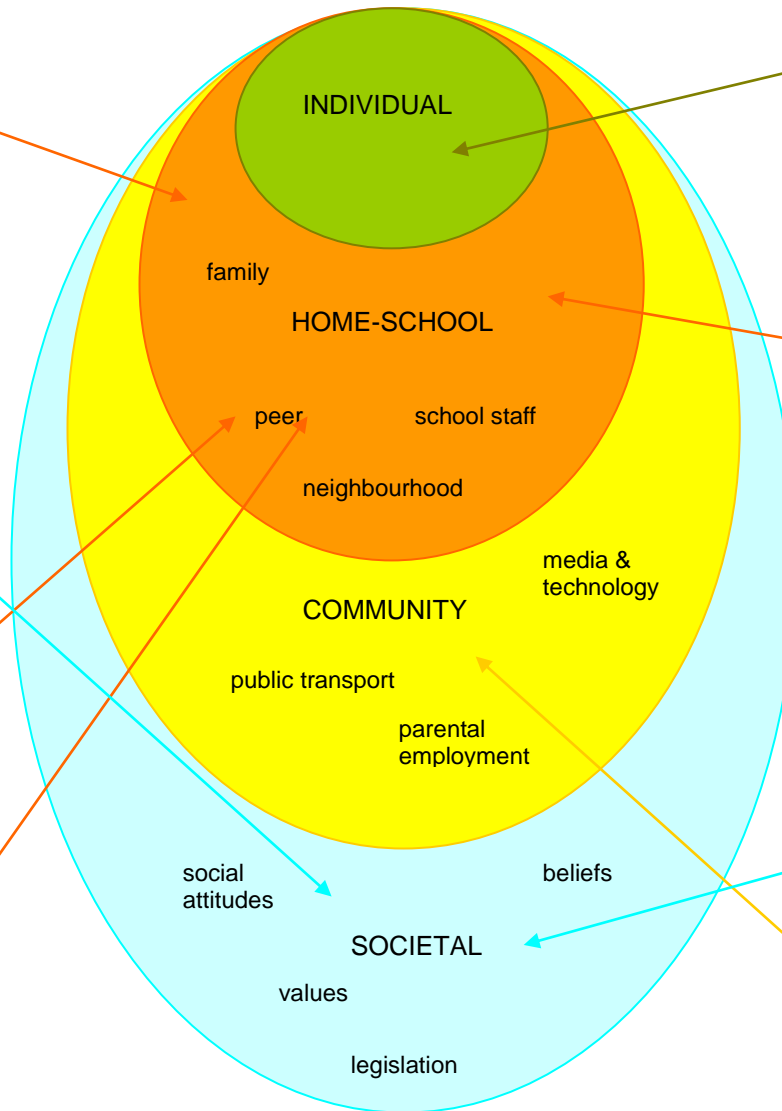
- wealth – recreational drugs/alcohol affordable
- divorce
- absent parents
- no proper discipline structures
- parental attitude to alcohol use
- parents' angry way of dealing with problems
- bad parent-child relationship
- emulating violence on TV
- economic pressures

3. CULTURAL & HISTORICAL FACTORS

- violent society
- secondary post-traumatic stress disorder syndrome

4. COMMUNITY FACTORS

- bystander behaviour
- community violence
- stressful lifestyle
- TV/media violence



Ecological Model
(Bronfenbrenner, 2005)

Figure 4.1 Factors contributing to learner violence

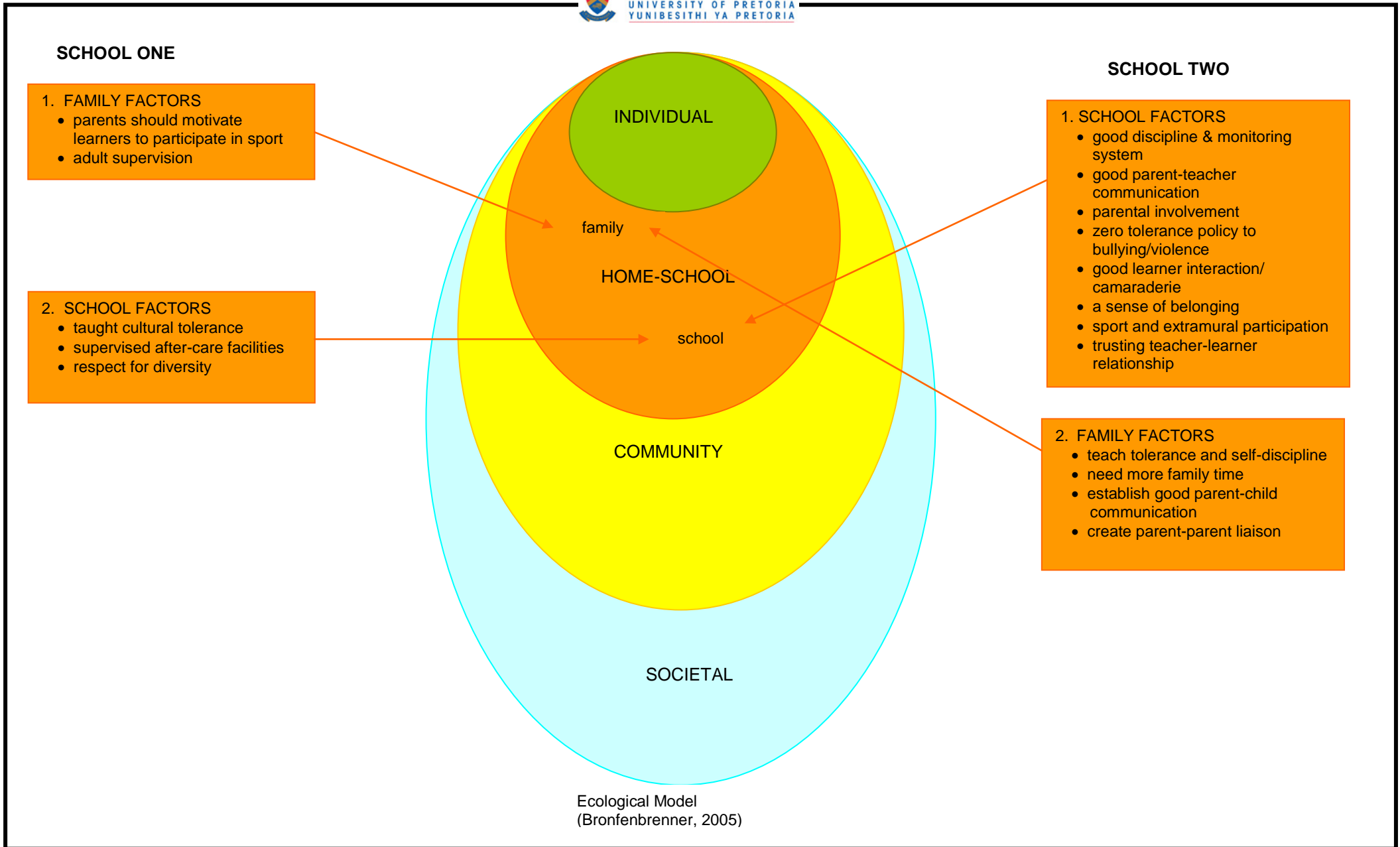


Figure 4.2 Factors preventing learner violence

The participants at School One attributed three of the four major contributing factors to the adolescent's three most influential social contexts, namely the family, peer group and school. Bronfenbrenner (2005) explains that the mesosystem links these microsystems through the relationships that the adolescent learner has with his/her parents, peers and the school staff members. The various family factors to which the adolescent is exposed affect the learner's socio-emotional development, which may influence how the learner will behave at school (Parke & Buriel, 2006). Similarly, the adolescent's relationship with his/her peers and school staff members will also affect his/her behaviour at school, at home and in the wider community. Bronfenbrenner's theory posits that linkages between the family and school are an important mesosystem (Fiese, Eckert & Spagnola, 2006). In addition to families and teachers, peers play powerful roles in adolescents' development. Good peer relationships may be necessary for normal development (Rubin, Bukowski & Parker, 2006) and peer relations may influence whether children and adolescents develop problems (Collins & Steinberg, 2006).

The fourth factor that the participants perceived as having a major impact on the behaviour of the learners at School One was the impact of cultural and historical factors, linking up with Bronfenbrenner's (2005) macrosystem which includes the wider societal influences on the individual. The parents of many of the learners at School One had been previously disadvantaged under the apartheid regime and that legacy still haunted many families. Although today's 15-year-olds were born after South Africa became a democracy, many of the old cultural belief systems and ethnic mistrust are still present in their homes and communities, which can cause interpersonal, family and peer group tension. Accordingly, family, cultural and historical, peer and school factors seem to play a major role in the way these learners form relationships with their parents, peers and school staff members. This relationship tension may result in aggressive learner behaviour.

The participants at School Two perceived individual factors and family factors as contributing the most to aggressive learner behaviour. The majority of its learners come from upper-middle class white families, which share similar cultural and religious beliefs as well as socio-economic status. Therefore, the individual learner may act aggressively because of personal traits or circumstances. The fifth psychosocial stage of Erikson's Life-Span Development Theory (1968) corresponds to the adolescent years. He claims

that the adolescents at this stage are trying to find out who they are, what they are all about and where they are going in life. The adolescent learner confronts many new experiences and roles, and has to explore different paths to acquire a healthy identity. However, this experimentation may lead to unacceptable or aggressive behaviour, especially if there is no good family support. Bad parent-child relationships, too much freedom and wealth may also trigger unacceptable or aggressive learner behaviour. The participants at School Two also perceived that cultural and historical, as well as community factors, might contribute to aggressive learner behaviour at school. Living in a violent society also adds to the problem that learners, teachers and parents suffer from secondary post-traumatic stress syndrome, which can result in learners acting aggressively. Bystander behaviour was seen as contributing to bullying at School Two because the general perception among the respondents was that provided you were not the one being bullied, you need not get involved.

At School One the factors that should prevent learners from becoming involved in aggressive or violent activities include greater parental involvement, especially in motivating their children to participate in sport and other extramural activities. Many of the learners are alone at home in the afternoons without proper adult supervision, making them vulnerable to being exposed to, and getting involved in antisocial or violent activities. The learners would like their school to do more training in cultural tolerance and respect for diversity.

The participants at School Two viewed the role of the school and family as most important for preventing aggressive learner behaviour. They stated that the best protective measures against aggressive or violent learner behaviour were good discipline structures, open communication, trusting relationships, tolerance and self-discipline, participation in sport and cultural extramural activities, and parental involvement.

4.5.1.3 Violence prevention strategies

Literature reviews on strategies for the prevention of school-based violence agree that the key to creating safe and supportive schools lies in preventing violence in all its forms, irrespective of whether it is bullying, aggressive classroom behaviour, gun use or organised gang activities (Furlong, Felix, Sharkey & Larson, 2005; Fields & McNamara,

2003). Analysing the findings obtained from School One and School Two, it seems that the type of discipline policy (zero tolerance versus democratic principles); the role that the school councillors play (ineffective versus supportive); and the extent to which the parents are supportive (lacking versus involved) have an impact on the collaborative nature of their efforts to prevent school violence.

Skiba and colleagues (2000) conclude that although the politically popular zero tolerance approaches to violence prevention may in the short term give parents and communities the impression of a “no-nonsense” (p. 23) response to violence, there is little or no empirical evidence that these strategies have improved learner behaviour or made schools safer (Skiba, Boone, Fontanini, Wu, Strassell & Peterson, 2000). Peterson and Skiba (2002) in discussing the findings from their Safe and Responsive Schools Project, suggest that a comprehensive and preventive model is more likely to ensure safe schools and promote pro-social behaviour than a simplistic or harsh zero tolerance discipline policy (Peterson & Skiba, 2002, p. 29).

Peterson and Skiba (2002) state that although school discipline has come to be associated with punishment and exclusion, the word “discipline” comes from the same Latin root as the word “disciple: *discipere*, meaning to teach or comprehend” (p.25). Their discipline model is based on the belief in discipline as instruction, or teaching the social curriculum (Peterson & Skiba, 2002, p. 25). It is therefore important that all teachers should be trained in using the same social curriculum that could act as a guide for learner behaviour throughout the school day. They should agree on what comprises the classroom and school expectations, values, rules and responses to inappropriate behaviour, and then implement these similar discipline structures. Classroom and school expectations define the desired social and behavioural climate of the school and are enforced through classroom and school rules, and through the positive and negative responses learners receive to their behaviour. The consistency of expectations, rules and consequences teaches learners the appropriate way to behave (Peterson & Skiba, 2002, p. 26).

From an education perspective, Furlong and colleagues (2005) argue that violence prevention should take steps to understand the reason for a learner’s behaviour and develop a plan to help the learner acquire appropriate skills; therefore the learners have to be involved in and connected to the school’s violence prevention strategies (Furlong,

Felix, Sharkey & Larson, 2005, p. 14) According to Bronfenbrenner and Morris (1998), child or adolescent development takes place through processes of progressively more complex interaction between an active child or adolescent and the people, objects and symbols in his/her immediate environments, such as the home and school. A child or adolescent's development is determined by the experiences he/she has in these settings, as well as the interaction between people in these settings, e.g. the parents and school staff members. The number and quality of the connections between the school and home have important implications for the adolescent learner's development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 996).

Both the selected schools have similar and adequate violence prevention strategies in place. However, the main difference between the prevention strategies at these two schools is the extent to which these strategies promote the positive development of their learners. Judd (2006) claims that positive youth development is:

an approach that focuses on young people's capacities, strengths, and developmental needs – not solely on their problems, risks or health compromising behaviours. It recognises the need to broaden beyond crisis management and problem reduction to strategies that increase young people's connections to positive, supportive relationships and challenging, meaningful experiences (Judd, 2006, p. 3).

Smith and Sandu (2004) suggest that for positive youth development to be effective, school-based strategies ought to be comprehensive, broadly applied and developmentally focused. These efforts should also occur across multiple contexts, including school, home and community.

The large and diverse learner population as well as the lack of parental support and involvement at School One act as barriers to implementing the prevention strategies that could promote the positive development of its learners. The supportive parents and caring community at School Two contribute immensely to the successful implementation of the school's discipline strategies, because as Bronfenbrenner (1979) and other suggest, taking a "person-in-context" approach to violence prevention allows for a more complete understanding of the development and prevention of aggression in youth (Reese, Vera, Simon & Ikeda 2000, p. 61).

4.5.1.4 Family-school collaboration

According to Cowan and colleagues (2004), “family-school collaboration is a reciprocal dynamic process that occurs among systems such as the school, families and communities and/or individuals such as parents and school staff who share in decision making toward common goals and solutions related to learners” (Cowan, Swearer & Sheridan, 2004, p. 201). This collaborative effort should be guided by an emphasis on specific, co-operatively predetermined outcomes for learners, with mutually established academic and behavioural goals (Minke, 2000).

In general, the main difference between School One and School Two regarding family-school collaboration is that at School One many parents are uninvolved and non-supportive and the learners are to a large extent unconnected as many learners do not participate in extramural activities or team sports. The learners also feel that they are not allowed to voice their opinions or feelings to either the school staff members or their parents. By contrast, at School Two there is a sense of being a family, a spirit of camaraderie and a culture of mutual respect among school staff members, learners and parents, giving the learners a sense of belonging and security.

These findings accord with the findings of many other researchers, namely that different schools display different levels of interaction, as many schools’ views about families are still often based on the deficit model, which regards parents and their children in terms of having particular needs due to their lack of particular desirable attributes. Teachers believe their task is to provide skills and knowledge to compensate for these deficiencies (Thompson, 2001). Few schools achieve full productive partnerships, which encourage and develop “shared, different but equally valued roles in the process of schooling for teachers, principals and families” (McConchie, 2004, p. 3).

As the current study has demonstrated, at both these selected schools there are various issues that operate as barriers which limit or exclude the informed and willing engagement and participation of many teachers and parents (Macgregor, 2006). These findings are in line with the extensive research done by Hoover-Dempsey and colleagues (2005) on the factors that can act as barriers to family-school collaboration, namely home and family factors, school factors and community factors (Hoover-Dempsey, Walker & Sandler, 2005). To promote family-school collaboration, schools

should develop a multisystemic approach. Bronfenbrenner's conceptualisation of the mesosystem provides a way to develop such an approach. Bronfenbrenner (2005, p. 148) defines the mesosystem as comprising "the linkage and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person. In other words, a mesosystem is a system of microsystems". In the current study, the mesosystemic linkage between the school and home is vitally important to promoting the positive development of the adolescent learner.

The school staff members at School Two have built positive and reciprocal relationships, based on a culture of mutual respect and trust, with most of the parents and learners. The result is a happy and secure school environment where the parents and learners feel connected to the school. By contrast at School One, the school staff members, learners and parents acknowledged that parental involvement and family-school collaboration were lacking because of the factors mentioned above. In terms of Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological Model (1979), the type and quality as well as the presence or absence of the interchange between the adolescent learner and his/her microsystems (such as school and home) obviously have effects which can either mitigate or stimulate behavioural or emotional problems. Difficulties that begin at home are often manifested in the school setting (illustrating the mesosystemic linkage).

Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2005) believes the instability and unpredictability of family life are the most destructive forces in a child or adolescent's development. At School One, a large number of learners did not have the constant mutual interaction with important adults that is necessary for development. The ecological theory postulates that if the relationships in the immediate microsystem break down, the adolescent would not have the tools to explore other parts of his/her environment. Adolescents who look for the affirmation that should be present in the child/parent (or child/other important adult) relationship, look for attention in inappropriate places. These deficiencies are exhibited in adolescence as antisocial behaviour, lack of self-discipline and an inability to promote self-direction (Addison, 1992). Schools should play an important secondary role in supporting the primary relationship (parent-child) by creating an environment that welcomes and nurtures families (Henderson & Mapp, 2002).

As discussed in Chapter Two (Literature Review), Smith and Sandu (2004) argue that a significant conceptual shift has taken place among researchers in the field of strategies

for the prevention of adolescent learner violence. Instead of using a risk or deficit model (a focus on everything that can go wrong with young people) the emphasis is now on using what is called a positive youth development model (e.g. Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2006; Lerner, 2005; Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007) when designing prevention strategies. Replacing the deficit view of adolescence, the positive youth development view regards all adolescents as having strengths. Lerner (2004) hypothesises that the enhancement of positive youth development should lead a young person to make multi-faceted contributions – to self, family, community and society – and that growth in positive youth development should decrease the likelihood of the emergence of risky/problem behaviour (Lerner, 2004).

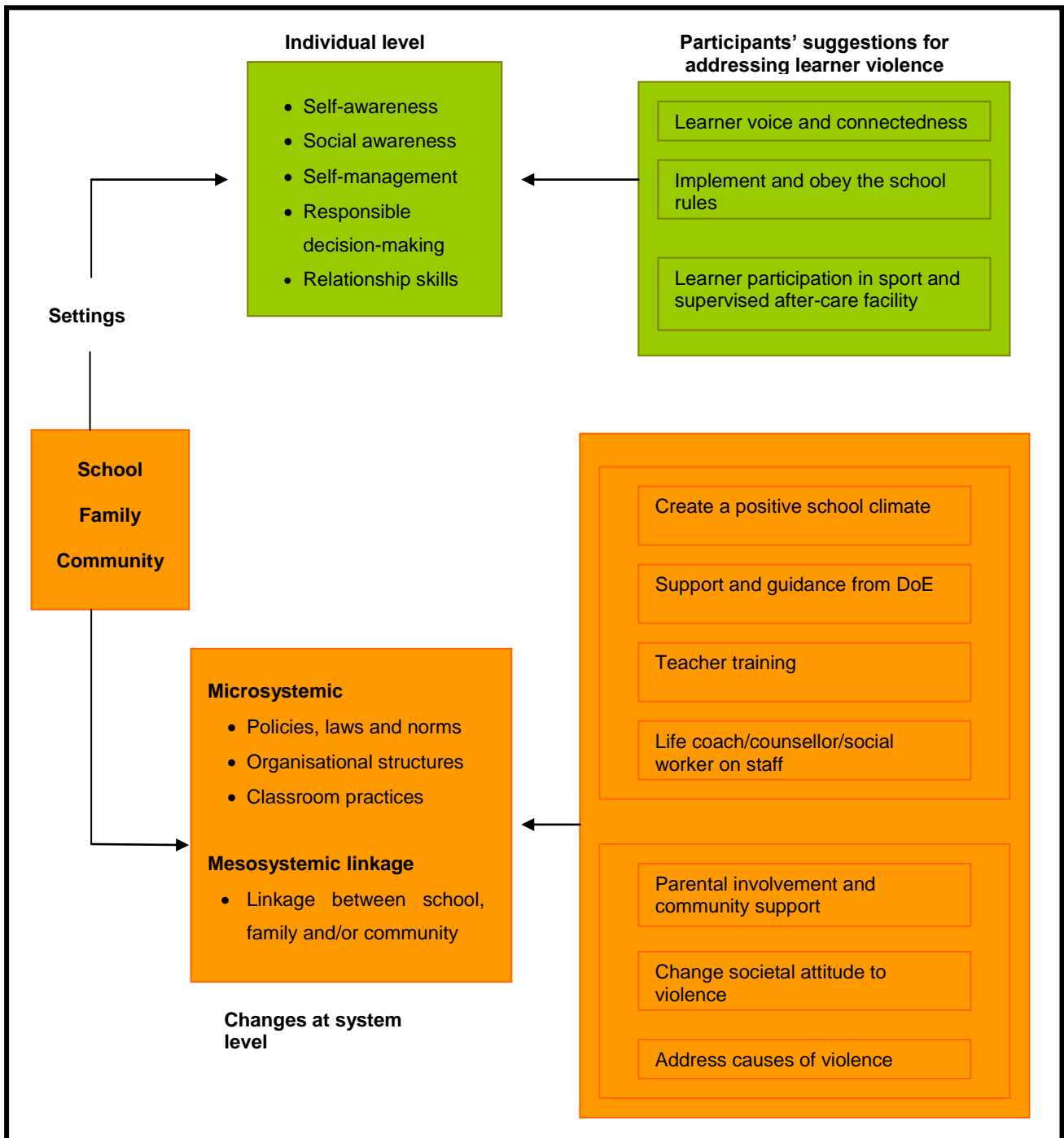
4.5.1.5 Suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence

As explained in Chapter Two of this study, the conceptual framework that Durlak and colleagues (2007) developed could guide researchers and educators with promoting the social change that should result in positive youth development. The focus is on the promotion of competencies at the individual level, and on changes at the system level, which could lead to desired youth development outcomes (Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki & Weissberg, 2007). This framework emphasises the importance of the settings for interventions, the intervention focus in terms of change at the individual – or system – level and the types of outcomes to consider (Durlak et al., 2007).

In the current study, the suggestions made by the school staff members, learners and parents for addressing school-based learner violence highlighted the need to improve the primary social systems in which the adolescent interacts, namely the home, school and community. Systemic school change requires prevention programmes that seek to–

- improve aspects of a school’s psycho-social climate (see Wilson, 2004);
- enhance the family environment so as to connect young people to pro-social adults through mentoring relationships and after-school programmes (see Durlak & Weissberg, 2007); and
- forge connections among families, schools and communities (see Khoury-Kassabri, Benbenishty, Astor & Zeira, 2004).

Using the conceptual framework for individual and system-level changes suggested by Durlak and colleagues (Durlak et al., 2007, p. 270), the suggestions made by the participants for addressing school-based learner violence are shown in Figure 4.3.



(Adapted from: Durlak, Taylor, Kawashima, Pachan, DuPre, Celio, Berger, Dymnicki & Weissberg, 2007, p. 270)

Figure 4.3: Participants' suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence

The suggestions made by the participants, such as promoting the learners' voice and connectedness, implementing and abiding by the school rules, learner participation in sport and providing supervised after-care facilities would not only promote the social and emotional competencies of the individual learner (such as self-efficacy, effective coping strategies, interpersonal problem-solving, conflict resolution and decision-making) but should also result in adolescents demonstrating more pro-social behaviour, having more effective peer and adult relationships and having fewer negative outcomes owing to their positive connections to school, family and other adult role models (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), 2003; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik & Elias, 2003).

Research findings indicate that youth development is optimised in settings that support and reinforce competencies, and that give adolescent learners opportunities to use their newly acquired skills (CASEL, 2003; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003). As many learners at School One commented, they did not have support from their parents or school staff members and were not connected to multiple pro-social or peer models in their communities. Therefore, in addition to working directly with individual learners, schools should provide environments more conducive to personal learner growth and development. This often requires changing the existing school structures and systems.

According to Durlak and colleagues (2007), it is difficult to change social systems, such as schools and families. Such change in order to modify the broad social system requires the support of school leaders and the involvement of a sufficient number of school staff members and families (Durlak et al., 2007). Change to a school system involves changing at all four levels of the Social Ecological Model, namely the microsystem (schools, families and communities); the mesosystem (links/relationships between school, family and community); the exosystem (community resources and services); and finally the macrosystem (broad societal cultural norms and values) (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The participants' suggestions, such as creating a positive school climate; teacher training; support and guidance from the Department of Education (DoE); employing Life Coaches/Counsellors or Social Workers as permanent staff members; and more parental involvement and community support, link the microsystems (home, school and

community); the mesosystem (linkage between home, school and community); and the exosystem (community level resources and services) when addressing school-based learner violence. Finally, addressing the causes of violence and changing societal attitudes to violence (macrosystem) should result in adopting a more comprehensive prevention approach, as suggested by Bronfenbrenner (2005) and others. Taking a person-in-context approach to violence prevention allows a more complete understanding of the development and prevention of aggression among adolescent learners and other youth (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Reese, Vera, Simon & Ikeda, 2000).

4.6 CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study concur with the general consensus among researchers in their respective perspectives on ecological and developmental systems, namely that positive and negative behaviour both have their roots in multiple interpersonal contexts. Furthermore, all sectors of society – and most centrally, the adolescent learners and their families – must be active, productive and collaborative partners if schools are to prevent negative learner behaviour by promoting the positive development of these young people (see Adelman & Taylor, 2006; Christenson, 2002; Durlak et al., 2007; Epstein, 2001; Hoover-Demsey et al., 2005; Lerner, Taylor & Von Eye, 2002).

Therefore, school staff members ought to involve the learners and their parents if they want to eradicate the causes that can lead to aggressive learner behaviour in the school context. The individual learner should be connected to all the important microsystems (i.e. home, school and community) by means of reciprocal relationships (mesosystemic linkage) to promote his/her positive development and well being.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter One, my motivation for undertaking this qualitative, exploratory and descriptive case study research was two-fold. Firstly, to make a contribution to the existing knowledge base on the role that collaborative efforts among school staff members, learners and parents play in addressing the prevailing forms of school-based learner violence in urban secondary schools. Secondly, to provide to school staff members, learners, parents and policy makers a better understanding of the complex and multi-faceted problem of addressing school violence, this should assist them with implementing their violence prevention strategies. The specific objectives guiding this study were the following:

- To establish the extent to which the school climate impacts on the collaborative efforts of school staff members, learners and their families to address the prevailing forms of violence
- To identify and describe the nature and prevalence of violence in urban secondary schools
- To identify and describe what school staff members, learners and parents perceive as the major contributing factors to either promoting or preventing violent behaviour among adolescent learners
- To explore and describe how school staff members, learners and parents develop their existing capacity, knowledge, skills and resources to address school-based violence
- To describe how school staff members, learners and parents deal collaboratively with violence in urban secondary schools
- To describe what school staff members, learners and parents suggest schools could do to address violent behaviour among learners.

My choice of viewing adolescent learner violence from an eco-systemic perspective was guided by reviewing and synthesising the existing empirical evidence on effective

violence prevention strategies as well as studying the current theoretical frameworks utilised by other researchers in exploring aggressive learner behaviour (see Chapter Two).

To justify my choice of research design and to ensure the trustworthiness of the current study, I describe in Chapter Three the methodology employed for collecting, managing, documenting and analysing the data. Chapter Four describes the data analysis process and the main research findings are described, summarised and interpreted by relating these results to the research purpose, the socio-ecological theoretical framework and related empirical evidence.

In this final chapter, I begin by drawing my conclusions in terms of the original research questions. The significance and possible contribution of the current study are discussed, followed by possible limitations of the study. I then critically reflect on the research process and conclude with my recommendations on implementation for practice and propose future research in the field of school-based violence prevention.

5.2 CONCLUSIONS IN TERMS OF RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The purpose of the current study was to explore and describe how the school staff members collaborate with the learners and their parents in addressing school-based learner violence. The main research question the study was aimed at answer was:

How do school staff members, learners and parents collaborate to prevent learner violence in urban secondary schools?

In the following section I discuss the study conclusions in terms of the research objectives and questions.

5.2.1 How does the school climate impact on the collaborative efforts among the school staff members, learners and parents to address the prevailing forms of violence?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Table 4.2 of Section 4.4.1: Theme 1: School climate

and culture in Chapter Four. By definition, school climate reflects the social, emotional and ethical as well as academic experiences of school life by learners, school staff members and parents (American Psychological Association, 2003; Durlak & Weissberg, 2005). Recent research reviews indicate that effective risk prevention and efforts aimed at positive youth development are associated with a safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik & Elias, 2003).

One of the fundamental dimensions of a school's climate is relational and how connected people feel to one another in the school context as well as how connected the school is to the community (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). A growing body of research suggests that school connectedness is a powerful predictor of adolescent health, academic outcomes (McNeely et al., 2002) and violence prevention (Karcher, 2002a, 2002b). School connectedness is the belief among learners that adults and their peers in the school do care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. A school's climate sets the stage for positive learner perceptions of school (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001) and as the current study has shown, how welcome and acknowledged the parents feel. Learner and parent connectedness to the school is enhanced by a healthy and safe school environment and a supportive psychosocial school climate. A clean and pleasant physical environment raises expectations of safety and sets the stage for positive, respectful relationships (McNeely, 2003). The psychosocial climate at school is influenced by various factors such as disciplinary policies, opportunities for meaningful participation and classroom management (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2001).

The findings of the current study mirror the above empirical evidence. Research indicates that there is less learner connectedness in schools with a harsh and retaliatory discipline climate, such as adopting a discipline policy of zero tolerance, as is the case at School One (McNeely, Nonnemaker & Blum, 2002). A positive school environment, or school climate, is characterised by caring and supportive interpersonal relationships, opportunities to participate in school activities and decision-making, and shared positive norms, goals and values (Wilson, 2004). In addition, schools with higher rates of participation in extracurricular activities during and after school tend to have higher levels of school connectedness (Blum, McNeely, Rinehart, 2002), as reflected at School Two. Good classroom management, such as adequate planning and fair consequences

for misbehaviour, is critical to establishing a positive school environment and increasing school connectedness. When teachers establish clear routines and guidelines, relationships among learners and between teacher and learners tend to be more positive and learners are more engaged in learning (Ryan & Patrick, 2001).

The findings of the current study support what many school climate researchers have shown, namely that school connectedness is an important protective factor. Young people who perceive their school's climate as positive will feel more connected to their school and are therefore less likely to engage in many risky activities, such as alcohol and drug use or violence (McNeely, et al., 2002). A safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climate is pivotal to establishing collaborative relationships among school staff members, learners and their families. Schools need to evaluate their existing physical and psychosocial school climate to determine to what extent it promotes or prevents learners and their parents from feeling engaged and connected to the school.

5.2.2 What is the nature and prevalence of learner violence and victimisation in urban secondary schools?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Tables 4.3 and 4.5 in Section 4.4.2 Theme 2: Violent learner behaviour – nature and prevalence in Chapter Four. Empirical evidence suggests that although only some schools experience the same types or levels of violence, there are themes that run through the literature, pointing to at least seven specific manifestations of violent behaviour that broadly affect schools in South Africa (Khan & Burton, 2006). These include, but are not limited to:

- theft and vandalism;
- lack of respect for, and threats against teachers;
- bullying of learners;
- physical assaults;
- weapons in school;
- gender violence and sexual assault; and
- gangs.

It is important to note that these are not discrete themes because the concepts overlap and interact in their manifestation and impacts. Each theme does, however, highlight different aspects of the problems facing South African schools (Braun, 2007).

The research findings of the current study underscore this evidence. Bullying is perceived as the most prevalent form of aggressive behaviour at both the selected urban schools. Theft of personal belongings, lack of respect for and threats against teachers and other learners, physical fighting and carrying weapons also occur at School One. At School Two the manifestations of violent behaviour include theft of personal belongings, physical fighting and alcohol use. Whitted and Dupper (2005, p.167) argue that the repercussions of bullying, even if it does not escalate into violence, affect all the learners in the school, not only the victims and the bullies. If bullying is ignored and aggressive behaviour not addressed, learners are likely to become more aggressive and less tolerant. Consequently, bullying and all other types of aggressive behaviour negatively affect the school climate and the learning environment (De Wet, 2007, p.193).

Schools should therefore identify the types and levels of violence at their schools and find strategies that can successfully deal with and eliminate all forms of violent behaviour. As the current study and previous empirical evidence have shown, a wide array of people – school staff members, learners and parents – have to be consulted to identify the nature and prevalence of existing types and levels of adolescent violence. School staff members need the input from these key role players if they want to identify and address these problems effectively.

5.2.3 What do school staff members, learners and parents perceive as the major contributing factors to either promoting or preventing adolescent violent behaviour?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Table 4.4, 4.6 and 4.7 in Section 4.4.2 Theme 2: Violent learner behaviour – contributing and preventive factors, in Chapter Four. In the transition from childhood to adulthood, adolescents establish patterns of behaviour and make lifestyle choices that affect both their current and future health and well being. Adolescent development takes place through the reciprocal and dynamic interactions

between individuals and various aspects of their environment, such as their families, peer groups, schools and communities (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005).

The current study found that individual, family, peer group, school, community, cultural and historical contextual factors all have an impact on how the adolescent learner behaves at school. The relationship an individual learner has with his/her parents, peers and the school staff members affects the way that learner behaves at home, in school and in the wider community. In addition, societal norms and values as well as the existing culture were regarded as predicting what acceptable behaviour is. Pelsler (2008, p.8) argues that for a significant portion of South African youth, crime and violence have become culturally acceptable and normalised because of the young people's consistent experience of and exposure to violence in the key institutions of their socialisation – their homes, their schools and their immediate environments.

The participants at both schools viewed the role of the family and school as most important in preventing aggressive adolescent behaviour. Many learners are left alone in the afternoons without any adult supervision and many of them also do not participate in sports or other after-school activities. This is the time when these young people are vulnerable and could easily get involved in violent activities. Proper adult supervision in the afternoons is seen as key to preventing violent learner behaviour; another major preventive factor is parents who motivate their children to participate in sport and other after-school activities.

Effective and clear discipline structures at home and in school as well as parental involvement in and support of their children's education and school, should help adolescents to develop in positive ways and prevent them from acting aggressively, especially as they would have the support and guidance of adult role models. These findings underscore what Burton (2007, p. 75) refers to as the important "symbiotic relationship" between what occurs in schools and what happens in a learner's home and community. He attributes this interaction to the widespread perception that violence is seen as a legitimate form of conflict resolution in the South African context.

School staff members should take into consideration that learner behaviour is influenced by various factors across ecological levels – individual, peer, family, school and neighbourhood. These factors may either promote or prevent adolescent

aggression or violence at school. To assist and support adolescent learners effectively, school staff members have to identify the risk and protective factors across all these ecological levels when designing and implementing prevention strategies.

5.2.4 How do school staff members, learners and parents develop their existing capacity, knowledge, skills and resources to address school-based violence?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Table 4.8 in Section 4.4.3 Theme 3: Violence prevention strategies, in Chapter Four. Schools are perceived as a natural setting for violence prevention as they provide regular access to children and young people throughout their developmental years. As the findings of the current study and other research have shown, the set of factors leading to youth violence is complex and can stem from a host of factors – ranging, for example, from individual neurological deficits to parent-child bonds and to neighbourhood conditions.

It is a difficult task to develop and implement strategies to reduce or prevent adolescent violence. Research has shown that effective violence prevention programmes are based on the following:

- Programmes aimed at building school capacity by focusing on the three P's – place, people and purpose (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2000)
- Long-term comprehensive instructional programmes focusing on developing social-emotional learning (SEL) (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2003) and promoting positive youth development (PYD) (Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007).

The findings of the current study indicate that there have been no incidents of overtly aggressive learner behaviour at both the selected urban school sites. This is attributed partially to the adequate physical security measures and clear discipline policies and structures at these two schools. At School One in particular, much attention is given to making the school environment safe and to preventing weapons and illegal substances from being brought onto school property. The school employs the help of community

organisations such as the police, fire brigade and a private security company to review the existing discipline policies. In addition, the school's Safety and Security Team regularly monitors and evaluates the safety regulations at the school. To ensure the safety of the large and diverse learner population, the school has a discipline strategy of zero tolerance. However, research has shown that adopting a zero tolerance policy has not been proven successful. A "one-size-fits-all" approach is ineffective when dealing with culturally diverse and large learner populations (Curwin & Mendler, 1999, p. 120).

As discussed in the previous section, bullying is perceived as the most prevalent form of aggressive learner behaviour at both schools, but it is no easy task to address bullying. As children enter adolescence, this form of aggressive behaviour becomes subtler, involving gossip, social exclusion and other forms of indirect aggression. As the participating learners at School One explained, many aggressive learners have high levels of status, popularity and admiration from their peer group and the school. Therefore, as aggression becomes more normative during adolescence, it is less likely to provoke peer rejection and more likely to elevate the bully's social status (Guerra & Leidy, 2008). Particularly in more disadvantaged contexts where resources are scarce, high levels of adolescent aggression may result not only in elevated status but also in a wide range of benefits, including material goods, protection and power. In other words, for some youth in some school settings, aggression may lead to high status and dominance in the social group (Guerra & Leidy, 2008).

To the extent that aggression and popularity are linked in a given peer context, being "tough" and aggressive might be seen as a desired goal which might also hinder efforts to encourage bystanders to intervene and stop aggression, particularly if this behaviour has a risk of loss of school status (Guerra & Leidy, 2008, p. 287). The participating learners at School One clearly expressed this view. Therefore the motivation to change cannot be assumed and this may require moving beyond zero tolerance policies in order to discount the normative reward structure in the peer group (Guerra & Leidy, 2008).

From the participating learners' perspective, adopting a discipline policy of zero tolerance contributes to their perception of not having an opportunity to voice their opinions and feelings about the existing school rules. They do not agree with many of the existing rules, so they break these rules. Furthermore they do not feel secure about

reporting their knowledge of illegal and antisocial learner behaviour, as they do not trust all the school staff members to take their concerns or complaints seriously. From their perspective, having all these security measures does not make them feel safe because these measures do not prevent learners from smuggling in dangerous and illegal substances or acting in aggressive ways towards one another.

Another problem was identified, especially at School One, concerning the development of the school's existing resources to address learner violence, namely the lack of parental support and involvement. The school staff members feel that many parents do not instil good discipline at home as they believe that disciplining their children is the sole responsibility of the school. A consistent finding in the research literature is that certain parenting practices and parent-child relationships can increase the likelihood of child aggression. Children who suffer rejection, neglect or indifference from parents are more likely to display aggressive behaviour. The quality of these relationships also influences child aggression; in particular, the parental expression of anger promotes aggression in children (Patterson, 2002). In adolescence, a lack of parental monitoring is associated with higher levels of aggression, violence and delinquency, as well as poorer relations with peers and teachers (Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001). Monitoring means that parents know where their children are, who they are with and what they are doing. Good supervision allows parents to respond appropriately to antisocial and delinquent behaviours, and also minimises the adolescent's contact with risky circumstances (Guerra & Leidy, 2008).

In recent work done by Guerra and colleagues, they suggest that culture should be viewed as a key moderator of intervention effectiveness. They define culture as a collection of social norms, beliefs and values that are learned over time and that provide both a worldview and a way of living (Guerra & Knox, 2008, p. 311). Schools should incorporate cultural competence in their prevention strategies by addressing issues of culture as part of the intervention so that culture becomes an asset to be enhanced (Guerra & Phillips-Smith, 2002a, 2006b). This is highly relevant for many schools in South Africa, as they accommodate families with very diverse cultures such as those at School One. School staff members should assess the various norms and values of these different cultures regarding appropriate behaviour. Staff members should also work out how best to address these issues in a culturally sensitive way if they want the learners and their parents to support the school's violence prevention strategies. All the

role players must take ownership of these strategies to facilitate their successful implementation.

Although School One succeeds in dealing with the obvious problems, its discipline strategies do not promote positive youth development as they focus mainly on addressing negative and problem behaviour instead of employing a more comprehensive, developmentally focused and broadly applied strategy which involves the learners and their families. It is essential for the learners and parents to be involved in the design and implementation of the various prevention strategies so that this can motivate them to take ownership of the strategies and support the school's efforts. The success of the prevention strategies at School Two can be attributed mainly to the positive, trusting and supportive relationships among the school staff members, learners and parents, as well as having discipline policies that focus developing the learners' self-discipline. Another contributing factor to this success is having various avenues for the learners and parents to participate and air their opinions about acceptable learner behaviour.

According to Paine and Cowan (2009, p.1), violence prevention is a day-in, day-out responsibility that influences every aspect of school life. Effective efforts protect the physical safety of learners and staff members and also promote positive learning and social development. For schools to develop prevention strategies that are developmentally focused and culturally appropriate, they need to acknowledge and accommodate the specific needs and beliefs of their learners and families. Promoting better learner and family support and participation would give the learners and families additional knowledge, skills and resources, which should result in more effective strategies for preventing violence.

5.2.5 How do school staff members, learners and parents collaboratively deal with violence at secondary schools?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Table 4.9 in Section 4.4.4 Theme 4: Family-school collaboration, in Chapter Four. Research shows that the availability of social support from friends, parents and other adults has well-established protective associations with adolescent well being and mental health (Cornell, 2003; Wiesner & Windle, 2004).

Schools are social places and learning is a social process where learners learn in collaboration with their teachers, in the company of their peers and with the support of their families (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg & Walberg, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) views the family, school and peer group as the most powerful circles of influence on a young person's life. A young person's behaviour reflects transactions within these immediate circles of influence; therefore the family, school and peer group should all work in harmony to provide positive support. By contrast, when they are in conflict, this affects the young person negatively and this effect can be displayed as antisocial or aggressive behaviour (Brendtro, 2006). Establishing family-school collaboration is seen as a key strategy for promoting this harmony among schools, families and peer groups that should result in reducing young people's aggressive behaviour (Taylor & Adelman, 2000).

However, as the findings of the current study indicate, there are various factors that may prevent parents from forming effective family-school partnerships. These factors may isolate these parents from their child's important developmental contexts, such as the peer group and school. Also, contrary to the assumption of many educators, parents are interested in their children's' academic success and well being, regardless of their ethnicity, culture or economic status, but they might not know how to help their children or might feel incapable of assisting these young people (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). As Scribner & Scribner (2001, p. 36) state: "Different cultures, ethnic background, social class and age of parents are a few of the factors affecting interpretations of or generalizations about the nature of parent involvement." This statement lists some of the factors that complicate and sometimes prevent family involvement in schools that serve families representing diverse populations. Families define support and interest from their own perspective, which might be different from the school's perspective. Family system factors are crucial to understanding an individual's motivation and ability to participate (Coatsworth, Santisteban, McBride & Szapocznik, 2001).

Another interesting finding of the current study, also contrary to general belief, is that adolescent learners do want their parents to be involved in their lives and support their education. However, these young people want to decide the extent to which their parents should be involved. Adolescents are at the developmental stage where they need to find their own identity (Erikson, 1968) but they also need to know that their

parents are there to support and guide them. As discussed earlier, peers play a major role in the developing young person's life but it is important for families to embrace this relationship and become part of it so that they can guide and assist their children to find appropriate friends who could have a positive influence on their children. As the participating learners stated, they need the support and trust of their teachers and their parents to help them withstand negative peer influence as well as guide them to make responsible choices in their lives.

These factors can all play a role in the lack of parental involvement in their children's education, especially as experienced at School One. Many parents do not support school activities or motivate their children to participate in all the various extramural activities that the school offers. This translates into learners feeling unconnected to the school as well as having the perception that they cannot talk to their parents about their feelings, concerns or problems. The school staff members become frustrated by the lack of commitment to supporting the school shown by the learners and their parents. At School Two, however, which is described as a community-based school serving a more homogeneous learner group, there is effective family-school collaboration based on a culture of mutual respect and trust among school staff members, learners and parents, giving the learners and parents a sense of belonging.

Therefore, fostering a culture of social trust is important to building family and community involvement with schools (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). However, just as the education of young people is a complex process, strategies to create purposeful interaction among school staff members and families so as to prevent violent adolescent behaviour, are multilayered and ongoing. As the school staff members plan strategies to build and promote family connections with schools, they should consider the common factors that affect whether or not and how family members choose to become involved. Empirical evidence has identified some of these common factors as:

- Parents' definition of their role in their child's education
- Parents' beliefs about appropriate methods of child rearing
- Parents' feelings about their ability to help their children, based on their own skills and knowledge level, and their access to other resources for assistance
- Parents' feelings of being welcomed at the school (Ferguson, 2005, p. 3).

All these differing viewpoints and needs can create barriers to meaningful family-school participation, especially in schools serving a culturally diverse learner population. Schools that are successful in addressing these factors are able to build on the cultural values of their families; promote personal contact and foster communication with the families; and assist family involvement by providing support systems such as transport, after-care facilities and other similar services (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ferguson, 2005).

If schools want to design and implement strategies that will successfully address and prevent aggressive or violent learner behaviour, they should give young people and their families the opportunity to be active, productive and collaborative partners in promoting the positive and successful development of these young people. Young people need to feel connected to their two most important social contexts, namely their homes and the school, by means of reciprocal and supportive relationships between their parents and the school staff members. As the participants in the current study stated, the commitment and participation of the learners and their families are crucial if schools want to address school-based learner violence effectively.

5.2.6 What can schools in general do to address school-based learner violence?

The conclusions related to this question are drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as presented in Table 4.10 and 4.11 in Section 4.4.5 Theme 5: Suggestions for addressing school-based learner violence, in Chapter Four. Paine and Cowan (2009) suggest that it is important for schools to recognise that they cannot establish safe, caring and responsive schools on their own. Schools have to balance building security with efforts that foster family-school connectedness by helping learners and their families feel valued and personally invested in keeping their school safe. However, as is the case with most challenges in education, there is no single or simple solution to making our schools safe. It is a multi-faceted, ongoing effort which requires the commitment and participation of all the stakeholders (Paine & Cowan, 2009, pp. 1-3).

In the current study, the suggestions that the participants from both schools made about addressing school violence, support the above views. The participants suggested that all levels of society – the individual learner, the family, educators and schools, the

community and government organisations – must all be involved in order to eradicate adolescent violence and create safe schools. Relating the suggestions made by the participants to the socio-ecological framework, it is evident that school-based learner violence should be addressed at micro (peer, family, school, and community), meso (relational linkage) and macro (society) levels. Pelsler (2008) asserts that a strong argument can be made that school-based violence is an extension of the crime and violence prevalent in South African homes and communities, and although South Africans have been discussing what should be done to reduce youth crime for over 20 years, we are still debating the issue.

As suggested by the participants and many others, we would have to change societal approval of violence and young people's exposure to violence in order to eradicate violence. Researchers have found that the majority of children worldwide are exposed to violence at some level – in their homes, on the street, in their schools and in the media – and this exposure has been directly correlated to the attitudes that approve of violence as well as violent behaviour. Exposure to violence not only increases the risk that a child or adolescent will behave in a violent or aggressive manner but is also related to significant stress, depression and other mental health disorders (Veenema, 2001; Wisdom & Maxfield, 2001).

Children and young people learn that violence is acceptable in some situations, not only through exposure to actual violence but also through observing the approval of violence. This societal approval of violence reinforces violent behaviours and often leads to more violence. Children and young people learn about violence through interactions with the family, peers and teachers. Young people's observation of violence as well as their observations of the lack of consequences for violent behaviour may reinforce their beliefs about the acceptability of violence and their use of violence (Daane, 2003). Political leaders and all people in authority – such as parents and teachers – should take a clear and public stand against all forms of violence.

At government level the Department of Education, in particular, should ensure that it has a clear understanding of the nature and causes of youth violence before implementing prevention strategies. Prevention programmes must be empirically supported and the Department must provide the necessary support, training and facilities to schools so that they can implement these strategies. Reviewers examining

the effectiveness of strategies for preventing youth violence have made various recommendations on improving the quality of these efforts. Many reviewers emphasise the need for those who develop prevention programmes to make greater use of theory and relevant empirical findings (Farrell, Meyer, Kung & Sullivan, 2001). For example, a growing body of research has indicated that risk and protective factors operate at multiple levels of influence and that different factors may be particularly prominent at different stages of development (Dodge & Pettit, 2003; Tolan, Gorman-Smith & Henry, 2003).

Perhaps the most consistent message is that effective violence prevention requires a multi-level (individual, family, school, community), multifaceted (academic, law enforcement, mental health, human services) approach, implemented systematically over time (see Gottfredson, 2001). Careful attention should be paid to institutional readiness to implement change and to the other factors critical to successful programme implementation, such as training the school staff members and the educators', parents' and learners' willingness to incorporate these programmes (Flannery & Seaman, 2001).

The Department ought to review teacher training to ensure that educators have the necessary knowledge and skills to support learners and families. For example, empirical evidence shows that social and emotional (SEL) programming is a promising approach to reducing problem behaviour, promoting positive adjustment and enhancing academic performance (see Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004). As the findings of the current study indicate, family-related factors have a strong impact on how adolescents behave. Therefore educators need the necessary skills and expertise to support learners and their families at a social and emotional level so that schools can promote the positive development of these young people. An integral part of all educators' training should be on how to educate learners to acquire the necessary social-emotional skills needed to cope with the demands of their daily lives.

One of the most revealing findings of the current study is that the learners themselves feel responsible for the incidence of violence at their schools. They want to be given the opportunities to air their feelings and have a say in how educators and parents could help them with taking responsibility for preventing learner violence at schools. They feel they are the ones who cause the problems as well as the ones who know what is going

on among the learners. For this reason, schools should create avenues to promote the learners' voice regarding violence prevention strategies. Levin (2000) and others argue that even though all the participants in education will say that schools exist for the learners, the learners are still treated almost entirely as the object of reform. Levin (2000) advocates the main role learners should play in any attempt at education reform, based on the following assumptions:

- Effective implementation of change requires participation by and buy-in from all those involved; learners no less than teachers and parents
- Learners have unique knowledge and perspectives that can make reform efforts more successful and improve their implementation
- Learners' views can rally the opinions of staff members and parents in favour of meaningful reform, and
- Learners are the producers of school outcomes, so their involvement is crucial to all improvement (Levin 2000, pp.156-157).

Listening to the opinions, views and suggestions made by the learners participating in the current study supports this view. School staff members and parents should include learners as equal partners in their efforts to prevent violence.

One of the suggestions the participating learners made was the need for positive adult role models in their lives. Many of them stated they could not talk to their parents or to school staff members about personal problems or concerns. Research has shown the potential beneficial effect of role models on adolescent outcomes, such as reduced risk behaviour and decreased aggressive behaviour (Aspy, Oman, Vesely, McLeroy, Rodine & Marshall, 2004). One suggestion that the participants made to address this, was that the Department of Education should employ full-time psychologists or life coaches or social workers on the school staff, depending on the social and emotional needs of the specific school environment at all secondary schools. These specially trained people could help the staff members, learners and parents to deal with the various societal and developmental issues that could lead to aggressive or violent learner behaviour. Such a person could also act as a link between the school, families and the community, and as such bring together these various human resources.

The participating learners, parents and school staff members suggested that there was a pressing need for supervised after-care facilities at secondary schools. They identified the time between school closure and the return of parents from work, as the time when these youngsters were most vulnerable. Young people should have a safe place to go in the afternoons, where they could participate in a variety of sports and cultural activities. This would also give them opportunities to socialise outside the classroom. Such a facility could also be utilised by the parents to promote their interaction with and feeling of connection to the school and the school community. Workshops to promote parenting skills as well as to address any other issues regarding parent-child relationships could be accommodated in such a facility.

Previous research has shown that parents and family members in particular are perceived as the best role models for adolescents (Hurd, Zimmerman & Xue, 2008). It is vital for parents and other family members to model pro-social behaviour for their adolescent children, considering that many of the participating learners suggested that they needed at least one person whom they can look up to. Involving parents in the after-care facility could give them an opportunity to establish trusting relationships with the learners, and parents could get the necessary training on becoming positive role models for their children. As the participants suggested, this type of school-based facility could also be used as a recreational hall where the parents and other community members could be involved. In this way the school could become a gathering place for the whole school community, which should promote community support.

In concluding this section, as these findings and previous research have shown, if school staff members are to promote family-school collaboration in their strategies to prevent violence, the learners and their parents would have to feel connected to the school. All forms of aggressive behaviour and violence have to be eradicated so that a school climate can be established that is positive, caring and responsive. Families, schools and the community ought to work together to create a school environment which facilitates the positive development of all children and young people.

5.3 SIGNIFICANCE AND POSSIBLE CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The current study has potential theoretical, methodological and practical significance. Viewing violence prevention from an eco-systemic perspective contributes to promoting

an ecological theoretical framework in which to conduct research on school violence. The study contributes to the diversity of methods (qualitative case study) that can be used to collect and analyse data on the collaborative nature of violence prevention strategies, as well as contributing to the existing knowledge base regarding effective violence prevention strategies in schools.

5.3.1 Theoretical significance

At the IV World Conference (2008) on school violence, one of the recommendations made was that researchers should adopt an ecological developmental theoretical viewpoint in school violence research (Benbenishty & Astor, 2008, p. 60). This theoretical model conceives of violence as the interplay among several relevant systems (see Chapter 1, Section 1.6: Theoretical Framework, of this study for more details of this theory). These authors claim that using this theoretical perspective could result in a better understanding of the relative influences of the school, the family, the neighbourhood and cultural contexts, on school violence and its prevention (Benbenishty & Astor, 2008, p.64).

Adopting an eco-systemic perspective in the current study contributed to and supported this global theoretical approach. Grounding the current study in the ecological systems theory could contribute to a better understanding of the role that collaboration plays among school staff members, learners and parents in effective efforts to prevent school-based violence.

5.3.2 Methodological significance

Benbenishty and Astor (2008) suggest that researchers should explore multiple perspectives when conducting research on school violence. As the current study has illustrated, school staff members, parents and learners have unique perspectives of the role that family-school collaboration should play in their violence prevention efforts. Each of these perspectives has its own merits and importance, and should not be overlooked in monitoring school violence (e.g. Marachi, Astor & Benbenishty, 2007a, 2007b). Furthermore, the similarities and differences between these perspectives may add important insights for schools and national education systems. Theory and research

emphasise the role of context in school violence, therefore the research design should include multiple population units of analysis, as was the case with the current study.

Devine and Lawson (2003) also argue that research should go beyond exact measures or reports on individual learners, and search for larger social factors. It is important to expand the range of methodologies used if we want to better understand these aspects of the social and cultural context. At the IV World Conference (2008) on school violence, the participants agreed that in addition to quantitative studies that provide vital representative statistical information on many aspects of the phenomenon, we should also employ sociological and ethnographic qualitative methods to help understand the ways in which the social fabric and culture of society shape school violence (Benbenishty & Astor, 2008). In-depth and detailed qualitative studies, such as the current study, could help identify the differences and similarities between the perspectives of school staff members, learners and parents regarding the role that collaborative efforts could play in preventing learner violence. The richness of such qualitative data could expand the repertoire of prevention strategies and help examine and develop theories of school violence. The findings of the current study underpin the international perspective that qualitative research can contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of school violence.

Since the Columbine High School shooting of 1999 in Littleton, Colorado, in the United States of America, numerous empirical research studies have been done worldwide. In the South African context, the School Safety Colloquium of 2006 resulted in various research studies being undertaken to explore the issue of school violence. These studies identified the lack of empirical evidence on all aspects related to school-based violence. Most of these domestic studies used a quantitative approach to establishing a statistical database to gauge the magnitude of school violence (see Burton, 2007, Leoschut & Burton, 2006). However, in conducting my own literature review over the past couple of years, I could find very few peer-reviewed local studies exploring the impact of family-school collaboration on school violence from a qualitative perspective. The qualitative findings of the current study should help address this gap in the knowledge base.

5.3.3 Practical significance

It is anticipated that the current study findings should inform both practice and policy. From a policy perspective, the study findings suggest that adolescent school violence is the result of multiple factors arising from multiple contexts. Consequently, schools should not be held solely responsible for effecting change. The current findings likewise suggest that prevention strategies should target and be implemented within multiple microsystems, such as the family, school, peer group and community to be most beneficial.

Narrowly focused policies that affect only a segment of young people's lives – such as the school – would have less impact than more broadly conceived policies and programmes that focus on families and neighbourhoods as well. Policy makers should also evaluate the existing societal and cultural perspectives on violence when designing their prevention strategies. This means violence prevention policies should be designed and implemented across all the microsystems that impact on the developing adolescents' lives, to promote positive development and prevent school-based learner violence effectively.

At school level, the findings of this exploratory and descriptive case study research should give school boards, principals, school staff members, learners and their families a better understanding of the important role that effective collaboration could play among all these stakeholders. They could find new and more meaningful ways to interact and establish positive, reciprocal and trusting relationships which should result in safe, caring, responsive and participatory school climates. This in turn could contribute to the positive development of all young people in their communities.

The implication is that policy and practice concerning the eradication of adolescent violence in school should focus on the schools' needs as well as the multiple microsystems in which these needs must be met – the families and communities. Establishing and promoting effective family-school collaboration should be central to all strategies and policies on preventing school-based violence.

5.4 POSSIBLE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The diverse nature of the type and levels of school-based learner violence make it impossible to assume that the contexts or participants in the current study are representative of all urban secondary schools. Furthermore, the nature of the family-school collaborative relationships at the two selected schools may not be typical of all the types and levels of existing practices at other urban secondary schools.

In addition, the participants in this study do not reflect the entire population of the school staff members, learners and parents at the two selected schools. As described in Chapter Three (Design and Methodology) of this study, I purposefully selected information-rich participants according to certain pre-determined criteria. Only those who volunteered were included in the study. The findings of this study are based on the analysis and synthesis of the perceptions of these participants only, and others who did not participate might have different perspectives.

I encountered practical and logistic issues regarding the time and availability of the participating learners and parents when planning to conduct the planned focus group sessions. To minimise the impact of these possible limitations, I conducted individual, dyad and triad interviews with the participating parents at both schools respectively, and group sessions with a class of Grade 9 learners at each of the two schools. I conducted three sessions over a two-week period with the learners of School One. However, at School Two the data collection was limited to a one-off session of an hour. As this was an exploratory and descriptive case study, I felt there was no need to return to the field for follow-ups. To accommodate the larger number of participants (N=22 and N=16) in these group interview sessions, I divided the groups into smaller groups of 4-6 learners by means of simple random sampling. This promoted good interactive discussions and made the moderation of these sessions easier.

The interpretative nature of qualitative research implies the subjective involvement of the researcher. Although I took great care to maintain my objectivity during both data collection and analysis, by being aware of my own worldview and personal preconceived notions (Yin, 2003), it is likely that my “lens”, grounded in the interpretative paradigm, may have coloured my interpretations.

Though I made every effort to establish the trustworthiness of the study's findings (see Chapter 3, Section 3.4: Quality Criteria) there remains a degree to which I cannot be absolutely sure that I have accomplished that. In spite of the possible limitations, I believe this study's findings do contribute to a better understanding of the important role of effective family-school collaboration in school violence prevention.

5.5 CRITICAL SELF-REFLECTION

For the past four years I have conditioned myself to be as objective as I can about this research project. Now that I have the opportunity to be more subjective, I do not know how to begin. So I did what I have been doing all along, I turned to research. As I was paging through one of my reference books, I came across the following description of qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln (1994). They state that qualitative research should be imagined as being a work of *bricolage*, and the researcher as *bricoleur*. The term "*bricolage*" is borrowed from the French word meaning "fiddle, tinker" and by extension, "make creative and resourceful use of whatever materials are at hand" (AbsoluteAstronomy.com, 2009, p.1). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) describe this as follows:

The product of the bricoleur's labour is a bricolage, a complex, dense, reflexive collage-like creation that represents the researcher's images, understanding, and interpretations of the world or phenomenon under analysis. This bricolage will connect the parts of the whole, stressing the meaningful relationships that operate in the situations and social worlds studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p.3).

They add that the *bricoleur* is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks, ranging from interviewing to observing to intensive self-reflection and introspection (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). From an introspective point of view, let me briefly tell you my personal experience of this research journey.

My personal history includes being trained as an educator. However, I pursued a career spanning 15 years as a TV director producing educational programmes. After being involved in this highly creative, exciting make-believe world, I got married, had two sons and then decided to return to my first passion, education. After 20 years of being "out in

the cold” as far as the academic world was concerned, I decided to start studying again. This brings me to the present, reflecting on this invaluable research journey.

The emphasis in interpretative analysis is on the reiterative nature of the process. Creswell (1998) describes it as the analytic spiral. I soon realised that the whole research process was an analytic spiral. Over this four-year journey, I kept challenging the work I had just completed, forever revising – always challenging what I had done with what I had learned. Sometimes it was frustrating but I came to trust my own sense of direction. After surviving the first year of attending classes and writing examinations, I started working with my study supervisor. She became my mentor, my harshest critic and most important, the stable influence in this sometimes erratic, frustrating but also rewarding journey. In times of self-doubt, she carried me to the next small triumphant moment. She was always reinforcing and motivating me to persevere.

Undertaking this journey gave me a great sense of accomplishment. I hope that all the amazing people who allowed me to be part of their lives for a short time and who so honestly and enthusiastically shared their opinions, feelings and knowledge with me, will benefit from the findings of this study. Adapting the words of Denzin and Lincoln (1994, p.3), I hope that this bricolage may “connect the parts of the whole, stressing the meaningful relationships that operate in the situations and social worlds” of your lives. Thank you.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

Grounding the current study in a sociological, interpretative paradigm and using a qualitative research approach, gave me the opportunity to explore the perceptions, opinions, views and suggestions of the participating school staff members, learners and parents about the collaborative nature of their school violence prevention strategies. The following recommendations and suggestions for implementation and future research efforts are based on these findings.

5.6.1 Recommendations for practice

The findings of the current study mirror the views of the existing empirical evidence, suggesting that effective school violence prevention programmes and strategies are

multifaceted and should be systematically implemented over a period of time. Key to the success is collaboration among policy makers, school staff members and educators, learners and their families, as well as society as a whole. The recommendations are therefore directed at the different social systems that form part of the school society.

5.6.1.1 Government and Department of Education

At the macro-level, political leaders ought to take a firm stand against all forms of violence and antisocial behaviour. As the participants stated, as long as young people perceive violence to be a normal part of their lives and are exposed to violence in their homes, schools and in the wider community, any attempt to make our schools safe will be futile. The Department of Education is in a unique and powerful position to initiate the changes needed at an education level to assist school staff members, learners and their families to work together in establishing safe schools and communities that will promote the positive development of our youth. The following are recommendations for the Department of Education.

Identify the nature and causes of school-based violence nationally: the Department should investigate the nature of and causes contributing to youth violence. To create violence prevention policies and programmes, the Department of Education should have a clear understanding of the nature and prevalence of school-based violence as well as the factors that could contribute to violent learner behaviour in secondary schools.

Advocate the integration of evidence-based prevention into social and education policies: the design of all violence prevention programmes and strategies should be based on theory and be empirically supported.

Increase collaboration and exchange of information on prevention strategies: the participants in the current study identified specific needs and made suggestions on how to address these needs. All such relevant information should be investigated to establish if it is applicable to schools on a national basis.

Pay attention to institutional readiness to implement system changes: the Department of Education should pay attention to institutional readiness and willingness

to implement changes. The Department should initiate collaboration among all the stakeholders.

The Department of Education should therefore provide the necessary leadership, training, support systems and avenues that could assist school management and school staff members, learners and their families to create safe, caring, participatory and responsive schools, situated in safe and caring communities.

5.6.1.2 Principals and School Management

Schools should become the hub of all efforts to create safe and caring communities. School Management and Principals are in a position to lead and implement changes to the school system. As empirical evidence illustrates, a key ingredient in quality schools is meaningful learner and family involvement. If the system of education, and specifically schools, is to be successful, every aspect of the system must function co-operatively with all the other parts. Principals and School Management should take a strong stand against any form of violence and should initiate the following strategies:

Evaluate the school's current climate: School Management should evaluate their school's current climate and the existing policies and strategies as these relate to promoting collaborative family-school partnership in their violence prevention strategies.

Identify and implement a framework promoting family-school collaboration: School Management should identify and implement a framework which would promote effective learner and family involvement. One such framework was developed by the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools (SEDL) (2005), drawn from a literature review consisting of more than 1 000 documents (see Ferguson, 2008, p. 22). This framework identified common characteristics and actions in all the effective programmes. By combining this framework with the suggestions made in the current study, School Management could design their own framework on the basis of the following characteristics and actions, as depicted in Table 5.1 overleaf.

Table 5.1 Family-school collaboration framework

The framework characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships among learners, families, and school staff members that foster mutual trust and collaboration • Recognition of families' needs and the class and cultural differences that encourage greater understanding and respect among all involved • Involvement of all stakeholders – learners, families and school staff members – in shared partnerships and mutual responsibility which supports the positive development of the young people concerned
Actions to be taken
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare all those involved – school staff members, learners and families – to support learning and participation in family-school partnerships which encourage meaningful engagement and connection to the school • Focus on creating safe and caring school environments and on the positive development of the learners • Advocate an inclusive education culture that involves all stakeholders in creating safe, caring, participatory and responsive schools

(Source: Ferguson, 2008, p. 22)

School Management and Principals should create the leadership and support systems that would enhance family-school collaboration in their violence prevention efforts.

5.6.1.3 School staff members and educators

The findings of the current study clearly indicate that neither the learners nor their families expect the school staff members to take over the parenting role. However, they look to the school staff members for guidance and support regarding their roles. For this reason, school staff members and educators should create ways for the learners and their parents to come on board and be full partners in creating safe and caring school environments. School staff members have to examine their own perceptions of and attitudes to involving the learners and their families.

Based on the study findings and the existing empirical evidence, enhancing family-school collaboration is key to promoting the positive development of the learners and their families that should result in safe and caring school environments. Establishing positive and caring school climates would help learners and their families feel more engaged and connected to the school. The following are suggestions that school staff members could use to promote family-school collaboration as part of their violence prevention strategies:

Establish positive and caring school climates: school staff members and educators should create welcoming school climates that foster family-school relationships which surpass context, culture and language (Ferguson, 2008). School staff members should create structures which would foster a culture of mutually respectful and reciprocal relationships with the learners and their families. A safe and caring school should not only have effective physical security measures but also a psychosocial school climate which promotes a feeling of connectedness between the school and the families. To create a supportive psychosocial school climate, school staff members and educators should evaluate their disciplinary policies, the existing opportunities for meaningful learner and family participation and effective classroom management. Learner and family support and participation are essential if schools want to establish safe physical school environments as well as positive and caring psychosocial school climates.

Identify the types and nature of school-based learner violence: to create safe and caring school environments, school staff members and educators should be knowledgeable about the types and nature of learner violence prevalent at their schools. As empirical evidence indicates, all schools have some form or level of aggressive or violent learner behaviour (see Khan & Burton, 2006). Schools cannot ignore or even worse, pretend that they do not experience learner aggression or violence at some level. As the current study and others have indicated, bullying seems to be prevalent at most schools. Schools should take a firm stand against any form of physical or emotional bullying behaviour because it affects the school climate and well being of everyone. All forms and levels of violent learner behaviour have to be eradicated. To gather the necessary information, schools could implement the following strategies:

- **Create a school violence prevention leadership team:** all stakeholders must be represented on this team, including School Management, school staff

members, parents, learners and school psychologists or social workers. Their task would be to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted programme to address all issues regarding creating a safe and caring school. They could conduct a needs assessment by means of a school-wide survey to obtain the necessary information on the type and nature of violence. The findings of the current study and others show that there are various factors which can either promote or prevent adolescents from behaving in an aggressive or violent way. This survey should be followed up by small-group discussions among the school staff members, educators, learners and their families to decide collaboratively on a plan of action to eradicate all forms and levels of violent behaviour as well as to make suggestions for more effective violence prevention strategies.

- **Develop a comprehensive school-wide plan to address and prevent bullying:** the participants in the current study as well as the existing empirical evidence indicate that bullying in various forms is prevalent at all secondary schools. Schools should not ignore this evidence and should implement effective programmes to prevent bullying by promoting a positive school-wide climate of mutual respect, caring and positive expectations.

To ensure that learners would report bullying and all other violence-related knowledge, schools should create responsible policies for addressing reports, ensure a school climate where everyone would feel comfortable about sharing information and encourage all learners to stop behaving like bystanders. School staff members, learners and families should all take responsibility for creating safe school environments (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 2008).

Collaboratively design and implement school-based violence prevention strategies: any changes to a system require the buy-in of all stakeholders. Learners and their families should take part in the decision-making, design and implementation of any violence prevention strategies or structures which schools want to employ. Involving the learners and their parents would also provide the school staff members with the additional knowledge, skills and resources they need for effectively implementing these strategies. School staff members and educators could include the following strategies in their violence prevention programmes:

- **Focus prevention strategies on the three P's – place, people and purpose:** empirical evidence indicates that effective violence prevention strategies focus on the place, the people and the purpose (Center for the Prevention of School Violence, 2000). Therefore, schools (place) should include the learners and their families (people) in their violence prevention strategies (purpose). The focus of these strategies should be on promoting the positive development of the learners, instead of merely focusing narrowly on intervening when a problem arises.
- **Implement long-term and comprehensive instructional programmes as part of the violence prevention strategies:** these instructional programmes should focus on the development of the young people's social-emotional learning (SEL) (see Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2003) as well as on promoting positive youth development (PYD) (see Silbereisen & Lerner, 2007). Young people need the knowledge and skills that would allow them to channel their emotions, frustrations and insecurities into positive outcomes.
- **Incorporate cultural competence in the violence prevention programmes:** any issues of culture must be addressed as part of any successful prevention strategy. Cultural diversity should become an asset to be enhanced, not to be perceived as a hindrance. School staff members and educators should evaluate the various norms and values of their different cultural families regarding parenting styles, parent involvement and appropriate learner behaviour. These issues have to be addressed in a culturally sensitive way.
- **Address family-related factors that can impact on learner behaviour:** as the findings of the current study and others indicate, what happens in the homes of young people may affect the way they behave at school. Therefore, school staff members and educators should adopt strategies to support the learners' families with establishing positive child-parent relationships and effective discipline structures, as well as ways to monitor and supervise their adolescent children.

School staff members and educators should employ comprehensive, developmentally focused, culturally appropriate and broadly applied prevention strategies involving all the learners and their families. The focus should be on protecting the physical safety of

the learners and staff members, and also on promoting the positive learning and social development of the young people.

Actively promote the family-school collaboration framework: as discussed in the previous section, School Management should establish a framework for establishing effective family connections with the school. Within this framework, school staff members and educators should take action to support effective family-school connections. The literature study synthesis by the National Center for Family and Community Connections with Schools identifies various characteristics and actions that can support effective school-family connections (see Ferguson, 2008, pp. 23-24). By combining these guidelines with the findings of the current study, school staff members could take the following steps to promote the implementation of the family-school collaboration framework as depicted in Table 5.2 overleaf.

Table 5.2 Implementation of the family-school collaboration framework

Implementation of the family-school collaboration framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sense of welcome: make all families feel valued and welcomed • Address misconceptions among all stakeholders: identify misconceptions and contextual barriers to family involvement • Tap into all resources: clearly define the roles that families could play and utilise their knowledge and skills • Adopt a systemic approach to structuring programmes: avoid isolated family involvement by systematically employing sustainable involvement • Give learners a voice: create channels and platforms for learners to air their opinions and to be actively involved in decision making and implementation • Act as positive role models: school staff members should model positive and non-violent behaviour • Employ life coaches for staff members: assist learners and families at a social-emotional level by providing trained psychologists as permanent staff members • Offer parent education programmes: create opportunities to educate and assist parents with building positive and supportive relationships with their children • Motivate learners to participate in extramural activities: adopt a holistic approach to educating the learners by supporting their participation in extramural activities • Establish safe and constructive after-care facilities: to support the families, provide the learners with supervised and quality after-care facilities

(Source: Ferguson, 2008, pp. 23-24)

As the findings of the current study and numerous others (see Burton, 2006, 2007, 2008; Leoschut & Burton, 2006) indicate, violence has become the norm in many adolescent learners' homes and communities. Moreover, many South African adolescents live under far from ideal family and community circumstances, therefore schools cannot ignore their social and moral responsibilities towards the learners and their families. Creating opportunities for the learners and their families to participate collaboratively in creating safe and caring schools and for school staff members and educators to reach out to these families and communities, should result in comprehensive, ongoing and systematic approaches to ensuring the healthy, safe and positive development of these young people and their families, to the benefit of South African society as a whole.



5.6.1.4 Parents and families

Capable and committed parents and families are the cornerstone of safe schools and communities (Duke, 2002). Schools need the support and participation of the learners and their families to provide safe and caring environments for their learners. Effective family-school collaboration is regarded not as an isolated set of activities but rather as an essential element of learner success which permeates every aspect of schooling and the positive development of young people (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001). Central to the collaborative approach is the development of supportive relationships between families and educators based on trust, two-way communication, respect and commitment (Adams & Christenson, 2000). Trusting and respectful relationships among school staff members and families appear to be the foundation of successful interventions to prevent violence (Minke, 2000).

The participants in the current study indicated that many families faced multiple challenges with unique sets of resources, skills, and preferences. Therefore, a “one-size-fits-all” approach to collaboration is unrealistic. However, all parents and families could and should participate meaningfully in their children’s education, according to their individual needs and preferences. Parents and families must be involved in all aspects of their adolescents' lives, especially in their education. Parents and families should pay attention to the following ways in which they could assist their adolescent children’s positive development.

Create safe and caring homes and communities: as the study findings have shown, schools do endeavour to create safe environments for their learners, yet many young people are exposed to violence in their homes and communities. Parents and family members should create safe and caring homes and communities for these young people. Parents should interact with other parents and create neighbourhood parent networks. The parents could come together and discuss ways of establishing safe communities. Parents ought to insist on knowing their children’s friends, their whereabouts and what activities they take part in after hours. Families should get to know the families of their adolescent children’s friends in order to build trusting and respectful relationships with them. The development of neighbourhood parent networks could support working parents in creating safe neighbourhood environments for the adolescents during the afternoons. Parents, family and community members ought to

model pro-social behaviour to promote the societal norms and values that prohibit violent behaviour. Together these adults could establish a community culture conducive to the safe and positive development of all young people.

Establish family involvement in adolescents' education: in the current study, the learners clearly expressed their desire for autonomy, independence and time with their peers but at the same time, they stated that they still needed and relied on the guidance from parents and other adults, such as school staff members (e.g. Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Unfortunately, family involvement in education seems to decrease in secondary school due in part to the adolescent's desire for autonomy and in part to changes in school structure and organisation. Yet family involvement remains a powerful predictor of various positive adolescent outcomes, such as academic achievement and good behavioural development (e.g. Harvard Family Research Project, 2007).

A large body of research supports the importance of family involvement in the positive development of adolescents (e.g. Harvard Family Research Project, 2007; Zarrett & Eccles, 2006). Parents and family members must however accommodate the developmental needs of these young people, and schools should support this relationship. Empirical evidence suggests various ways in which parents and family members could effectively build relationships with their adolescent children as well as being involved in their lives.

- **Parenting style:** parents' attitudes, values and practices regarding parenting their children, the quality of the parent-youth relationships and the ways parents monitor youth behaviour all influence adolescent achievement and development. Warm, trusting, responsive and supportive parenting is related to school success and positive social and emotional outcomes (e.g. Madara, 2006).
- **Family-youth relationships:** adolescent-parent relationships undergo significant transformation during adolescence. During adolescence, young people spend progressively less time with their parents and family and more time with their peers. Family relationships are transformed from more hierarchical relationships at the onset of adolescence to more egalitarian (equal rights) relationships by late adolescence. Establishing trusting and reciprocal parent-youth relationships is crucial before this change happens. Encouraging young people to talk about

how they experience the parent-child relationship could help parents understand how their adolescent perceive the roles they should play.

- **Parental monitoring:** parents should accommodate this transformation in their relationship with their adolescent child, but parental monitoring as a form of behavioural control is increasingly important in adolescence as it allows the parents to keep track of their adolescent's activities, peer associations and whereabouts, while permitting greater autonomy. Numerous studies indicate that inadequate parental monitoring is associated with externalising the adolescent's problems, such as drug use, truancy and antisocial behaviour (e.g. Steinberg & Silk, 2002). Greater parental monitoring is associated with higher academic achievement and better adolescent adjustment (e.g. Pettit, Laird, Dodge, Bates & Criss, 2001). Parents' monitoring of their adolescent's activities could prevent emerging problems from becoming serious and show their children that the parents are truly interested in their children's well being and care about them (e.g. Spera, 2005).
- **Promote and support participation in constructive after school activities:** the findings of the current study support the growing evidence that adolescents' participation in constructive leisure or after-school activities facilitates positive youth development (e.g. Morrissey & Werner-Wilson, 2005).

Establish trusting, reciprocal home-school relationships: though home-school relationships seem to wane during adolescence, parents and families should continue to seek formal and informal connections with their adolescents' schools. Effective home-school relationships could assist families in several ways. As the findings of the current study suggest, parental involvement or presence at school helps parents to obtain information and to monitor their adolescent's academic and social progress, as well as to foster positive relationships with the school staff members. Parents who are involved in their children's school also convey to the teachers and learners the parent's beliefs about the importance of education and appropriate behaviour. In particular, families of diverse backgrounds could make school staff members and educators aware of cultural and community issues, in this way assisting the schools to adopt more culturally effective and meaningful ways of reaching out to the learners and their families (e.g. Madara, 2006). The study findings indicate that the majority of parents want to be

involved in their children's lives and that adolescents need support and guidance from their parents and school staff members. Parents and families should work together with and support the school staff members and educators if they want to create safe and caring home, school and community environments conducive to the safe and positive development of these adolescent learners.

5.6.1.5 Adolescent learners

In the current study, the participating learners acknowledged that they were the ones who actually caused much of the violence at schools and that they would like to take responsibility for their actions but needed more opportunities to participate in the school's strategies for preventing violence. The current international thinking about school improvement is that a change should be made from the traditional method, where interventions tended to drive change from the outside into schools. Instead, there is a need to begin by getting close to the learners first (Mapp, 2004; Flutter, 2007).

Learners are the people who matter most in schools and they have unique knowledge about what is going on at school and how to address problems and issues related to learner behaviour and school safety effectively. However, the learners themselves ought to advocate their rights and should participate in decision making about collaborative strategies to prevent violence. The following suggestions could assist learners with becoming active partners in creating safe and caring school and community environments.

Actively participate and promote learner voice: the learner voice may be seen as nested inside the broader principle of learner participation, a term which includes strategies which offer learners opportunities for active involvement in decision making in their schools (Flutter, 2007). The basic premises of the "learner voice" is that learners should speak up and talk about their experiences as learners, and that school staff members and parents should listen and respond to what the learners have to say. This learner voice approach could be an important catalyst for establishing safe, caring and participatory school climates. The following are suggestions about what learners could do to promote a learner voice by creating their own avenues to be heard.

- **Actively participate and act as representatives:** learners should actively participate in existing school structures and advocate and initiate new opportunities to voice their opinions. They should stand for elections for class representatives and/or school councillors. If they feel that the existing system does not work, they should raise their concerns with the educator in charge.
- **Set up committees and initiate discussion groups:** action committees should be set up to consider particular issues of concern, such as learner behaviour, bullying and after-school facilities. Choose representatives to present the findings and to offer positive suggestions to the School Management.
- **Join peer support structures:** learners should start up or participate in peer support schemes, for instance by creating a “buddy system” or using a “bully box” where learners could lodge their distress and concerns. They could sign up to become peer tutors and speak up against any form of bullying.
- **Do not act as a bystander:** learners should report all knowledge of bullying or any other forms of violence. This would create a school atmosphere of care and support for peers and educators.
- **Support and participate in extramural activities and programmes:** learners could ensure their own safety in the afternoons by being actively involved in constructive after-school activities.

Acting in responsible and proactive ways would not only benefit the learners but also create opportunities for their families and school staff members to work together to support and participate actively in the lives of these young people.

Act as link between home and school: learners should play an active role in linking their parents and families to their schools. Adolescents in particular should talk to their parents and explain to them to what extent and how they want their parents to be involved in their lives. Similarly, they should talk to their educators about any family-related issues or problems so that the school staff members could assist them with addressing these problems. If learners show that they want to take responsibility for

their lives and future success, this would help their parents and school staff members to build mutually respectful and trusting relationships.

Active learner participation would contribute to establishing a school climate of collaboration and mutual trust and respect among the learners, school staff members and families. It would teach learners that responsibility goes hand in hand with rights. An ecological and systems approach would link prevention efforts with youth and their families to changes in the environment and systems. Change processes in the school system require the involvement of multiple change agents – such as youth, educators, parents, peers and school management. This is why learners ought to play an active role in designing and implementing violence prevention strategies as well as in promoting family-school partnerships.

5.6.2 Recommendations for future research

The purpose of the current study was to explore and describe how the school staff members at two urban secondary schools involved the learners and their families in their violence prevention strategies. The study therefore focused on the mesosystemic link between the school and home, and how the relationships among school staff members, learners and families influenced the collaborative nature of the selected schools' violence prevention strategies (e.g. Lawson, 2003). The findings of the current study suggest that effective strategies to reduce violent learner behaviour should address factors in the two key microsystems, namely the school and home, to promote more supportive social climates in schools, which should contribute to preventing school-based learner violence.

These findings, supported by a review of existing empirical evidence, hold important implications for future research into collaborative violence prevention policies, programmes and strategies. Based on the conclusions drawn from the analysis and synthesis of the study findings as these relate to the research questions, I make the following recommendations for future research in the field of school violence prevention.

5.6.2.1 School climate and connectedness: identify research-based guidelines

The findings of the current study and previous research suggest that schools should have safe, caring, participatory and responsive school climates to establish collaborative relationships among school staff members, learners and families. A growing body of research indicates that a positive school climate is a dimension critical to effective risk prevention and the positive development of young people (e.g. Cohen, 2001; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik & Elias, 2003).

However, there is little or no research on guiding school staff members and educators on ways of implementing important and sustained change. Attention should be given to monitoring the school environment and climate. The findings of the current study mirror the existing empirical evidence, suggesting that relationships are one of the fundamentally important dimensions of school climate and another is the degree of connectedness that learners, their families and school staff members feel with one another in school (e.g. Whitlock, 2006). I recommend the following research focus to explore this issue further:

Conduct research on school ecology and connectedness: connectedness is a powerful predictor for preventing violence (e.g. Karcher 2002a, 2002b) and as a protective factor against risky sexual, violent and drug use behaviour (e.g. Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002). More research should be done on identifying the factors that could promote school connectedness and on the way that the school ecology influences the extent to which school staff members, learners and families feel connected to one another. The findings of such studies could contribute to identifying research-based guidelines for promoting school connectedness. Promoting school connectedness should result in creating safe, supportive, responsive and participatory school climates conducive to collaborative violence prevention efforts.

5.6.2.2 Nature and prevalence of adolescent learner violence: create a comprehensive national database

In the *Report on School Based Violence* (2006) by the South African Human Research Committee (SAHRC), which synthesises the views expressed during the public hearing, one of the recommendations is that a nation-wide data system of the types and nature

of learner violence should be developed. Statistical data could be a highly effective tool for identifying how, where, when and by whom school-based violence occurs.

To address this need, the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) undertook the National School Violence Study (NSVS) that sought to provide some of the data necessary for informing policies and strategies. The main objective was to collect sound empirical data which would be representative of schools at national and provincial levels and which should provide insight into the real extent of violence in South African schools (see Burton, 2008, p. xi). The findings of the current study underscore these views and identify the need for more specific empirical data on the nature and prevalence of learner violence at secondary schools. Such data would assist schools with designing focused and effective prevention strategies. I recommend that the following research should be conducted to address this knowledge gap:

Create a central register of violence in schools: an important first step in promoting safe schools and effective violence prevention programmes is systematically documenting the existing programmes and policies as well as the empirical evidence on violence prevention, by creating a website that could be continuously updated with the findings of new research and evidence. Providing all the necessary and updated information in one convenient and accessible place would make such a website a valuable resource for researchers, policy makers, school staff members, families and learners and could further promote best practices in schools regarding the prevention of violence among adolescent learners.

Conduct nation-wide quantitative survey studies: these nation-wide quantitative survey studies should be based on a structured questionnaire to be designed by a scientific committee. This questionnaire should be administered at all urban and rural secondary schools throughout South Africa. Benbenishty and Astor (2008) state that the scientific literature indicates strongly that school violence has many forms and types; therefore they suggest that school violence studies should examine the prevalence of a wide range of concrete and specific types of victimisation, which should include at least the following groups of behaviours: verbal, social, indirect violence, physical, property-related, sexual and weapon-related aggressive acts.

The insights gained could be integrated into existing violence prevention strategies and be used to develop new initiatives. This national database should be available to all schools, research and government organisations to assist the development of effective violence prevention policies and strategies on a national basis. In addition, research efforts should be co-ordinated to minimise duplication and focus on developing empirically sound strategies for preventing violence that would meet the needs of various South African schools and communities.

5.6.2.3 School violence prevention: adopt a socio-ecological and developmental perspective

The findings of the current study support the existing empirical evidence that urges scholars and researchers on school violence to shift their focus from the individual characteristics of victims and perpetrators to an understanding of the way that the context in and outside the school impacts on school violence (e.g. Furlong & Morrison, 2000). Therefore, all these factors have to be taken into consideration to address violent adolescent behaviour at school and to design effective prevention strategies. I recommend that future research on the prevention of school violence should heed this call and that studies should focus on exploring and identifying the various environmental and societal factors that might have an impact on the way adolescent learners behave at school. Future studies could include the following:

Research on the factors that either promote (risk factors) or prevent (protective factors) adolescent learner violence: by taking a socio-ecological approach, researchers could examine how the external contexts in which a school is embedded interact with internal school characteristics and learner characteristics to influence the levels of learner violence in schools. The culture, norms and values of a country are reflected in the way its citizens view aggressive or violent behaviour. This in turn impacts on how families, school staff members and young people interact with one another. Multiple ecological factors also seem to influence the way that adolescents behave. Exploring and comparing these various risk factors and protective factors could contribute to designing more effective programmes that would promote the positive development of today's youth.

Explore and identify the specific developmental needs of adolescent learners:

empirical evidence also suggests that effective strategies for violence prevention are developmentally focused. To be effective, prevention strategies should be comprehensive, broadly applied and developmentally focused, and be implemented across multiple contexts, including the school, home and community. Identifying the specific developmental needs of today's South African adolescents could contribute to designing prevention strategies which would address these specific issues.

The findings of these studies should contribute to creating a better understanding of the relative influences of the school, family, community and society on violent adolescent behaviour at school.

5.6.2.4 Family-school collaboration: design empirically based frameworks

As the findings of the current study and numerous other studies have shown, schools bring together several interacting and equally important groups, namely the school staff members, learners and their families. Each of these groups has a unique perspective on what is happening at school, as well as what should be done to create safe and caring school environments. Furthermore, the similarities and differences between these perspectives may add important insights into strategies for promoting effective family-school collaboration which seems to be essential to addressing school-based learner violence effectively (e.g. Marachi, Astor & Benbenishty, 2007a, 2007b). Future research should investigate the following issues:

Conduct research on school violence prevention by including the perspectives of school staff members, learners and families: using a qualitative and exploratory case study design and involving multiple population units of analysis (school staff members, learners and parents) gave the participants of the current study the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions on ways of addressing school-based learner violence. More research should be done to explore these various perspectives. As suggested by the participants of the current study, the following areas should be further explored as they seem to influence the way that adolescents behave at school.

- **Learner voice and connectedness:** explore ways of promoting learner connectedness and learner voice in violence prevention strategies.

- **The role of extracurricular activities and after-care facilities in violence prevention:** examine the impact that supervised after-care facilities and participation in extracurricular activities could have on the positive development of adolescent learners.
- **Employing of full-time Life Coaches:** conduct feasibility studies on employing full time psychologists to act as Life Coaches at all secondary schools as part of the schools' violence prevention strategies.
- **Educator pre-service and in-service training:** examine and evaluate the existing educator pre-service and in-service training curricula to establish to what extent educators are trained in developing the social-emotional learning of learners and in promoting family-school collaborative partnerships.
- **Design empirically based family-school collaborative frameworks:** explore strategies to promote family-school collaboration and parent involvement as part of school-based violence prevention strategies. If adolescents are to become positive, responsible and caring members of society, they need the support and guidance of, and positive relationships with, the adults from both of the two most influential microsystems in their lives, namely their families and school staff members. Family-school collaboration founded on the developmental and relational realities and needs of adolescents could provide a solid framework for the families and school staff members to support one another's efforts to promote the safe and positive development of these young people.

The findings of these studies should contribute to developing research-based guidelines and models to promote family-school collaborative partnerships.

5.6.3 Synthesis of recommendations and implementations

Employing an ecosystemic perspective, the synthesis of the recommendations and implementations for practice and future research is graphically illustrated in Figure 5.1 overleaf.

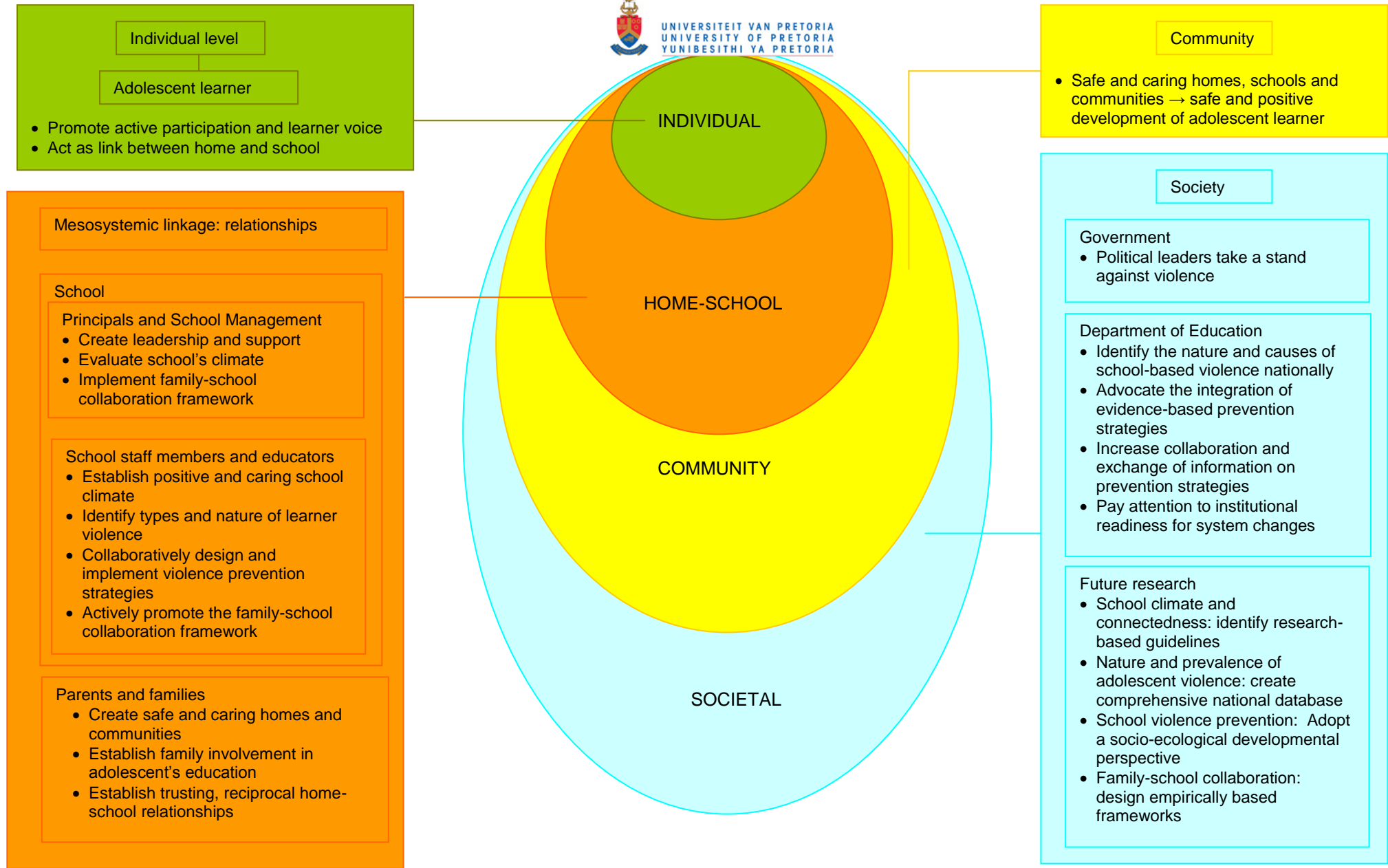


Figure 5.1 Synthesis of recommendations and implementation for practice and future research: an ecosystemic perspective

5.7 CONCLUSION

The findings of the current study suggest that family-school collaboration in school violence prevention strategies is especially important for families with adolescent children. Adolescents are entering a developmental period characterised by physical, cognitive, social and emotional changes. These changes require adolescents to navigate social and emotional choices, which could result in aggressive or violent behaviour. Helping adolescent learners deal with these choices while they try to succeed academically requires systematic collaboration among learners, families and schools (e.g. Beyer, Patrikakou & Weissberg, 2003).

Learners, however, ought to play active and participatory roles in these collaborative efforts to prevent violence. Giving learners a voice could assist adults with defining the role these young people should play in establishing and maintaining meaningful relationships between the families and school staff members. Their views, taken together with those of parents and educators, could lead to developmentally appropriate strategies for violence prevention and to meaningful family-school partnerships.

In summary, the findings of the current study and other empirical evidence (Adelman & Taylor, 2006, Burton, 2008) suggest that national and international concern about violence in schools provides opportunities for enhancing connections with learners, families and other neighbourhood resources. However, to promote collaboration, schools and policy makers should acknowledge the fact that school-based learner violence is a reflection of what is happening in many learners' homes and communities. Particularly in South Africa, too many learners regard violence as a fact of life. Schools and policy makers should embrace comprehensive and multifaceted school-wide and community-wide approaches to address violence. A key facet of addressing school-based learner violence is to develop models which could guide the implementation of productive family-school collaborative partnerships. School staff members, parents and, pivotally, the learners have to be active participants in this process.

In conclusion, the findings and recommendations of the current study, situated in the qualitative paradigm, may not necessarily apply to schools in general. Policy makers, school staff members, families and learners should evaluate for themselves the virtues

of these findings and recommendations, based on their own school and family contexts. They could select and adjust these suggestions to meet their own needs and settings.

My hope, however, is that policy makers, schools and families will use these research findings as a catalyst for developing supportive and reciprocal family-school partnerships so that all schools and communities can become safe, caring, supportive and participatory places which will promote the positive and successful development of all young South Africans. To conclude, as Sonia Nieto (2006, p. 9) suggests: “If we believe in the power of education in a democratic society to offer all students a chance to dream, that is the least we can do.”

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Appendix A1

Extract from School Prospectus: School One

1.1 School culture

Document: School Prospectus, 2009a

Motto: *“Rus in urbe”*

“Peace in the Community” (School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 2)

Vision: “To prepare learners to positively engage in our diverse and dynamic world.” (School Prospectus, 2009a, p. 2)

Mission:

- “To engage learners in Academic, Sporting and Cultural activities in a safe teaching and learning environment.
- To promote meaningful partnerships among all stakeholders.
- To manage the school’s resources effectively.
- To attract, develop and maintain competent educators.
- To instill positive values and equip learners with the skills to acquire knowledge.” (School Prospectus, 2009, p. 2)

Management and Admission:

Section 21 Co-ed English medium Public Secondary School

The premise for management and admission at (name omitted) School is based on:

- The South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996).
- The Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa Constitution Act 1996).
- Gauteng Department of Education Circular 29 of 2007 on admissions. (School Prospectus, 2009. p. 5)

And

3.2 CODE OF CONDUCT

The school rules:

ZERO TOLERANCE IN MAINTAINING GENERAL ORDER AND DISCIPLINE! (see Code of Conduct: Learners, 2009a, pp. 6-7)

Appendix A2

Extract from School Prospectus: School Two

Document: School Prospectus, 2009b

Motto: *“Alis Vola Propriis”*

“Spread your wings” (School Prospectus, 2009b, p. 2)

Vision:

The vision of the College is to send forth well informed, educated young men and women with a balanced outlook on life, conversant with modern technology, respectful of the rights of others and who, in all things, have an unquenchable thirst for excellence.

Traditional education is complimented by innovative teaching methods to enable the pupils to think independently, to communicate effectively and to have confidence in themselves.

Mission:

1. (Name omitted) College is an English medium, non-denominational, co-educational, community based school. Grounded on a traditional educational programme, innovative modern teaching methods are utilised.
2. The healthy, nurturing, attractive country ambience instills an awareness of and sensitivity towards both the community and the ecological environs.
3. Professional, dynamic, enthusiastic and committed staff nurtures each pupil as a whole person. High moral standards prevail through the encouragement of integrity, mutual respect, honesty, trust and self-discipline.
4. Pupils are recognized as individuals and taught to think creatively and critically, to analyse and explore situations, to arrive at informed opinions and to continually expand their own horizons. The development of self-confidence, understanding, tolerance and adaptation to change are fostered.
5. Pupils are challenged to fulfill their potential in academic, sporting, social, artistic and spiritual spheres within a culture of teamwork and mutual reliance (School Prospectus, 2009b, p. 2).

And

Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct is an essential document for the successful running of a school. It is based on democratic principles and fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination, non-violence, equity and participation.

Parents, Pupils and Educators are in a partnership to ensure that (name omitted) College is properly governed and that discipline is maintained.

The Code of Conduct is a set of rules, which regulates the conduct of pupils at the College. Good behaviour from pupils is expected in the classrooms, on the sports fields, on the College property and when representing the College. Pupils are representatives of (name omitted) College and as such should uphold the values of the College, i.e. honesty, courtesy and respect for themselves and others (see Code of Conduct, 2009b, p. 2).

Appendix B

Copies of letters granting permission to conduct research

B1: Letter from Gauteng Department of Education

B2: Principal letter – School One

B3: Principal letter – School Two

B4: Ethical clearance – Ethics Committee University of Pretoria

Appendix B1

Letter from Gauteng Department of Education



Appendix B2

Principal letter – School One



Appendix B3

Principal letter – School Two

Appendix B4

Ethical clearance – Ethics Committee University of Pretoria

Appendix C1

Interview Protocol

Semi-structured Interview Protocol: Principal

Introduction

Start by completing the participant's biographical information.

School climate and culture

1. How will you describe your school's overall school climate?
2. In your opinion what is the predominant school culture?
3. Tell me how you think the school's physical environment contributes to a safe learning environment?
4. What do you think can contribute to an unsafe learning environment? Give examples
5. How does the school staff promote parent involvement in the school?
6. How does the school promote communication and interaction with the learners and their parents? Give examples.
7. How does the school staff promote the diverse abilities and attributes of the learners?
8. In your opinion, how does the school climate impact on the behaviour of the learners?

School violence

9. How is school violence defined in your school? (in writing/ by way of understanding?)
10. How do you define school-based violence? Give examples.
11. In what ways do this school-based violence manifest at your school?
12. How often do you encounter any of these forms of violence? Give examples.
13. Why do you think some learners become aggressive or violent?

School violence prevention

14. What does your school do to prevent violence? Explain and give examples.
15. Who is involved in the violence prevention strategies?
16. How does the school relate these strategies to a) the school staff, b) the learners and c) the parents? Give examples.
17. How does the school educate and train a) the school staff, b) the learners and c) the parents in violence prevention strategies? Give examples.
18. How does the school monitor and evaluate the existing violence prevention strategies? Give examples.

Family-school collaboration

19. How does the school involve the parents in their violence prevention strategies?
20. What do you experience as factors that can act as barriers to family-school collaboration? Give examples.
21. What can the school do to build positive family-school partnerships? Give examples.
22. What role do you think learner involvement can play in preventing school-based violence? Give examples.
23. What role do you think family-school interaction can play in monitoring learner behaviour?

In conclusion

24. How do you personally deal with school-based violence?
25. What do you think the school can do to address and prevent learner violence?
26. Do you have any comments you wish to add to any of the issues we have discussed today?

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with me.

Appendix C2

Revised Interview Protocol

Research study: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools

Interview protocol

A) SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE:

1. How will you describe the school's overall climate and culture?
2. Tell me how you think the school's physical environment contributes to a safe learning environment?
3. What do you think can contribute to an unsafe learning environment? Give examples
4. In your opinion, how does the school climate impact on the behaviour of the learners?

B) SCHOOL VIOLENCE:

5. How is school violence defined in your school? (in writing/ understanding?)
6. In your opinion, what type of learner behaviour can be described as school violence?
7. In what ways does this school violence manifest at your school?
8. How often do you encounter any of these forms of violence? Give examples.
9. Why do you think some learners become aggressive or violent?

C) SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION:

10. What does your school do to prevent violence? Explain and give examples.
11. Who is involved in the violence prevention strategies?(Staff/learners/parents)
12. How does the school educate and train the school staff/learners/parents?
13. How does the school monitor and evaluate the existing violence prevention strategies? Give examples.

D) FAMILY – SCHOOL COLLABORATION:

14. How will you describe the concept “family-school collaboration”?
15. How does the school involve the parents in the school activities? In violence prevention strategies?
16. What do you experience as factors that can act as barriers to family-school collaboration? Give examples.
17. What can the school do to build positive family-school partnerships? Give examples.
18. What role do you think learner involvement can play in preventing school-based violence? Give examples.

E) IN CONCLUSION:

19. What do you think schools in general can do to prevent school violence?
20. Do you have any comments you wish to add to any of the issues we have discussed today?

Thank you for sharing your time and expertise with me.

Appendix D1

Informed Consent Form: School Staff

School Staff Informed Consent Letter to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Mrs. / Mr.

I am presently studying for my Master's degree in Adult and Community Education and Training at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor is Dr CJ Gerda Bender. As part of my studies I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research is: ***An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.***

You are invited to participate in this research study. The **purpose of this research** is to explore, describe and gain a better understanding of how the school staff collaborates with the learners and their families in addressing and preventing adolescent learners' violent behaviour at school. Your participation will involve the following:

- **An individual, in-depth interview session**

You are invited to participate in an in-depth, semi-structured interview where we will discuss issues regarding the collaborative efforts in school violence prevention. With your permission I will tape-record these sessions. The tape-recorded interview will be transcribed verbatim and you will receive a transcript to review and comment on. I need approximately one hour of your time, which we can schedule at a time and venue at your school that is most convenient to you.

Risks and Discomforts

I do not foresee any risks associated with your participation in this study. However, if you share sensitive information that may distress you we can stop at any time with that line of questioning.

Potential Benefits and Incentives

Your participation in this research can contribute to identifying ways in which families can assist the school in their violence prevention efforts. You will not receive any financial incentive for your participation.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in the study is totally **voluntary**. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Research is under the auspice of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. **Neither the school nor your name will be mentioned during or on completion of the study.**

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Name: Annemarie Emslie Cell: 0832668266 Email: emslie.a @ absamail.co.za

School Staff Consent

I have read this consent form and was given the opportunity to ask questions.

I, (full name and surname) consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature:..... Date:.....

Researcher's signature:..... Date:.....

Thank you for your kind cooperation. You will receive a copy of this consent form.



Appendix D1.1

Biographic Detail: School Staff

School One (MH)

Portfolio	Academic Qualifications	Years at School	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Other
Principal	BA(HDE) ACE(ML)	15	F	53	White	Married	SGB SAPA
Deputy Head: Discipline Safety & Security	BA(HDE) Further diploma	9	M	43	White	Married	SGB Sub- Committee: safety & security
Gr 9 Grade Controller Afrikaans	BA Communication Post Graduate Teaching Education	6	F	30	White	Married	
HOD: LO	BEd (Arts) Dipl in Assessment	3	F	34	African	Married	
Educator LO	MEd in Educational Psychology BEd in Edu Phy BEd in Management HED Bachelor of Arts (BG)	2	F	34	African	Single	

School Two (BC)

Portfolio	Academic Qualifications	Years at School	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Other
Principal	BA (HONS) HDE	4	M	52	White	Married	
Gr 12 Tutor HOD Sport Gr 9 Controller	B.Phys Ed Geography Major Phys Ed Major	7	M	37	White	Married	
HOD Art	MA Fine Arts	9	F	51	White	Single	
Deputy Head: Pupil Matters	H Dip Ed	7,5	M	43	White	Married	
HOD Business Studies Grade 9 Grade Tutor Head of Cultural	Bed HONS	6	F	32	White	Married	

Appendix D1.2

Extract from Transcribed Interview

TUESDAY – 17th June 2008 – INTERVIEW WITH BC

A. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

MRS EMSLIE : Good afternoon BC (name omitted) and thank you for granting me this interview.

BC : It is a pleasure.

MRS EMSLIE : Now in general how would you describe your school's climate?

BC : With particular regard to violence, I think I think that we are really very fortunate, very well off. We are a school, which is small so that all our children are well known to staff as well as to me. We are secure, we have palisade fencing, electric gates, we have a guard who is on twenty-four hour duty and we have access control to the school. All of those things add I think to the overall security of the school but obviously it is something that you cannot become complacent about and I know that as a new headmaster in Johannesburg, coming from the Midlands, it was something that I needed to be educated in.

MRS EMSLIE : And then your school culture, what do you strive for at the school in general?

BC : It is a good question because I think that one of the things that we have always prided ourselves in is just the whole business of traditional values along with innovative teaching and we have a uniform, we have a respect for and a pride in our new school. It is community-based so not only are the children known to us, as members of staff, but many of the families know each other so that adds a great deal to the sense of security within the school. I think that the kind of culture that I like to bring about in the school is one where we move in adolescence from position where rules are imposed on you, which is obviously the area in early adolescence, and grades 8's and 9's come into the school and learn the ropes and are answerable to councilors and a slightly stricter mentoring kind of regime and as you progress through the school to move towards greater and greater self-discipline. Ultimately as (left out to protect privacy) I want to inculcate in our children a sense of doing the right thing because it is the right thing, not because someone – some slave driver is standing over you trying to enforce rules and by and large we have some success with that.

MRS EMSLIE : And how do you communicate that to the learner?

BC: There are/..

Appendix D2

Informed Consent Form: Learners

Learner Informed Consent Form to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Learner

I am presently studying for my Master's degree in Adult and Community Education and Training at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor is Dr CJ Gerda Bender. As part of my studies I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research is: ***An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.***

You are invited to participate in this research study. The **purpose of this research** is to explore, describe and gain a better understanding of how the school staff collaborates with the learners and their families in addressing and preventing adolescent learners' violent behaviour at school. Your participation will involve the following:

- **Focus group interview sessions**

You are invited to participate in focus group sessions involving Grade 9 learners. During these sessions we will discuss issues regarding the collaborative nature of the school violence prevention efforts at your school. These sessions will be conducted during Life Orientation periods at your school. With your permission these sessions will be tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and you will receive a transcript to review and comment on.

Risks and Discomforts

I do not foresee any risks associated with your participation. However, if during the course of our discussions you share sensitive information that may distress you we can stop at any time and discontinue that line of questioning.

Potential Benefits and Incentives

Your participation can contribute to identifying ways in which families can assist the school in their violence prevention efforts. You will not receive any financial incentive for participating.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in the study is totally **voluntary**. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Research is under the auspice of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. **Neither the school nor your name will be mentioned during or on completion of the study.**

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Name: Annemarie Emslie Cell: 0832668266 Email: emslie.a @ absamail.co.za

Learner Consent

I have read this consent form and was given the opportunity to ask questions.

I,..... (full name and surname) consent to participate in this study.

Learner's signature:..... **Date:**.....

Researcher's signature:..... **Date:**.....

Thank you for your kind cooperation. You will receive a copy of this consent form.

Appendix D2.1

Parental Informed Consent Form: Participation of child in study

Dear Parent

I am presently studying for my Master's degree in Adult and Community Education and Training at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor is Dr CJ Gerda Bender. As part of my studies I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research is: ***An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.***

Your child has been invited to participate in this research study. The **purpose of this research** is to explore, describe and gain a better understanding of how the school staff collaborates with the learners and their families in addressing and preventing adolescent learners' violent behaviour at school. Your child's participation will involve the following:

- **Focus group interview sessions**

Your child has volunteered to participate in focus group sessions involving grade 9 learners. During these sessions we will discuss issues regarding the collaborative nature of school violence prevention at the school. These sessions will be conducted during Life Orientation periods at school. With your permission these sessions will be tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and your child will receive a transcript to review and comment on.

Risks and Discomforts

I do not foresee any risks associated with your child's participation. However, if during the course of our discussions your child shares sensitive information that may distress him/her we will discontinue that line of questioning.

Potential Benefits and Incentives

Your child's participation can contribute to identifying ways in which the families can assist the school in their violence prevention strategies. Neither you nor your child will receive any financial incentive for participating in the study.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in the study is totally **voluntary**. You may refuse to allow your child to participate or withdraw your child from the study at any time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Research is under the auspice of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. **Neither the school nor your child's name will be mentioned during or on completion of the study.**

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Name: Annemarie Emslie Cell: 0832668266 Email: emslie.a @ absamail.co.za

Parental Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions.

I give permission for my child (full name and surname) to participate.

Parent's signature:..... Date:.....

Researcher's signature:..... Date:.....

Thank you for your kind cooperation. You will receive a copy of this consent form.



Appendix D2.2

Summary of Learner Profile

SUMMARY OF LEARNER PROFILE				
School One (MH)				
Number of participants	:	22		
Average Age	:	15		
Gender	:	Male	:	9 (41%)
		Female	:	13 (59%)
Ethnicity	:	Black	:	20 (91%)
		Indian	:	2 (9%)
		White	:	0
		Coloured	:	0
Average years at school	:	2		
Marital status of parents	:	Married	:	14 (64%)
		Single	:	4 (18%)
		Divorced	:	2 (9%)
		Widowed	:	1 (4.5%)
		Remarried	:	1 (4.5%)
School Two (BC)				
Number of participants	:	16		
Average Age	:	15		
Gender	:	Male	:	8 (50%)
		Female	:	8 (50%)
Ethnicity	:	White	:	9 (56%)
		Black	:	7 (44%)
		Indian	:	0
		Coloured	:	0
Average years at school	:	2		
Marital status of parents	:	Married	:	13 (81%)
		Divorced	:	3 (19%)

Appendix D2.3

Sampling Process: Simple Random Sampling – School One: Learners

(A similar process was followed with the learners of School Two)

N = 31

n = 22

Start: Row E, Column 3

(PLEASE NOTE: Only 22 of the 31 learners consented to participate in the group sessions recordings. Only those learners that returned their signed indemnity forms participated. Those in brackets did not participate).

School One: Grade 9 Learner Focus Group

(Names of learners omitted for confidentiality)

Group A		
Name	Pseudonym	No
X	A1	31
M	A2	06
M	A3	18
N	A4	23
(A		01)
V	A5	30
M	A6	16
(n=6)		

Group B		
Name	Pseudonym	No
(N		22)
(M		17)
N	B1	20
R	B2	26
N	B3	24
K	B4	04
(N		21)
P	B5	25
(M		12)
N	B6	19
(n=6)		

Group C		
Name	Pseudonym	No
M	C1	10
M	C2	07
(S		29)
M	C3	15
(M		13)
G	C4	02
M	C5	09
(n=5)		

Group D		
Name	Pseudonym	No
M	D1	08
(S		27)
S	D2	28
K	D3	03
(L		05)
M	D4	11
M	D5	14
(n=5)		



Appendix D2.3.1

Random Number Table

(Source: Fisher, R.A., & Yates, F. (1974) *Statistical Tables for Biological, Agricultural and Medical Research* (6th Ed.)
Table XXX11. London: Longman Group.



Appendix D2.3.2

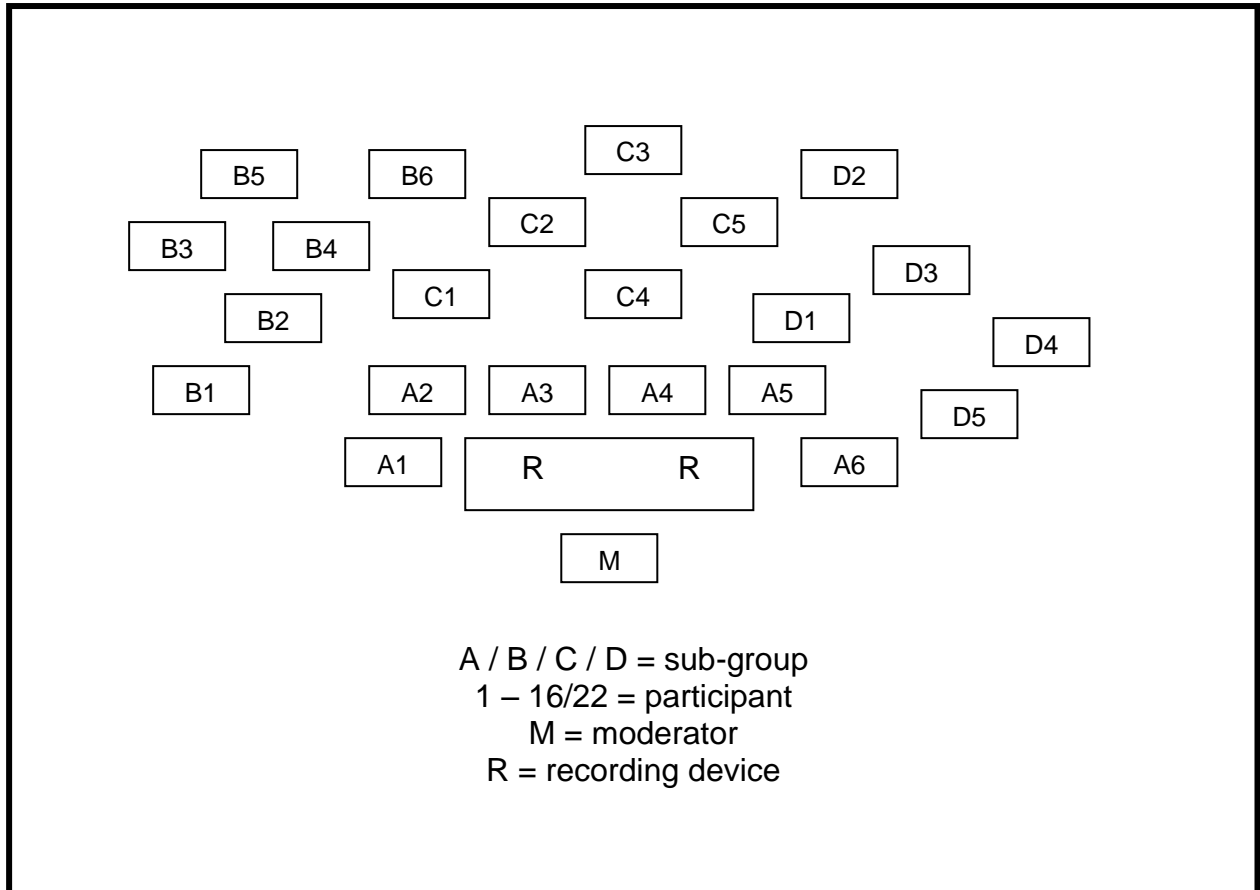
Class List: School One – Grade 9 learners

(Name omitted) High School		
Educator: 042	Name: (omitted)	Grade 9
Admin No	Surname	Gender
1	A	F
2	G	F
3	K	M
4	K	M
5	L	F
6	M	F
7	M	F
8	M	F
9	M	F
10	M	M
11	M	F
12	M	F
13	M	F
14	M	M
15	M	F
16	M	F
17	M	F
18	M	F
19	N	M
20	N	F
21	N	F
22	N	F
23	N	F
24	N	M
25	P	M
26	R	M
27	S	F
28	S	F
29	S	F
30	V	M
31	X	F

Total learners in the class: 31

Appendix D2.4

Grade 9 Learners Focused Group Interviews: Classroom Seating Arrangements





Appendix D3

Informed Consent Form: Parents

(School Logo omitted)

(Name of School) HIGH SCHOOL

P O Box (...), HALFWAY HOUSE, 1685

Telephone: (011) Fax: (011)

Principal: Mrs

Request for Parents to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Mr. /Mrs.....

I am presently studying for my Master's degree in Adult and Community Education and Training at the University of Pretoria. My supervisor is Dr CJ Gerda Bender. As part of my studies I am required to conduct a research project. The title of my research is: ***An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.*** You are invited to participate in this research study. The **purpose of this research** is to explore, describe and gain a better understanding of how the school staff collaborates with the learners and their families in addressing and preventing adolescent learners' violent behaviour at school. Your participation will involve the following:

- **Focus group sessions**

You are invited to participate in a focus group, consisting of parents of Grade 9 learners at Midrand High School. During these sessions we will discuss issues regarding the collaborative nature of school violence prevention efforts. We will meet on three different occasions for approximately one hour each time. We will schedule these sessions at a time and venue at the school that is most convenient to all. With your permission these sessions will be tape-recorded, transcribed verbatim and you will receive a transcript to review and comment on.

I am currently busy interviewing members of the school staff as well as conducting focus group sessions with Grade 9 learners during Life Orientation periods. **I feel it is extremely important to also talk to you, the parents of these learners, to obtain input from all the stakeholders at the school.**

Risks and Discomforts

I do not foresee any risks associated with your participation. However, if during the course of our discussions you share sensitive information that may distress you we can stop at any time and discontinue that line of questioning.

Potential Benefits and Incentives

Your participation in this research can contribute to identifying ways in which families can assist the school in their violence prevention strategies. You will not receive any financial incentive for your participation.

Voluntary Participation

Taking part in the study is totally **voluntary**. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

The Research is under the auspice of the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria. All information collected will be kept strictly confidential. **Neither the school nor your name will be mentioned during or on completion of the study.**



If you would like to volunteer to participate in these Focus Group sessions please complete the form and send it back to Mr. (Name omitted): Deputy Head, (Name omitted) High School by Wednesday 13 August 2008.

I will then contact you telephonically to arrange a time and venue most suitable to all.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Annie Emslie

Cell: 0832668266

Email: emslie.a @ absamail.co.za

REPLY SLIP

Parents of Grade 9 learners: (Name omitted) School – Focus Group

I would like to volunteer to participate in the Focus Group sessions.

Parent full name and surname :.....(Print)

Child's Name:Grade 9.2 or 9.3 (Circle appropriate class)

Parent contact numbers:

Cell:.....

Home:.....

Work:.....

Parent's signature:.....Date:.....

Please hand in Reply Slip at Front Office for attention: Mr. (Name omitted)
Deputy Head
(Name omitted) High School

Thank you for your time. I am looking forward to meeting with you.



Appendix D3.1

Biographical Detail: Parents

School One (MH)

Profession	Academic Qualifications	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Children at School	Position at School
Director	Masters Degree	M	45	Black	Married	1 M	Parent: Convenor of Safety & Security SGB
Housewife	Gr 12	F	35	Indian	Married	1 F	Gr 9 Parent
Electronic Engineer	Electronics Dip	M	42	White	Divorced	1 M	Gr 9 Parent
Retired	Not specified	M	66	White	Married	1 F	Parent SGB
Instructor	Not specified	F	52	White	Married	1 F	Parent
Solution Developer	Not specified	F	34	White	Separated	1 F	Gr 9 parent SGB

School Two (BC)

Profession	Academic Qualifications	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Marital Status	Children at School	Position at school
Medical Doctor	MBBCH DTM & H	F	48	White	Married	1	Gr 9 parent
Educator Primary School	H Dip Ed (JP)	F	43	White	Divorced	4	Member of Parent Forum
Office Manager	Gr 12	F	46	White	Married	1	Member of PTF
Registered Nurse	Dip in Clinical Nursing	F	53	White	Married	1	Chair Parents Forum
Shop owner	THED	F	44	White	Married	1	Gr 9 parent
Shop owner	Not specified	M	57	White	Married	1	Chair B of G Gr 9 parent

Appendix E

Fieldwork: Time Management

School One (MH)

Interview Type	Participant	Date
Individual Pilot Interview	Principal	09 June 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff MJ	10 June 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff MH	31 July 2008
Dyad Interview	School Staff: MKa & MKb	15 August 2008
Group Sessions	Grade 9 Learners	01 August 2008 05 August 2008 08 August 2008
Triad Interview	Parents: MH; MG; MS	20 September 2008
Individual Interview	Parent: MR	21 October 2008
Individual Interview	Parents: MJ	07 November 2008
Dyad (Pair) Interview	Parents: MD & Md	10 November 2008

School Two (BC)

Interview Type	Participant	Date
Individual Pilot Interview	Principal	17 June 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff BB	16 September 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff BKa	16 September 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff: BKb	16 September 2008
Individual Interview	School Staff: BR	29 October 2008
Group Session	Grade 9 Learners	22 September 2008
Triad Group Interview	Parents: BN; BM & BMA	24 September 2008
Individual Interview	Parent: BP	29 September 2008
Dyad (Pair) Interview	Parents: BT & BG	29 October 2008

Appendix F

Extract from Field Notes

Date:	5 August 2008
Venue:	School One Life Orientation Class
Participants:	Grade 9 Learners
Format:	Group interview
Session:	Second
Duration:	19.57 minutes

Remarks:

Very lively discussion. RCL's seem to be real issue with learners. Kept referring back to RCL's. Great interaction and debating. Good session.

Interesting findings:

- Learners want their parents to be more supportive and involved in their school life
- Learners find it difficult to communicate with parents and some of school staff
- Learners want more opportunities to socialize....school must organize more social activities...want to get to know one another better
- Want to have more of a say re school rules...they feel they are the ones that cause the problems and violence...need safe channels to report knowledge of illegal activities...do not trust all their teachers
- Need a role model...adult they can trust to give them guidance and advise... someone like a Life Coach.

Implications:

Probe more in follow-ups with other participants:

- parent involvement
- Socializing
- Safe reporting mechanism for learners
- Life Coach

Appendix G

Extract from Document Review Worksheet

School One	School Two
Document 1: School Prospectus, 2009a	Document 1: School Prospectus, 2009b
Theme 1: School Climate & Culture Category 1.1 Culture	Theme 1: School Climate & Culture Category 1.1 Culture
<p>Motto: “<i>Rus in urbe</i>” “<i>Peace in the Community</i>” (p.2)</p> <p>Vision: “<i>To prepare learners to positively engage in our diverse and dynamic world</i>” (p.2)</p> <p>Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>To engage learners in Academic, Sporting and Cultural activities in a safe teaching and learning environment</i>” • <i>To promote meaningful partnerships among all stakeholders</i> • <i>To manage the school’s resources effectively</i> • <i>To attract, develop and maintain competent educators</i> • <i>To instill positive values and equip learners with the skills to acquire knowledge</i>” (p.2) <p>Management and Admission: Section 21 Co-ed English medium Public Secondary School (p.5)</p>	<p>Motto: “<i>Alis Vola Propriis</i>” “<i>Spread your wings</i>” (p.2)</p> <p>Vision: “<i>The vision of the College is to send forth well informed, educated young men and women with a balanced outlook on life, conversant with modern technology, respectful of the rights of others and who, in all things, have an unquenchable thirst for excellence</i>”</p> <p>Mission:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “(Name omitted) <i>College is an English medium, non-denominational, co-educational, community based school. Grounded on a traditional educational programme, innovative modern teaching methods are utilised.</i>” • <i>The healthy, nurturing, attractive country ambience instills an awareness of and sensitivity towards both the community and the ecological environs.</i> • <i>Professional, dynamic, enthusiastic and committed staff nurtures each pupil as a whole person. High moral standards prevail through the encouragement of integrity, mutual respect, honesty, trust and self-discipline</i>” (p.2)
Category 1.4 School Safety	Category 1.4 School Safety
“(Name omitted) <i>School has adopted a policy of zero tolerance. This is related to all aspects of discipline and behaviour of the learners. Parents are requested to ensure that their children obey the rules of the school as contained in the Prospectus and the Code of Conduct</i> ” (p.9)	“ <i>A Code of Conduct is an essential document for the successful running of a school. It is based on democratic principles and fundamental rights, such as non-discrimination, non-violence, equity and participation. Parents, Pupils and Educators are in a partnership to ensure (name omitted) College is properly governed and that discipline is maintained.</i> ” (p.2)

Appendix H1

Extract from Coded Interview Transcript

17 JUNE 2008

INTERVIEW WITH RESPONDENT: BC

A. SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CULTURE

INTERVIEWER:

Good afternoon BC (name omitted), and thank you for granting me this interview.

RESPONDENT: BC:

It is a pleasure.

INTERVIEWER:

Now in general how would you describe your school's climate?

RESPONDENT: BC:

With particular regard to violence, I think I think that we are really very fortunate, very well off. We are a school, which is small so that all our children are well known to staff as well as to myself. We are secure, we have palisade fencing, electric gates, we have a guard who is on twenty-four hour duty and we have access control to the school. All of those things add I think to the overall security of the school but obviously it is something that you cannot become complacent about and I know that as a new headmaster in Johannesburg, coming from the Midlands, it was something that I needed to be educated in.

BC1	School climate: regarding violence-very fortunate
BC2	School climate: small school: learners known to staff
BC3	School climate: security good-palisade fencing: electric gates: 24 hour guard: access control
BC4	Security mechanisms: add to overall security: not become complacent



INTERVIEWER:

And then your school culture, what do you strive for at the school in general?

RESPONDENT: BC:

It is a good question because I think that one of the things that we have always prided ourselves in is just the whole business of traditional values along with innovative teaching and we have a uniform, we have a respect for and a pride in our new school. It is community-based so not only are the children known to us, as members of staff, but many of the families know each other so that adds a great deal to the sense of security within the school. I think that the kind of culture that I like to bring about in the school is one where we move in adolescence from position where rules are imposed on you, which is obviously the area in early adolescence, and grades 8's and 9's come into the school and learn the ropes and are answerable to councillors and a slightly stricter mentoring kind of regime and as you progress through the school to move towards greater and greater self-discipline. Ultimately as Headmaster I want to inculcate in our children a sense of doing the right thing because it is the right thing, not because someone – some slave driver is standing over you trying to enforce rules and by and large we have some success with that.

- BC5 School culture: traditional values; innovative teaching; uniform; respect for & pride in school
- BC6 School culture: community-based school
- BC7 Community-based school: families know each other-adds to sense of security
- BC8 School culture: in early adolescence-answerable to councillors; stricter monitoring
- BC9 School culture: older adolescents-greater self-discipline
- BC10 School culture: Head inculcate in children-self-discipline not enforce rules



Appendix H2

Example of Theme Chart

Category 4.1: Parent involvement									
School Staff		Grade 9 Learners		Parents					
BC165	:	Head interview with new parents	B33D2	:	not want parent involvement-need to learn to become independent	BPN44	:	school very pro the triangle-pupil, parent & school	
BC166	:	Head-parent interview-discuss child's involvement/relationship between pupil, parent & staff	B34D2 B35D2	:	parents' job-to support activities child's right to solve own problems	BPN45	:	lost of times part of triangle missing	
BC167	:	parent-teacher relationship-depend on one another for child's success			<p>"No, because I think they interfere a lot and we – it is our education and our learning and our sport that we do at the school so I think we should be able to make the decisions ourselves with the teachers and the people involved in it, not – I mean our parents have their own work and stuff to deal with and we should learn to be independent.</p> <p>INTERVIEWER: And what about supporting some sports activities or cultural things? D2: Yes, like supporting it, like coming to watch the school plays and stuff, that is fine, because that is the parents job really and yes, but to like come in when there is a fight and stuff – if a child causes a fight with another person it is the child and the other child's right to solve it." (Interview BD2, p. 29)</p> <p>parents involved-child not learn to be independent</p>	BPN46	:	communication between teachers & parents and bringing child in=excellent	
BC168	:	communication key to parent-teacher relationship							<p>"I think for me the school is very much wanting the parents to be part of things that happen to the child, it is not a case of what happens at home is at home, what happens at school is at school, I think they are very pro the whole triangle of the pupil, the parent and the school, and that the triangle does not function effectively if one of those partners are not engaged in that. I think that is the ideal, I think obviously there are a lot of times that part of that triangle is missing whether the child is disengaged or whether the parents are kind of abdicating their roles to an extent for the school to take over, but I think on the whole that is what they are wanting and I find the communication between teachers and parents and then bringing the child in, in my experience has been excellent." (Interview BPN, p. 22)</p>
BC175	:	success of parent involvement is their willingness to hear other peoples point of view							
BC176	:	matter of real concern-bring parents into discuss issue re drinking incident, with them							
BC188	:	lots of parents who are happily involved with their children							
BC189	:	parents establish really good rapport with the school							
BC190	:	involvement of Dads on PTF/Board							
BC191	:	nice balance between involvement of moms and dads							
BC192	:	absenteeism of dads not problematic							
BB88	:	parent support at sport-50%	B36D4	:					
BB89	:	first team level-more parent support							
BKa58	:	informal communication with teacher next to sports field							
BKa59	:	parent support-varies depending on activity							
BKa60	:	parent evening attendance-80-90%			<p>"This is actually a two-way street, in my mind, my set mind tell me yes, in some aspects parents should be involved to a certain extent, not to say that they must be involved in every single little thing that happens because then that does not grow us as people but again they should be involved because that is how a relationship with the school works. It is the parents, the child and the schoolteacher or the school colleagues; it is also that to a certain extent not to say every single little thing must revolve around that as well." (Interview BA4, p. 31)</p>				
BKa61	:	sports attendances-working-difficult							
BKa62	:	Saturday sport attendance-50-60%							
BKa63	:	evening functions 40-50%							
BKa64	:	generally very good parent support base				BPM50	:	school would appreciate more parent involvement	
BKa67	:	majority of parents want to be involved				BPN81	:	teenager wants independence but like knowing parent there for backup	
BKb47	:	big financial investment-parents extremely committed				BPP15	:	school tries to involve parents-work as a team	
BKb51	:	learners not think parent involvement cool but want them involved				BPP21	:	parents hover in background	
	:					BPP22	:	low % of parents actively involved	
BKb52	:	not a forum for parent involvement-school needs to do more	B37A4 B38A4	:	parent should be involved to certain extent-two way street need parent involvement to build relationship with school	BPP24	:	more involved parents-teachers get to know them better-not only when there is problem	
BKb53	:	much more socialising at Prep school-apatetic in High school	B39A4	:	parent-school relationship-need parent, child & teacher	BPT10	:	brilliant grounding at prep school-have been together for 8 years-know each other	
BKb54	:	PTF-very few parents willing to serve	B40B1	:	teachers need to keep balance re involving parents				



Category 4.1: Parent Involvement (Continued)									
School Staff			Grade 9 Learners			Parents			
BR60	:	family-school collaboration-essential to keep parents in loop re happenings			"M'am I think parents should not be involved because some teachers take it like too far and then they turn - like if you do something wrong then they go right to your parents and tell your parents that you have not done this and that and then you will not get a chance to prove yourself like to the teacher that you can do things by yourself." (Interview BB1, p. 31)	BPT24	:	school communication via email/sms	
BR61	:	essential school inform parents re changes/up coming events/structures				BPG25	:	every Friday-electronic newsletter & weekly planner	
BR62	:	essential-1 on 1 meeting with parents				BPG26	:	open door policy to see teachers-email or phone for appointment	
BR63	:	essential parents come together as forum within school				BPT29	:	parents need to structure their lives to make time for their children	
BR64	:	school-parent connection-essential: informed parent/school is equipped parent/school	B41C1	:	parents can make situation worse-subjective-teacher thinks less of child	BPG40	:	small school-parents know one another	
			B42B3	:	parents should be involved when their children ask them to be	BPG41	:	socialise a lot with parents from school-become family friends	
BR65	:	teenagers do not walk-important school informs parents							
			B43A2	:	parents need to realise and understand the teenage phase	BPT42	:	most friends made at Prep school-now together at College	
BR74	:	good network-know each other fairly well			"I think that every child goes through a phase where they do not want their parents to be involved and they do not want to tell their parents and I think that our parents having gone through phases where we want them to know everything are not used to us not telling them everything and then they try to get involved and that just forces us to push them more away and then we no longer want them to know anything and the phase carries on for longer than it should." (Interview BA2, p. 36)			"And to be quite honest, perfectly honest, we have taken the decision and not out loud or anything but we could make more money if we spent all our time or more time on the business but as a lifestyle of being able to watch-you know nothing can replace being able to go and watch the kids play sport and be involved with them in that way so there we are very privileged but a lot of people do not have that opportunity." (Interview BPT, p. 32)	
BR75	:	good parent network-kids come from same Prep school/socialise after hours							
BR76	:	teenagers do not want parents involved-do not want them to know what they are getting up to							
		"I think it is essential that parents are kept in the loop with regards to everything that is happening in schools. I think it is essential that schools inform parents on changes of systems, changes in structures, upcoming trends, for example there is facebook, mix-it, you know the dangers of those things. We are in touch with it, we see the kids every day, we know that the kids are sitting on mix-it and they are meeting at Monte Casino and doing things that they should not do because we hear it from within the school. Now I think it is essential that we have those one-on-one meetings with parents where we inform them. I also think it is essential for parents to come together as a forum within the school and say you know what my child was invited to a party, can we get a little communication list going of telephone numbers. I think it is essential that you have that connection between the parents and the schools, purely because an informed parent or an							
			B44A4	:	parents should understand their children better than they understand themselves				
			B45A2	:	needs trusting relationship with parents				
					"I think that is depends on whether or not-there is a lot of trust that is involved so your parents need to trust you to know that you will tell them when something is extremely wrong and you cannot handle it." (Interview BA2, p. 39)				



Appendix H3

Extract from Stakeholder Reports

MEd Research Project: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools

STAKEHOLDER REPORT

School:

I,.....(print name and surname) have read the preliminary report of this research dissertation. I approve of the content.

Stakeholder signature:

Date:

Comments:

Thank you.

Annemarie Emslie

Student number: 24428401



Extract from Stakeholder Reports

MEd Research Project: An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools

STAKEHOLDER REPORT

School:

I,.....(print name and surname) have read the preliminary report of this research dissertation. I approve of the content.

Stakeholder signature:

Date:

Comments:

Thank you.

Annemarie Emslie

Student number: 24428401



Letter from Gauteng Department of Education


 UMnyango WezeMfundo
 Department of Education

 Lefapha la Thuto
 Departement van Onderwys

Date:	02 July 2007
Name of Researcher:	Emslie Annemarie
Address of Researcher:	283 Pinto Place
	Beaulieu, Kyalami
	Midrand 1685
Telephone Number:	0117022105/0832668266
Fax Number:	0113509149
Research Topic:	An Analysis of Collaborative Efforts towards Violence Prevention in Urban Secondary Schools
Number and type of schools:	2 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Johannesburg West

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

1. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*



4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Senior Manager (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.
8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
12. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Senior Manager: Strategic Policy Development, Management & Research Coordination with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.
13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Senior Manager concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study

Kind regards

Tom Waspe
 CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Tom Waspe 20/07/2007

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.

Signature of Researcher:

AE

Date:

20.07.2007



Appendix B2

Principal letter – School One



Ethical Committee of the University of Pretoria

To Whom It May Concern:

Dear Sir/Madam

This serves to inform that Ms Annemarie Emslie, registered for a M. Ed degree in Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET) at the University of Pretoria, has been granted permission by the SGB of Midrand High, to conduct her research at the school.

Our sincere and best wishes accompany her.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be a cursive name.

PRINCIPAL



Appendix B3

Principal letter – School Two



11 July 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

I hereby give permission for Mrs Annie Emslie to conduct research for her Masters Thesis in Adult and Community Education & Training at Beaulieu College. The title of her thesis, which will be conducted through the University of Pretoria, is an analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.

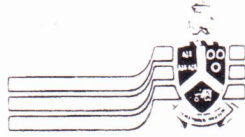
I have been in discussion with Mrs Emslie who has briefed me on the extent of parent, pupil and staff involvement.

Headmaster



Appendix B4

Ethical clearance – Ethics Committee University of Pretoria



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE

CLEARANCE NUMBER :

CS07/08/02

DEGREE AND PROJECT

M Ed Curriculum Studies

An analysis of collaborative efforts towards violence prevention in urban secondary schools.

INVESTIGATOR(S)

Annemarie Emslie - 24428401

DEPARTMENT

Curriculum Studies

DATE CONSIDERED

17 August 2007

DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE

APPROVED

This ethical clearance is valid for years and may be renewed upon application

CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE

Dr S Human-Vogel

DATE

24 October 2007

CC

Dr G Bender

Dr Jita

Ms Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for permission and informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.



Appendix H3

Extract from Stakeholder Reports

STAKEHOLDER REPORT

School: HIGH SCHOOL

I, _____ have read the preliminary report of this research dissertation. I approve of the content.

Stakeholder signature:

Date:

17 AUGUST 2009

Comments:

A very informative report highlighting crucial areas of school development. I do believe that this research document can become a tool to assist educational managers to engage upon constructive dialogue with the parent body.

Please amend p107: "The school is governed by the SGB consisting of the principal, 9 parents...."

Thank you.

Annemarie Emslie

Student number: 24428401