

LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

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Declaration of Originality

I, Avivit Miriam Cherrington, (student number 28248989) declare that:

Learners' experiences of school violence in a rural school

Is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Signature

.....

Date

Acknowledgements

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- To my husband who endured my constant ups and downs, inspiring me with wise words and love;
- My family who understood the sacrifices and were always so excited and proud of my endeavour.



Dedication

As I was completing this dissertation my mom proudly asked if I found out the answer. When I asked what she meant, she rephrased the question: "Well, in your research... did you find out why children are violent?" I simply answered: "Not yet, mom. Perhaps I will attempt that in my next one."

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom who instilled in me an insatiable curiosity and drive to find out 'why'.

Summary

LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study was to obtain insight into how Grade 9 learners (average age of 15 years) in a secondary rural school conceptualise school violence. The study was framed by a social constructionism paradigm, focusing on the co-construction of knowledge and meanings by the researcher and participants through personal engagement. Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory of Human Development, operationalised by the Process-Person-Context-Time Model, provided a theoretical grounding for the inquiry. An instrumental case study design was followed, whereby nine Grade 9 learners (4 boys and 5 girls) in a rural secondary school participating in an academic service learning project were conveniently selected as the unit of study. Qualitative data from a focus group and task-based activities were transcribed, whilst participant observations were documented in a research journal through photographs. Constructivist grounded theory principles guided the thematic analysis. Three primary themes emerged: Violence as behaviour; Violence as experience and Power and authority. Findings indicate that school violence was perpetuated by both peers and teachers, in physical and verbal forms. Corporal punishment continued to be a prevalent strategy for maintaining discipline and authority within the school. It was also evident in the findings that learners differentiated between acts of school violence and play-fighting according to the intentions and responses of those involved. Contradictory sentiments regarding the acceptability of school violence emerged. On the one hand participants wanted school violence to stop, describing it as hurtful. However, they also expressed views that when used by someone in authority for the purpose of discipline or protection, school violence was appropriate and acceptable. Therefore, the current study suggests that participants view school violence in a duplicitous role – used negatively to cause harm, but also positively to enforce order and protect. This study contributes to literature by providing youth-generated conceptualisations of school violence.

KEYWORDS:

Bioecological Theory of Human Development

Corporal punishment

Rural school

Social construction

School violence

Violence

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF INQUIRY

Overview:

This chapter opens the research report by providing an overview of the problem of school violence, a concern in South Africa and globally. It follows with a discussion of my rationale for embarking on this inquiry, the intended purpose and an explanation of the core concepts. Finally, I conclude with a summary of the theoretical and paradigmatic frameworks guiding this research, as well as the design, methodology and approach.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“Children and violence don’t mix – that’s what we’d like to believe, at least. Yet a look at a few statistics tells us that despite our wishes, violence and youth do mix; they have an affinity that is impossible to deny” (Lawson, 2005, p.3). Violence in the school setting has become a major concern in recent times, brought on by the prevalence of high profile school fatalities (Pichler, Urban & Bockewitz, 2005; Smit, 2007). However, a review of literature attests to the fact that the phenomenon is not new and has been a topic of debate and concern for many decades (Burton, 2008; De Wet, 2007). In fact, this growing concern for learners’ and teachers’ safety has stimulated an emerging multidisciplinary research agenda (Furlong, Morrison, Cornell & Skiba, 2004).

Children in today’s society are faced with the daunting task of adjusting to a world that is no longer predictable or secure (Allen, 2005). This has encouraged a growing demand for social research to ensure children’s voices are heard, and their opinions sought in matters that affect their lives. Morrow and Richards (1996, p.91) cite various principles set by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which acknowledge that: *“children have the right to be consulted and taken account of, to have access to information, to freedom of speech and opinion, and to challenge decisions made on their behalf.”* However, oftentimes adults may listen to what children have to say, but dismiss their thoughts or ideas as inconsequential. Therefore, in essence children might be consulted, but they are not truly being heard (Latess, 2008; Morrow & Richards, 1996).

The current study seeks to address the issue of school violence as expressed by learners in a rural South African secondary school. In doing so, I enter the process of inquiry aware that the way in which I, as the researcher, perceive childhood and the status of children in society will influence my understanding and representation of children and childhood (Punch, 2002).

1.2 THE PROBLEM OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The school environment impacts significantly on a young person's socialisation process (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Nesor, 2005), providing a platform for developing positive citizenship skills and preparing children for their role in society at large (Burton, 2008; Nesor, 2005). Therefore, it is imperative to ensure that learning occurs in an environment which is safe, trusting and nurturing (Ebersöhn, 2008; Joubert, 2008; Lubbe & Mampane, 2008). However, this is somewhat at odds with the image created by constant media reports and academic studies across the world.

1.2.1 A GLOBAL CONCERN

The rising levels of school violence among children and youth globally remains a concern (Braun, 2007; Burton, 2008; Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Lawson, 2005; Steyn & Naicker, 2007 citing Vogel, 2002). With more than one-half of juvenile victimisations occurring at school or on school grounds, the United States is regarded as the most violent country in the industrialised world (Allen, 2005 citing Fingerhut, 1993).

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Victims of crime (2002 in Allen, 2005) reported that 74% of children aged eight to 11 years of age, and 84% of 12 to 15 year olds reported experiencing teasing and bullying at their school. Nearly half (45%) of elementary schools, 74% of middle schools, and 77% of high schools experienced one or more violent incidents daily. Pichler, et al, (2005, p.93) add that 20% of youth admitted to carrying a knife, gun or other weapon regularly, while seven percent disclosed they carried a weapon on school property. The authors thus concluded that "*Not only are youths becoming more violent, but more use violence as a form of conflict resolution.*"

Boroughs, Massey and Armstrong (2006) discovered that violence referrals in low socio-economic schools numbered about five times those of high socio-economic status (SES) schools, while classroom behaviour referrals were three times higher in lower SES schools when compared with high SES schools. Although community factors such as poverty, unemployment and high crime have been linked to escalating school violence (Baker, 1998; Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Netshitahame & van Vollenhoven, 2002; Sexton-Radek, 2005), some authors warn that the phenomenon of school violence has no boundaries and is actually pervasive in all schools and communities (Braun, 2007; Lawson, 2005).

1.2.2 A SOUTH AFRICAN CONCERN

Similarly, South African media coverage of violent incidents in schools abound (Booi, 2009; De Wet, 2009; Kruser, 2009; Thaw, 2009). According to a media monitoring agency, in the period from January 2007 until April 2009, there was not a single month without coverage of school violence in South African TV news (Media Tenor, 2009). In addition, news on violence at schools accounted for more than a quarter of all news stories focusing on schools in international coverage, and 10% in the domestic context. It is not surprising then, that this exposure has given rise to a growing body of literature on the causes and nature of school-based violence, as well as possible interventions to address it (Bruce, 2007; Burton, 2008; Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Naser, 2005; Parkes, 2007; Steyn & Naicker, 2007).

One of the most extensive studies on school violence in South Africa conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2005 was the Youth Victimization Study (Burton, 2008). Among its primary findings was that the school environment was the most common site of theft, assault and sexual assault experienced by children and young people (Burton, 2008), showing that two out of five young people reported that they had experienced some form of crime in the school context. In 2008, the CJCP conducted the National Schools Violence Study (NSVS) to expand on its earlier findings. It included a sample of 12 794 learners in both primary and secondary schools; 264 principals and 521 educators in 245 schools nationally (Burton, 2008). The findings supported much of those highlighted in the previous one. According to Burton (2008), violence within schools can take many forms: verbal (such as teasing, taunting and sexual harassment); involving property (such as robbery) and seemingly gratuitous violence. Adding to this, Jefthas and Artz (2007 citing Eliasov & Frank, 2000) also mention intimidation, bullying, shootings, stabbings, gangsterism and drug trafficking as forms of school-based violence.

It has also been asserted that South African schools have become unsafe places for young people, modelling and encouraging violence rather than pro-social behaviours (Harber, 2004; Morrell, 2001; Ward, 2007). This is particularly relevant when one considers findings demonstrating linkages between school experiences and the home or community (Burton, 2008; DoE, 2005; Fong, Vogel & Vogel, 2008). A key concern regarding violence, within (or around) the school environment, is learners reporting ease of accessing alcohol, drugs and weapons at schools (Braun, 2007; Brown, 2006; Burton, 2008; Steyn & Naicker, 2007). Although it is difficult to pinpoint a definitive causal relationship, there is little doubt that a strong correlation exists between substance abuse and crime or violence (Burton, 2008).

1.2.3 CONSEQUENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The vast number of studies conducted on school violence in the last five years not only highlight learners' (and teachers') increased exposure to violence in the school environment, but also warn about the long-term impact on emotional and psychological development (Neser, 2005; Pichler et al, 2005). Exposure to violence can also have a negative effect on children's understanding of how the social world works (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007 citing Salzinger, Feldman, Stockhammer & Hood, 2002). Neser (2005 citing Graham & Juvonen, 2001) mentions the development of self blaming attitudes and attributions which can lead to internalising distress. *"All of these consequences contribute to inability to learn, whether because of increased awareness and excitability; inattentiveness due to fear; or recurrent, intrusive thoughts of post-traumatic stress disorder"* (Pichler et al, 2005, p.95).

The growing violent nature of communities within South Africa has become a widespread characteristic (not limited to impoverished households) and many researchers believe this has led to an apparent immunity among children to the violence that surrounds them (Burton, 2008; Lawson, 2005; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007; Neser, 2005). This ambivalence is reflected in the number of children who state in various questionnaires that they feel safe at school (and in their community) despite the high levels of crime and violence (Burton 2008; Ebersöhn, 2008; Lawson, 2005; Neser, 2005).

While there's a general consensus in literature that school violence has a negative influence on learners and teachers alike, there are several opinions on what causes school violence and what can be done to effectively decrease it. A multitude of causes and contributing factors have been identified, which are inextricably linked to South Africa's past of oppression (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Jeffthas & Artz, 2007). Although violence in schools may be a global problem, it appears that the worst violence is experienced in societies where resources are most limited, in countries undergoing a state of civic upheaval or war (Morrell, 2002). Although South Africa is experiencing a period of relative peace and stability, it is still in the process of emerging from the legacy of apartheid and its entrenched policies of inequalities and discrimination. In this regard, rural environments are often characterised by high adult illiteracy and lack of parental involvement in schooling. In addition, belief in witchcraft, poorly maintained school buildings and facilities, as well as vague perceptions about the need for school safety burden school safety efforts (Burnett, 1998; Netshitahame & van Vollenhoven, 2002).

Neser (2005) urges that when schools become violent, unsafe environments it is critical that institutions and Government respond quickly and appropriately. Although the Department of

Education has prioritised the issue of school violence (Braun, 2007; Burton, 2008; DoE, 2006), there is still insufficient relevant descriptive and comprehensive data available (Burton (2008)). I believe that this deficit in reliable data may continue to hamper efforts to curb the violence and create safe school environments.

1.3 RATIONALE

My interest in the topic was spurred by a year spent doing volunteer work with a group of boys aged 15 to 17 awaiting trial at the Pretoria Central Correctional Facility. In my various conversations with them during that time, the topic of violence experienced at school (and sometimes at home too) came up often. I was curious to ‘go back in time’ (so to speak) to explore the issue of school violence as experienced by learners, in the hope of perhaps gaining some insight into what leads South African youth towards crime and violence.

As I started engaging with literature on the prevalence, nature and occurrences of school violence I noted that some authors (Burton, 2008; Nesor, 2005; Smit, 2010) point out an apparent dichotomy, or divergence, between participating learners’ reported feelings of safety and overall perceptions, and their attachments to any particular environment. In various studies, despite reporting a high incidence of school violence, participants stated that they felt safe at school (for example, 90% in Burton’s study, 2008 and 70% in Nesor’s study, 2005). This contradiction underscores the perceived widespread ‘banalisation’ and normalisation of violence among the youth who seem to view violence as a legitimate form of conflict resolution (Burton, 2008). Similarly, Lawson (2005) and Leoschut and Bonora (2007) report that constant exposure of youth to criminal and violent acts in their homes and schools have led to the normalisation of such acts in their socialising contexts, and hence the perception that crime and violence are part of the normal order of things. The boys I engaged with in the prison also demonstrated this ambivalence, often expressing feelings of being victims of a hypocritical society. Bereft of positive, ethical role models they looked up to the gangsters who, in their eyes, represent respect, authority and status. This perpetuates their beliefs that crime is not all bad, but a means to fit in and, sometimes, survive.

I find it particularly worrying that our country’s youth are not only perpetuating violent acts, but seem to be normalising these incidents into their life experiences. Burton (2008) noted that it is not crime per se that is becoming normalised, but violence. It is this concern that impelled me to explore how learners define and construct meaning around their experiences of school violence.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTION

Prior to implementing an intervention programme, it is crucial to gather information from children, parents, school personnel, and community workers about their perception of violence in the school and community settings (Allen, 2005). Without accurate and detailed understanding of incidents of violence within schools, authorities can do little to monitor the success of interventions, the extent of the problem, or the causes of violence (Burton, 2008). However, despite the scramble to gather relevant data, little attention has been paid to how learners themselves make sense of, and interpret, experiences of violence at school (Burton, 2008; Parkes, 2007).

Although several surveys have shed light on the problem of school violence, they have mostly followed a quantitative approach, collecting data by means of self reporting questionnaires (Neser, 2005; Steyn & Naicker, 2007). Despite their ability to include a large data set of respondents, I believe such methods provide surface information - what, where, who – and not descriptions of the experiences of those involved. Furthermore, researchers such as Skiba and his colleagues (2004), report concern over the construct validity of self report measures of school violence or safety, stating “*Unless school safety surveys represent a relatively complete universe of variables that have been identified as contributing to school safety, the scale will be unable to assess factors that make important contributions to student perceptions of violence or safety*” (Skiba, Simmons, Peterson, McKelvey, Forde & Gallini, 2004, p.154). They go on to explain that criminal violations and physical violence are consistently used as criterion variables in school violence, overlooking other day-to-day disruptions and discipline problems, “*Thus, the validity of school safety surveys has been for the most part assumed rather than tested; in truth, we do not know which events or variables cause learners to feel more or less safe in schools*” (Skiba et al, 2004, p.154).

Understanding the lived experiences and needs of children is crucial to advocating for their needs at policy and programme level (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). Burton (2008) also contends that his extensive study paid little attention to the voices of the children themselves. “*Until recent decades, children were silenced, their voices unheard and their experiences largely concealed in the knowledge created by sociologists, anthropologists and historians*” (Thorne, 2002, p.251). Parkes (2007), who sets an example with a descriptive analysis of children’s narratives on violence, also highlights her concern for the shortage of literature seeking to understand the ways in which children make sense of their experiences of violence, “*attending to them as active agents,*” (Parkes, 2007, p.401).

The current study, therefore, is an attempt to contribute to current literature by exploring rural learners’ perceptions of school violence, using the framework of social constructionism. The aim of

this study is to be exploratory and descriptive, as I set out to gain new insights into school violence providing a descriptive account of results and findings. Following a qualitative, case study research design my intention was to represent voices and experiences of those seldom documented – learners in a rural school.

The primary research question guiding the research inquiry is:

How do Grade 9 learners in a South African rural school experience school violence?

To answer the above, the following sub-questions were also explored:

- a) **How do Grade 9 learners in a South African rural school conceptualise violence?**
- b) **Which systemic factors contribute to this conceptualisation of school violence?**

1.5 EXPLANATION OF CORE CONCEPTS

There are various concepts related to the research topic that require further clarification for application in this study.

1.5.1 SCHOOL VIOLENCE

School violence in literature is often considered broadly as a group of undesirable behaviours that result in a significantly negative outcome for another person or entity (such as school buildings). These behaviours can include acts against objects (theft, vandalism, and arson); against peers (from intimidation, bullying and assault to sexual harassment and rape; against staff (physical, verbal, sexual in nature) and other ‘victimless’ deviant or undesirable behaviour such as truancy (Burton, 2008; Osborne, 2004 cited by Du Plessis, 2008).

A broader, more contextual, definition of school-associated violence is that it occurs on school grounds. This definition includes travelling to or from school, or during school sponsored events (Fong, Vogel & Vogel, 2008; Greene, 2005). For the purpose of this study, school violence refers to any negative actions experienced by learners, teachers and other school staff, occurring during the course of carrying out school-related activities. Negative actions are identified as when “*someone intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort upon another*” (Olweus, 1994 cited by De Wet, 2010, p.190).

1.5.2 LEARNER

Dawson (2007) explains that in the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996), the term ‘pupil’ was replaced with ‘learner’ to provide for a broader context. For the purposes of this study, the term learner refers to a child (below the age of 18 years) attending school regularly for the purpose of

learning. The learners participating in this study were in Grade 9 (aged between 15 and 17 years) attending a secondary public school in rural Mpumalanga.

1.5.3 RURAL SCHOOL

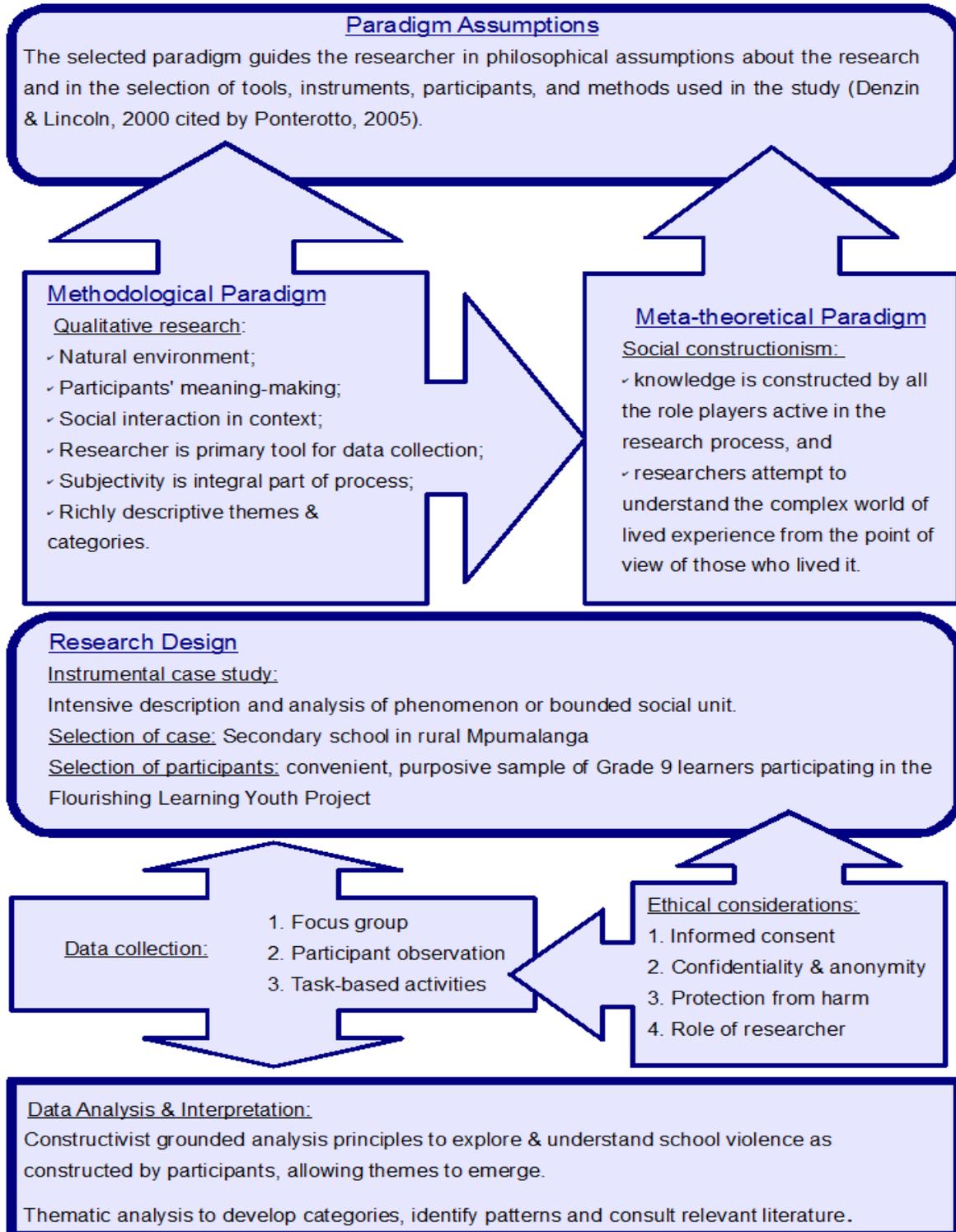
Defining 'rural' is a difficult undertaking as there is no common definition (Saloojee, 2009). *"Definitions of 'rural' tend to emphasise a particular feature of rurality: settlement or demographic patterns; spatial or environmental characteristics; political or economic factors; and, socio-cultural or historical factors"* (DoE, 2005, p.8). In international literature 'rural' is defined as a space where human settlement and infrastructure occupy only small patches of the landscape, and economic activity is dominated by primary production.

In South Africa, however, this definition of rural has to be expanded to include areas of dense settlement created by apartheid-driven land resettlement policies (DoE, 2005). For the purpose of this research, a rural community is one situated in a remote area with relatively poor infrastructure and little access to social amenities in the immediate vicinity. Therefore, a rural school is one situated in such a rural community, is government-subsidised, and in this case, caters to black-only learners. Photograph 1.1 is a visual representation of the rural school which participated in this study, showing its remote surrounds.



Photograph 1.1 This rural school is characterised by a lack of resources and an isolated geographical location

Figure 1.1 Summary of research process
(Braun & Clarke, 2006; Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Maree & Pieterse, 2007; Merriam, 2002; Morrow, 2007; Palincsar, 1998; Ponterotto, 2005; Stake, 2000; Swart & Pettipher, 2005; Windschitl, 2002).



1.6 CONCLUSION

In summary, by conducting a basic qualitative study, I wanted to explore and understand school violence from the perspectives of learners in a rural school. Data was collected through interaction with participants in their natural setting, and then inductively analysed to identify recurring patterns and common themes. The meta-theoretical and methodological paradigms, as well as the research design process are graphically represented in Figure 1.1, and described in more detail in Chapter 3. A rich, descriptive account of the findings is presented and discussed in this report with reference to the literature that framed the study in the first place (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). I conclude by reflecting on the significance of the research to the growing body of knowledge, and the insights I gained during this process of inquiry.

1.7 ORGANISATION OF RESEARCH REPORT

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the problem of school violence. It consists of an introduction to the research topic and an outline of the current study's research purpose, as well as outlining the rationale, the paradigmatic perspective, research design and methodology which guide the inquiry.

In Chapter 2 I present the literature review and theoretical framework from which I viewed the topic of school violence in context. It consists of a review of the empirical literature in the domain of school violence – its nature, prevalence and consequences. I also explored concepts and theories related to my topic of study which furthered my understanding and interpretations.

In Chapter 3 the qualitative research design is outlined, as well as the methodological strategies used to accomplish the study. I included a detailed discussion of the data collection methods and analysis process.

Chapter 4 presents the results that emerged by using constructivist grounded analysis principles and thematic categorisation, including definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria for each theme and category. These are explicated via vignettes, participant comments and photographs, allowing the reader to engage fully with the data.

Chapter 5 concludes the report with a synthesis of the findings, aligning the current study with literature, and providing answers and insight into the initial research question. I also offer recommendations for further research, as well as practical guidelines to educators and learners eager to create a safe school environment.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: UNDERSTANDING SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN CONTEXT

Overview:

This chapter provides an overview of current literature explaining violence, specifically within the context of the school environment. To understand how the current study could contribute to this growing body of knowledge, I reflect on international and local discussions regarding relevant themes on the topic, as well as recommendations towards future studies and perspectives. A brief outline of Bronfenbrenner's main principles and ideas – as operationalised by means of the Bioecological Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model - follows, whereby I motivate how it provided a backdrop to theoretically frame this study. Finally, I wrap up with an examination of the processes that guided my meaning-making and shaped my insights of how the study's participants internalise external experiences to construct their life-worlds.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The school environment impacts significantly on a young person's socialisation process (Jeffthas & Artz, 2007; Lleras, 2008; Nesor, 2005; Ward, 2007) as children spend the majority of the day and most of the year there. Learning is more effective in an environment which is safe, trusting and nurturing (Joubert, 2008; Lubbe & Mampane, 2008). However, the rising levels of school violence among children and youth globally, over the past decade, has sparked urgent and serious concern (Burton, 2008; De Wet 2009; Jeffthas & Artz, 2007; Nesor et al., 2004; and Steyn & Naicker, 2007 citing Vogel, 2002). The ever-growing body of international and South African academic literature, as well as media coverage of school violence (Booi, 2009; Bruce, 2007; Burton, 2008; De Wet, 2009; Jeffthas & Artz, 2007; Kruser, 2009; Nesor, 2005; Parkes, 2007; Steyn & Naicker, 2007; Thaw, 2009; to name a few) provide a dynamic platform for discussion and engagement.

Many studies indicate that problems within a school correlate highly with characteristics of the school population and the community context (Baker, 1998; Burton 2008; De Wet, 2007; Harber 2004; Lubbe & Mampane, 2008; Reppucci, Fried & Schmidt, 2002). This perspective advocates the

assumption that children are products of complex interactions occurring within the different environments to which they are exposed, and in which they live. It is through social interaction that learners gain experience, receive reinforcement or punishment for their behaviour and are exposed to various role models; which all profoundly influence their successes and failures in life (Mampane, 2004). “*Constructivist perspectives on schooling maintain that children learn by actively exploring ideas and information so that they become meaningful within the child’s life experiences*” (Baker, 1998, p.33).

To understand the ways in which children acquire violent repertoires, it is necessary to explore the ecology of contexts in which they grow (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Osher, van Acker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer & Quinn, 2004; Ward, 2007). Some theories on violent behaviour contend that it is a result of a complex interaction among many different types of causal mechanisms, including individual vulnerabilities (eg. poor impulse control or low intelligence), problems in the rearing environment (eg. poor parental discipline) and stressors in the larger social ecology (eg. living in poor, high crime neighbourhoods or having limited educational opportunities) (Allen, 2005 citing Frick, Osofsky & Lewis, 1997). Therefore, I chose Bronfenbrenner and Morris’ (1998) Bioecological Theory of Human Development to ground this study theoretically. In essence the theory explains how the complex interconnectedness of systems, which extend far beyond the learner’s immediate environment, directly affect his/her psychological growth.

2.2 WHAT DO WE KNOW SO FAR? IDENTIFIED THEMES AND TRENDS IN SCHOOL VIOLENCE LITERATURE

School violence is a complex phenomenon, its causes are multi-dimensional and its consequences have ramifications far beyond immediate perpetrators and victims (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Gilbert, 1996). This topic has garnered extensive literature and discussions over the decades, yet the phenomenon of school violence still cripples many communities.

With its legacy of confused meanings and the lack of consensus amongst researchers, school violence is an elusive phenomenon that has defied attempts to explain it (Chan, 2009; Parkes, 2007; Reppucci et al., 2002; Ward, 2007). Braun’s (2007) extensive review of South African literature on the topic of school violence reveals that although not all schools experience the same types or levels of violence, there are themes that run through the literature. She highlights the following seven specific manifestations of violent behaviour: 1) Theft and vandalism; 2) Lack of respect for, and threats against, teachers; 3) Bullying of learners; 4) Physical assaults; 5) Weapons in school; 6) Gender violence and sexual assault; and 7) Gangs.

Several studies attest that schools have become unsafe places for learners, inhibiting healthy growth and development (Lleras, 2008; van Jaarsveld, 2008; Ward, 2007) and impacting negatively on the culture of learning and teaching (De Wet, 2007; Lleras, 2008; Osher, Van Acker, Morrison, Gable, Dwyer & Quinn, 2004; Zulu, Urbani, van der Merwe & van der Walt, 2004). Often, learners' anxieties about safety can have significant implications for school attendance, personal confidence, academic performance, and the general quality of scholastic life (Sacco & Nakhaie, 2007 citing McGee, 2003 and Brown & Benedict, 2004).

Although many reports allude to school violence as a global concern (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), South Africa is seen as a very violent society in which schools have been particularly beleaguered by violence (Bhana, 2005; Harber, 2004; van Jaarsveld, 2008). According to Khan and Burton of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP, 2006 cited by Braun, 2007), to some degree, the majority of schools in South Africa are affected by school violence. Although there is some difference in the levels and types of violence experienced by urban and rural schools, as well as between provinces, they assert that school violence cannot be correlated with socio-economic status. No school is immune to the problem of school violence.

But literature also attests to the notion that schools (as environments of teaching and learning) are not always simply on the receiving end of violence. Through his years of researching the phenomenon of school violence, Harber (2004, p.3) is convinced that schooling itself is often responsible both for initiating violence and for reproducing and perpetuating forms of violence existing in the wider society, stating: "*The more I looked the more I found instances and examples of schooling having a violent impact on learners.*" Mayer (2010) adds that overly controlling and restrictive approaches to learning and discipline within the school can often promote aggression and violence.

Despite various statements by the Department of Education (DoE, 2006) affirming that the issue of school violence is an urgent priority, several studies attest that too little meaningful action is evident (Burton, 2008; van Jaarsveld, 2008; van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2009). The major challenge for the education system is, therefore, to gain an understanding of the complexity of the influences, interactions and interrelationships between the individual learner and multiple other systems (Swart & Pettipher, 2005) in order to implement meaningful change. "*The general challenges of development cannot be separated from the more specific challenges of addressing social issues, especially within the South African context*" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p.10). It seems that despite the concerns and interest regarding safe schools, there is a lack of reliable information relating to the true nature and extent of crime and violence in South African schools (Burton, 2008; RAPCAN,

2007). To truly understand the topic of school violence, I found it was essential to first get a grasp on the umbrella concept of 'violence'.

2.3 VIOLENCE: A SIMPLE ACT WITH FAR-REACHING RAMIFICATIONS

"Violence breeds upon itself, and its insidious influence reaches out into every corner of present society, and also into the future, for today's violence is the seed from which tomorrow's violence will grow." McKendrick and Hoffman, 1990 (cited by Gilbert, 1996, p.873)

2.3.1 WHAT IS ALL THE COMMOTION ABOUT?

Although so prevalent in global societies, the term violence is a complex one to define (Gilbert, 1996; Parkes, 2007; Reppucci et al., 2002; Ward, 2007). Pichler, Urban, and Bockewitz (2005) state that a major caveat in literature on violence and violence prevention is the lack of agreement of a clear, concise, widely used definition of the phenomenon of youth violence. *"These definitions run the entire gamut from formal psychiatric diagnoses to simple acts of aggression as determined by reports from self and others. Other definitions use delinquency and criminal records as a measure. Still others define youth violence as only that act that results in institutionalisation of the offending youth"* (Pichler et al., 2005, p.92). It is further noted that acts of violence deemed legitimate in one society might be considered illegitimate or culturally unacceptable in another (Cooke & Michie, 2002; Gilbert, 1996 citing Hoffman & McKendrick, 1990).

Therefore, one of the challenges of tackling literature addressing violence is the numerous ways in which researchers define and subsequently measure violence, and therefore, perceptions of safety at school. Fast and Marchetti-Mercer (2009, p.5) challenge that *"to get anywhere in our understanding of violence in its myriad forms, we need a general theory of violence, or at least an agreement about a paradigm in which to study it."* I approached this study based on the definition of violence provided by the World Health Organisation (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002, p.5):

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.

This definition has three important implications for research. These implications are: the concept of intention, the inclusion of power, and the broadened range of outcomes (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Ward, 2007).

2.3.1.1 Intentions And Consequences Of Violent Acts

The first of these - the definition's explicit reference to intentionality - implies a cognitive purpose, goal or meaning (Ward, 2007). According to Dahlberg and Krug (2002) this definition associates

intentionality with committing the act per se, irrespective of the outcome it produces. In my mind, however, intention also implies that one has some knowledge of expected outcomes and repercussions. But in many cases of violent behaviour, intended behaviour does not necessarily imply intended consequences (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Lawson (2005) believes that violence appeals to adolescents (especially disaffected ones) and is often used to defy authority, in the pursuit of material goods, for the domination involved in taking possessions from another (or from rape), retribution, the thrill of risk taking or the expression of a type of deviance. This again points more to an initial intention, rather than necessarily to an intended consequence.

2.3.1.2 Power And Force In Violent Acts

These motivations highlight the association between power – the second factor implicated in the definition – and violence. It is generally recognised that notions of force should not only refer to physical power, but need to include those acts that may result from the misuse of a power relationship, such as threats and intimidation (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Chan (2009), however, argues that the inclusion of power as a central parameter is a problematic one. His reasoning is that all human social relationships are embedded with some inherent inequality in terms of age or culturally defined roles. *“The first issue is that many human relationships are hierarchical, and the pecking order is culturally sanctioned, being accepted by the dyad as a reciprocal set of rights and responsibilities”* (Chan, 2009, p.178). He believes that any disruption within human interactions points to an abuse of trust, and it is superfluous to refer to such acts as bullying or violence. In his study he set out to prove that the majority of bullying in schools is carried out by peers or age-equals and, indeed, his findings raise an important issue relating to the existence of a power imbalance, which for many researchers is regarded as a necessary parameter for violence to take place (Chan, 2009). I agree with his ideas questioning society’s use of the terms ‘victim’ and ‘perpetrator’ when discussing acts of violence (or bullying). These expressions, in fact, presume a power imbalance, which makes the concept of power redundant. But this also raises a question for me regarding current estimates of school violence and whether the phenomenon itself is possibly being misattributed? Furthermore, does power and status between people feature as an important consideration in children’s perception of what violence is?

2.3.1.3 Long-Term Effects Of Violence

The definition as set out by the World Health Organisation (*refer to p.14*) is the first to explicitly highlight the broad range of outcomes which exposure to violence can bring about – not merely physical injury or death. Despite the lack of clarity surrounding the concept of violence, researchers are in agreement that victimised children are at a heightened risk of developing a host of emotional, behavioural, and social difficulties (Lawson, 2005; Lleras, 2008; Nesor, 2005). It is recognised that

even if violence does not result in injury and death, it can still impose a substantial burden on individuals, families, communities and health care and social systems (Neser, 2005). Lawson (2005) explains that some children display anxiety and depressive symptoms in instances where community violence has resulted in injury or death of someone known by the child. “*The developmental significance of exposure to violence extends beyond distress and the coping mechanisms employed to manage it*” (Lawson, 2005, p.12). Neser (2005) discusses social and intrapersonal forms of maladjustment, such as loss of self-esteem/self-confidence, an increased risk of suffering stress, as well as various other related symptoms.

It is interesting that some authors (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007; Wallach 1994 cited by Lawson, 2005;) put forward a different argument regarding the harmful consequences of exposure to violence. They state that frequent exposure to community violence can also eventually lead to habituation and normalisation of maladaptive behaviours, with the child projecting an indifferent or nonchalant attitude towards violent events. Resignation, fatalism and hopelessness appear in children and youth exposed to community violence, resulting in the perception that crime and violence are part of the normal order of things (Burton, 2008; Lawson, 2005; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007).

2.4 SCHOOL VIOLENCE: A CONTEXT FOR SOCIALISATION

2.4.1 WHAT DID YOU LEARN TODAY?

Furlong and Morrison (2000) highlight that the term ‘school violence’ has evolved over the years, yet these shifts and changes have been seemingly overlooked by researchers, educators and politicians in their focused efforts to reduce the occurrence of violence in schools. School violence in literature is often considered broadly as a group of undesirable behaviours that result in a significantly negative outcome for another learner or entity (such as school buildings). These behaviours can include acts against objects (theft, vandalism, and arson); against peers (from intimidation, bullying and assault to sexual harassment and rape); against staff (physical, verbal, sexual in nature) and other ‘victimless’ deviant or undesirable behaviour such as truancy (Baker, 1998; Burton, 2008; Osborne, 2004 cited by Du Plessis, 2008). To me, this description infers that school violence is perpetuated by learners only. Therefore, I prefer to consider Zulu, Urbani, Van der Merwe and Van der Walt’s (2004, p.170) description of school violence as “*wilful and illegitimate acts of man-made violence*” occurring on school property which, according to them, includes any behaviour by learners, educators, administrators or non-school persons, which attempts to inflict physical injury on another person or to damage school property. Jeffthas and Artz (2007 citing Eliasov & Frank, 2000) also mention intimidation, bullying, shootings, stabbings,

gangsterism and drug trafficking. A broader, more contextual, definition of school-associated violence is that it occurs on school grounds, which includes travelling to or from school, or during school sponsored events (Fong, Vogel & Vogel, 2008; Greene, 2005). Another interesting perspective from which to view school violence is Van Jaarsveld's (2008, p.176) definition taken from the Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (DJJDP, 2002) as "*any behaviour that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect.*"

As such, literature sub-divides forms of violence according to '*learner-on-learner*' violence, where both perpetrator and victim are learners at the same school; '*peer-on-learner*' violence, which means that an outsider (adult or child) are inflicting the violence on someone either within the school or within its broader context (examples of this are drug dealers on school grounds, and threats or incidents learners and staff experience on the way to school); and '*educator-on-learner*' violence - in the form of intimidation, sexual harassment and corporal punishment (Burton, 2008; Ward, 2007).

When considering school violence, I think it is important to also consider the subtle manipulations and intimidations that occur within the classroom. Sercombe (2003 cited by De Wet, 2007, p. 676) observes that violence in schools is not just about learners carrying weapons, about bullying or about educators being beaten up by learners. "*It is also about the dark sarcasm in the classroom, about the threats, about leaving the student ignored in the corner for months on end, about getting rid of a student, hounding him/her until he/she leaves or is suspended, about insults, put-downs and spite, and about classifying a young person as a 'troublemaker' or a 'no-hoper', knowing that the student is being harmed.*" I am curious to explore whether participants in the current study experience any of these forms of classroom intimidation, and if so, whether they (as Sercombe notes) consider them to be acts of violence?

2.4.2 HYPE OR REALITY?

There have been critics of the media's tendency to create hype and 'sensationalism' around issues of school violence (Brown, 2006; Fong et al., 2008). De Wet (2009, p.46) even states that media reports are often used to generate unrealistic public fears about the nature and extent of victimisation of school children, claiming "*They select events that are atypical, present them in a stereotypical fashion and contrast them against a backdrop of normality which is overtypical (sic).*"

Articles often garner much attention around serious forms of school violence – such as murder, rape and suicide – while researchers tend to focus on the myriad of less serious forms of school-based violence, which are much more common (Fong et al., 2008; Van der Westhuizen, & Maree, 2009). These behaviours include bullying, verbal intimidation, threats, pushing, shoving, or fighting

as well as other indirect forms of hostility such as spreading malicious rumours and social ostracising (Batsche & Knoff, 1994; Fong et al., 2008; Greene, 2005).

Reports of school violence date back to the 1970s. However, it seems that in the last decade there have been an increasing number of violent episodes on school grounds which have been fatal. According to The United States (U.S) Bureau of Justice Statistics in 2007, there were 43 school-associated violent deaths (among youth ages 5–18), and about 1.5 million victims of nonfatal crimes at school (among learners ages 12–18) including 826 800 thefts and 684 100 violent crimes (simple assault and serious violent crime). During the 2007–08 school year, 85% of public schools recorded that at least one violent crime, theft, or other crime had occurred at their school (Dinkes, Kemp, Baum & Snyder, 2009). Yet empirically, and contrary to public perception, the number of violent acts perpetrated on school grounds is actually decreasing (Booren & Handy, 2009; Greene, 2005; Mayer, 2010). The United States Department of Justice, urges that the rate of violent crime occurring in schools has in fact been declining since the late 1990s (US Department of Justice, 2007). Fong et al., (2008) even state that children and adolescents are more likely to be victims of serious violence or homicide away from school than at school.

Greene (2005) explains this perceived phenomenon in a different light by referring to various self-report national surveys administered in the United States (namely the Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, the School Crime Supplement of the National Crime Victimization Survey, and Monitoring the Future), providing valuable information on the nature and prevalence of school violence. He states that emergent themes such as sexual harassment, the expression of bias-based actions or attitudes (e.g. homophobia and racism), bullying, and attitudes and beliefs about the use of violence and aggression which highlight the severity of school violence perpetration are inversely proportional to their frequency of use. *“Physical aggression is less frequently perpetrated than verbal aggression, threats with a weapon are less frequently made than threats without a weapon, fights that result in a physical injury are less common than those that do not result in injury, and the most common forms of school-based violence are predominantly verbal—bullying and sexual harassment”* (Greene, 2005, p.238). Furthermore, it is understood that less serious forms of violence invariably precede more serious forms of violence (Greene, 2005). These findings point back to the WHO definition (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), which stresses that violence is inherently intentional, contains a power dimension and, most importantly, impacts negatively on the person whether it is actual or a threat.

Lawson (2005) on the other hand, believes there is a significant disconnect between crime statistics and learners’ perceptions of safety, violence at school and victimisation. Her argument is that many

incidents go unreported and remain private. Therefore, research drawing information directly from learners could reveal much higher rates of victimisation than reported in official records. Although this may be true, in the presence of such vague definitions and conceptualisations of school violence, Burton (2008) begs the question: Are the 'violent incidents' occurring in schools and reportedly on the increase, simply indicative of a change in form and locality, thus placing the issue of school violence more on the radar of the general populace? This aspect is also relevant to me as it brings to question: what forms of school violence are being studied and measured? In the current study I intended to throw a spanner - so to speak - into the centre of this discussion by exploring what the learners themselves regard as school violence thus, perhaps, shedding light on the relevance and accuracy of studies investigating the prevalence and nature of school violence.

In South Africa, some authors believe school violence is pervasive and on the increase (Bhana, 2005; Burton, 2008). One of the most extensive studies on school violence, conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2005, was the Youth Victimisation Study. It was followed in 2008 by the National Schools Violence Study (NSVS), with Burton (2008) producing an extensive monograph series of articles to describe and discuss the findings. What stands out, is his assertion that the school environment was the most common site of theft, assault and sexual assault experienced by children and young people, showing that two out of five young people reported that they had experienced some form of crime in the school context (Burton, 2008).

Although these extensive surveys have shed much light on the problem, as stated earlier, I am intrigued to contribute to these discourses on school violence by adding learner-generated perspectives. Burton (2008) contends that his extensive study paid little attention to the voices of the children themselves. Furthermore, the self-report questionnaires used, once again raise the issue of what predefined constructs of the definition of violence were measured, and therefore, what aspects could possibly have been overlooked? The learners were asked whether they had experienced or witnessed these incidents, but were not asked whether they themselves would regard these events as being 'violence'.

2.4.3 SO, WHAT'S THE HARM?

Whatever the figures and arguments regarding definitions and prevalence, researchers are in agreement that school violence has a negative, long lasting impact on learners, school staff and the community at large. School violence has an adverse effect on the morale of both learners and educators, harming the efficacy of the teaching and learning environment (De Wet, 2007; Zulu et al, 2004). It follows, then, that the atmosphere within the school (manifested in attitudes, relationships and policies) will have a profound impact on the nature and extent of school-associated violence

(Osher et al., 2004). *“A school’s climate is a complex matrix of student and adult attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the school; interpersonal relationships within the school; values and norms, particularly in relation to resolving interpersonal conflict; and codes of behaviour”* (Greene, 2005, p.243 citing Cook, Murphy, & Hunt, 2000). A hostile school climate is one in which *“students experience disruptive, physically and/or psychologically abusive situations that may directly or indirectly interfere with or draw attention away from the learning environment, resulting in a school climate that can negatively affect student engagement and performance in school”* (Lleras, 2008, p.106). Therefore, schools with high rates of crime and violence are less effective in educating learners, have lower levels of learner achievement, higher rates of absenteeism, and more dropouts (De Wet, 2007).

A hostile climate outside of classroom can also affect a learner’s academic effort and performance (Lleras, 2008), implying that feeling emotionally safe is critical to learning. Sacco and Nakhaie (2007) explain that even fear and worry about the threat of victimisation can reduce the overall quality of school life and seriously undermine educational objectives. Although learners may miss school because of fears for their physical safety, they may also do so out of fear of emotional ridicule, including being bullied or harassed by other learners or staff for their gender, appearance, disability, sexual orientation, race, language, behaviour, or other matters (Lleras, 2008; Osher, Dwyer & Jimerson, 2006). The result is a poorer attitude toward school in general.

Some children repeatedly exposed to violence may develop coping strategies to protect themselves from harassment. These include avoiding certain places in school, withdrawing from classroom and school activities, and even dropping out of school altogether to reduce their risk of repeated victimisation (Lleras, 2008; Mayer, 2010). Furthermore, learners experience diminished ability to focus on academic pursuits, school personnel become fearful and anxious, and increased weapon-carrying occurs in the guise of self-defence (Greene, 2005). The irony is that, in time, these behaviours and attitudes contribute to the gradual acceptance of violence as a reasonable form of conflict resolution within (and outside) the school environment. Peer and adult norms which ignore or reinforce some forms of aggression (such as bullying) often act to sustain other aggressive behaviour (Greene, 2005 citing his earlier work, 2000; Ward, 2007). I like the way De Wet (2007, p.673) very simply states: *“School violence breeds school violence”*, citing the Columbine school killings as a pertinent example. And so, once again we see the pervasive disruption of school violence, affecting the school itself, and the surrounding community (Dinkes et al., 2009).

2.4.4 POVERTY AND OPPRESSION

While some researchers try to explore the nature and frequency of school violence, others try to understand what causes violence and, therefore, what can be done to effectively stop (or at least minimise) it. In some community contexts the opportunities for violence are greater (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). A multitude of causes and contributing factors have been identified which are inextricably linked to South Africa's past of oppression (Jefthas & Artz, 2007), such as high levels of poverty or physical deterioration and lack of access to institutional supports (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

The above factors support Netshitahame and van Vollenhoven's (2002) comment that rural schools in South Africa are more vulnerable to violence, listing factors such as high number of illiterate parents, lack of parental involvement, belief in witchcraft, unsafe school buildings and facilities and vague perceptions about the need for school safety. According to the Ministerial Committee of Rural Education (DoE, 2005) the challenges facing rural schooling are complex, intractable and interdependent, conceding that even after ten years of democracy, rural schooling has shown little improvement. Such comments serve to highlight the importance of placing the current study on school violence contextually, taking into account multiple systems (neighbourhood, community, country) as well as beliefs and attitudes (historical, cultural, political).

Others, such as Osher et al. (2004), look within schools to identify warning signs for school violence. They highlight the importance of both school structure and culture in affecting behavioural as well as academic outcomes, explaining that a poorly organised school can overwhelm some learners, setting the stage for violence. Indicators of troubled schools, which play a role in reinforcing school violence, include an unsafe environment (school grounds); learner and staff behaviour (untrusting and unsupportive relationships), and vague, inconsistent or unenforced policies. *"The warning signs for a school environment that threatens the safety of its students can be characterized as unclear expectations, inconsistent and punitive application of consequences, and few opportunities for students to learn positive behaviors"* (Osher et al., 2004, p.19).

2.4.5 ACTIONS, REACTIONS AND VIEWPOINTS

Neser (2005) urges that when schools become violent, unsafe environments it is imperative that institutions and Government respond quickly and appropriately. However, because school violence is a multifaceted problem with biological, psychological, social and environmental roots, it needs to be confronted on several different levels at once (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002).

In the United States, the main response has been to install security guards, metal detectors, cameras and identification badges on school grounds. However, their effectiveness in reducing school violence has been questioned and criticised (Booren & Handy, 2009; van Jaarsveld, 2008). When it comes to South Africa's governmental response to the issue of school violence, the Department of Education (DoE) has prioritised it as a concern. Together with the South African Police Service (SAPS), the DoE compiled a policy document 'Signposts for Safe Schools' as part of its Safe Schools Campaign, to serve as support material providing guidance on school safety related issues (Smit, 2010; van Jaarsveld, 2008).

In general, however, van Jaarsveld (2008, p.185) believes that very few policies, acts and documentation which should be implemented in schools exist in South Africa. "*School violence and the lack of security measures in schools have been recognised as a serious problem by the Department of Education and other departments, but not enough is being done to assist with preventing and reducing the problem.*" Other authors believe that a lack of sufficient relevant descriptive and comprehensive data has inhibited meaningful action (Burton, 2008; van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2009). "*Information relating to the numbers of learners and educators who perpetrate violent incidents (this includes corporal punishment) at school; the rate of victimisation of learners and educators; the extent to which violence in the community impacts on schools; and information on the forms of violence to which learners are exposed at school is critical to the development of appropriate preventative and responsive policies for Educations departments and schools*" (RAPCAN, 2007, p.2).

I agree with these concerns, having found relatively few comprehensive, qualitative South African studies on the topic of school violence. My premise is that to better conceptualise the creation of safe learning environments, we need to take cognisance of the learners' perceptions and understandings of what entails school-violence.

There have been some interesting studies conducted in South Africa to explore social constructions of masculinity (and gender inequality) among children and youth with regards to violence (Barker & Ricardo, 2005; Bhana, 2005; Campbell, 1992). One example is Phillips' (2007 cited in Booren and Handy, 2009) study indicating that adolescent males saw masculinity and male violence as socially constructed, based on perceived behavioural norms that male violence is part of being masculine. This further demonstrates how "*behaviours are learned and reinforced in the social environment, and clearly can have implications for school environments*" (Booren & Handy, 2009, p.238), and highlights the need to examine learners' perceptions, constructions and experiences of violence (Booren & Handy, 2009; Parkes, 2007; Varjas et al., 2008) within the school setting.

The discussion thus far, has hopefully demonstrated that the problem of school-based violence is a complex, multi-layered one, requiring an analysis of the interconnectedness of numerous variables at play. Greene (2005) asserts that behavioural and systemic approaches to school violence, often implicitly exclude factors external to the school itself, and therefore proposes incorporating a perspective which focuses on the full range of influences from individual, community structures as well as societal power that may well influence the issue of school-violence. The current study endeavours to address this complexity by emphasising the importance of discussing and analysing the concept of school-violence and its consequences within various interrelated contexts of influence.

2.5 BIOECOLOGICAL THEORY OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

2.5.1 A CONTEXTUAL FOOTING

In 1995 Urie Bronfenbrenner took what he termed a “*risky course*” by proposing an “*untried*” theoretical perspective on current ecological models (p.619). The Bioecological paradigm places the individual as an active agent existing within multiple social systems which are interconnected, interrelated and interactive (Mampane, 2010; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Merging contributions from ecological theories of human development and models of behavioural genetics (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), the Bioecological paradigm is a significant contextualist theory (Elliott & Tudge, 2007).

I chose this theory to guide my research as it reflects a constructivist worldview, emphasising holism, personal meaning, subjectivity and recurrence between influences (Du Plessis, 2008). The Bioecological Theory also presents the child as a dynamic entity that structures his/her living environment, and as a result, brings meaning to their development as they actively interact with the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 cited by Mampane, 2010). One such influential environment relevant to the current study is the school context, which provides learners with opportunities for regular interactions in an attempt to ensure the optimal experience of development (Mampane, 2010). By acknowledging the active, diverse and bidirectional relationship that exist between the learner and his/her environments I believe the Bioecological Theory, and more specifically the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) Model (refer to Figure 2.1, p.25), could assist me in exploring interactions between the developing learner and his/her development contexts.

2.5.2 INVESTIGATING INTERACTIONS THROUGH THE PROCESS-PERSON-CONTEXT-TIME MODEL

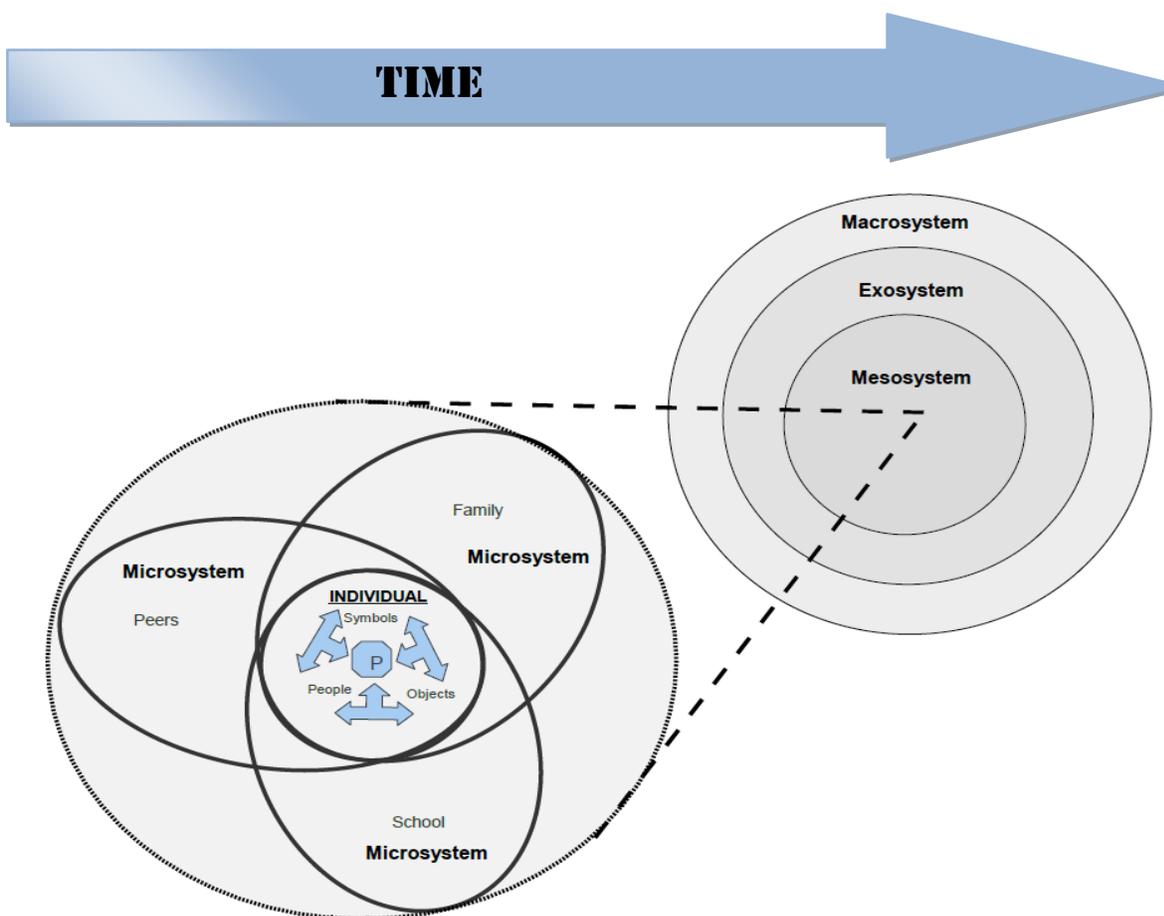
Bronfenbrenner (1999) referred to the PPCT Model as an operational research design that permits the simultaneous investigation of the Bioecological Theory’s main propositions. This model requires that I consider the four defining properties (the developmental process, person, context and time) of the theory, as well as the interrelations among them (Elliott & Tudge, 2007).

2.5.2.1 The Process Dimension

Described as the “*engines of development*” by Bronfenbrenner (1995, p.620), proximal processes play a key role in the theory, for they are the primary mechanisms for producing human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Elliott & Tudge, 2007). These everyday interactions guide how individuals gain understanding of their experiences and interpret their world (Tudge, 2008). Consequently, it is important not to overlook the complex and dynamic interactions between participants and their immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Elliott, & Tudge, 2007; Mampane, 2010).

When it comes to exploring the participants’ experiences of school violence, it was important to note that often the parents and other adults in the learner’s immediate environment determine the kinds of proximal processes in which the learner will, or will not, become engaged (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). This could be the family’s (and even teachers’) attitudes towards, and levels of sustaining (or promoting), violence. Another, though more indirect way, is when families bring in resources (for example: knowledge, materials) from the external environment to further the learner’s knowledge and exposure (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994). An example of this would be violence through media and entertainment, or school policy.

However, proximal processes alone do not tell the whole story (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994), as both their power and effectiveness will vary according to the characteristics of the environment in which they take place, the persons living in that environment, and the nature of the developmental outcomes. This highlights the learner’s active agency with the capacity to partially transform some aspects of the immediate setting (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) thereby impacting on his/her developmental outcomes.



The PPCT Model illustrates the proximal process of human development - an evolving, biopsychological Person (P) engaging in complex reciprocal interactions within the Microsystem with people, objects and symbols. The bidirectional arrows indicate that the interactions can occur simultaneously or separately (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). There is also interaction with other Microsystems in the immediate external environment consisting of significant others, such as school, family and peer group. These interactions in turn exist within larger systems of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Mampane, 2010; Tudge, 2008). These interrelated, interdependent multiple systems have a significant influence on the Person's development, while in turn, as an active agent in his own development, the Person also has the capacity to influence these multiple contexts. All these bidirectional interactions occur regularly, on a continuous basis over the life course of the Person, which is presented by the Time (T) arrow.

Figure 2.1 The PPCT Model (Adapted from Tudge, 2008, p.69)

2.5.2.2 The Person Dimension

According to the PPCT Model the biopsychological characteristics of the person both produce, and are a product of, development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The model acknowledges the personal characteristics that individuals bring with them into any social situation, such as measures of ability, achievement, temperament and personality (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). It also takes note of a more dynamic set of personal attributes - bio-ecological resources, demand characteristics and personal dispositions (or force characteristics) – which can shape the course of future development through their capacity to affect the direction and power of proximal processes throughout the life course (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). There are also developmentally disruptive dispositions such as impulsiveness, explosiveness, distractibility, inability to defer gratification, which can result in violent and aggressive behaviour (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Characteristics such as inattentiveness, apathy, lack of interest in one's surroundings, feeling of insecurity or a general tendency to avoid or withdraw from activity also play a role in school violence and are thus also significant in the current study.

Elliott and Tudge (2007, p.96) summarised the Person component of the model succinctly saying:

“Bronfenbrenner provided a clear sense of individuals’ roles in altering proximal processes, from the relatively passive (changing the environment simply by being in it, to the extent that others react differently to individuals based on their age, gender, skin colour, and so on), to the more active (the ways in which individuals change their environments are linked to the types of physical, mental and emotional resources they have available to them), to the most active (the extent to which individuals change the environment is linked to their motivation to do so, persistence and so on).”

For me, this active orientation corresponds well to the social constructionist paradigm I selected. It validates my belief that the study participants (as all human beings) have the capacity and inclination to set in motion, sustain, and enhance processes of interaction between themselves and particular features of persons, objects and symbols in their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

2.5.2.3 The Contextual Dimension

Proximal processes are profoundly influenced by the contexts in which they occur (Elliott & Tudge, 2007), and contexts pertains to the individual's environments (Mampane, 2010). It is a basic premise of the Bioecological paradigm that development is a function of forces emanating from multiple settings and from the relations among these settings (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The PPCT Model illustrates the individual at the centre of these interacting systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

- Microsystem

The first (immediate) system with which the individual has direct contact, and includes neighbourhood, school, peer group and family factors (Reppucci, Fried, & Schmidt, 2002). It consists of the pattern of activities, roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 cited by Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Within this system ‘significant others’, who also possess distinctive personal characteristics and belief systems, can influence the learner’s development (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Therefore, I take note that the belief systems of parents, teachers, friends and peers may be especially important influences on participants (Bronfenbrenner, 1995).

- Mesosystem

The Mesosystem includes the connections, or interactions, between two or more Microsystems which involve the developing child (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Lawson, 2005; Mampane, 2010). Examples at this level, which could be relevant to my study, include violent behaviours between the learner and his/her peers, discipline within school or within the house.

- Exosystem

The Exosystem comprises linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, in which at least one does not contain the developing child. However, these events indirectly influence processes within the learner’s immediate setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1999). In essence, although the learner is not a direct participant, interactions at this level (such as decisions made) may have far-reaching effects on him/her (Lawson, 2005). Practical examples of this system relevant to the current study, are decisions made between teachers and the local governing body regarding discipline policies.

- Macrosystem

This system encompasses any group (culture, subculture, or other extended social structure) whose members share value or belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange (Elliott & Tudge, 2007 citing Bronfenbrenner, 1993). These shared values, cultural understandings, priorities, history and symbols frame decision-making and actions within the other systems (Lawson, 2005). This is the second most important context for the developing child (Elliott & Tudge, 2007) and especially relevant to my research as it contains the consistencies of the other systems that exist (or could exist) at a cultural level, such as belief systems and the underlying ideology (Mampane, 2010). *“Development of one’s characteristics as a person depends to a large extent*

on the options that are available or not in a given culture at a given point in time” (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p.14).

The Macrosystem can influence the Microsystem when group-wide values and beliefs are put into practice by individuals engaged in proximal processes. By the same token, as one should expect from a contextualist theory, what occurs on an everyday basis with Microsystems also influences the Macrosystem (Elliott & Tudge, 2007), which means that individuals do have the capacity to influence a community’s beliefs or a country’s policies.

Violence is a multifaceted problem in which the social and cultural environment tends to either promote or buffer it (Allen, 2005; Ebersöhn, 2008). Van Jaarsveld (2008, p.178) contends that violence in schools is caused by societal cultures which encourage, tolerate and demand violence, *“Solving conflict and problems through violence has long been a core element in South African culture, and as a result, violence is used as a method of solving conflict and reaching goals in schools as well. School pupils are only modelling what they see at home and in their communities, which leads them to also use violence as a method of resolving issues”* (citing Vogelmann & Lewis, 1993).

Neighbourhood characteristics are often strongly related to levels of violence in a community, with poverty, economic inequality, racial discrimination, high population density and family disruption implicated as causes of high rates of violence in some communities and schools (Reppucci, Fried, & Schmidt, 2002). Statistics yielded from Burton’s (2008) study, however, demonstrated that violence impacts learners in South African schools regardless of socio-economic, racial and geographic environments. This suggests that the root causes of violence in schools (and factors that maintain it) might lie beyond commonly attributed variables of poverty or socio-economic status, and are to be found in characteristics or drivers that are more systemic. Reppucci et al. (2002) list these as discrimination, prejudice, the accessibility of firearms, and societal abuse of drugs and alcohol.

To explore what school-based violence means to participants in the current study, it is crucial that I acknowledge the interrelated social systems (family, school, community, society) which interact with each other, and with the participants. Just as significant are the still lingering effects of South Africa’s political and cultural past on the community’s current economic and social condition. These social systems are interconnected, interrelated, interactive and reciprocal (Swart & Pettipher, 2005) and therefore, cannot be viewed independently.

2.5.2.4 The Time Dimension

This system represents time as an attribute of the developing person over his life, and of the surrounding environment across history (Mampane, 2010 citing Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Bronfenbrenner specified that an individual's proximal processes varied by aspects of the individual, the spatial context, and the temporal context, or "*the continuities and changes occurring in the environment over time, through the life course, and during the historical period in which the person has lived*" (Elliott & Tudge, 2007, p.97 citing Bronfenbrenner, 2005).

Glen Elder's work on Life Course Development played a significant role in guiding this perspective (Bronfenbrenner 1995, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), asserting that the individual's own developmental life course is embedded in, and powerfully shaped by, conditions and events occurring during the historical period through which the person lives. It is therefore evident that environmental changes across historical time can produce significant developmental changes in either direction (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; 1999) - they can disrupt the timing or duration of normative transitions during the life course, or offer the person new, more stable and more challenging, opportunities that enhance psychological growth or even reverse a previously downward course. It follows therefore, that proximal processes cannot function effectively in environments that are unstable and unpredictable across space and time (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). This is likely an important point for consideration concerning findings of the current study, and perhaps in trying to view school violence from the eyes of children in a South African context.

The idea that a country's historical events (such as apartheid), or experiences of economic growth or recession (poverty), impact on the individual's proximal processes is clearly relevant to this study. Furthermore, Elliot and Tudge (2007) highlight that changes at the level of the Macrosystem do not necessarily filter down to all Microsystems at the same rate or with the same effects. They contend that this is due to old cultural patterns of activities (proximal processes) which continue to exert an influence, particularly as the individuals involved (teachers, when thinking about schooling) for the most part have stayed the same (Elliott & Tudge, 2007). Conceptualising time across the systems can help me to gain an understanding of the role of developmental processes and outcomes in producing large-scale changes over time, and the implications of these changes for the country's future (Swart and Pettipher, 2005).

2.6 MEANING-MAKING FROM A BIOECOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Children's perceptions of their context are central to understanding how they interact with their environment. The way they perceive their circumstances influences the way they respond to their human and physical contexts (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). So far the Bioecological model has

provided some clarity on the various systems of influence impacting on learners' development, and their ability to influence their own development. However, approaching this study from a social constructionist approach, my thoughts shift to the possible meanings these interactions (processes) and influences hold for the child (learner). In Gergen's (1997) words: "*How is it that the external world comes to have meaning for the individual?*"

2.6.1 TRANSFORMING EXPERIENCES INTO THOUGHTS

According to Bronfenbrenner, this is precisely why proximal processes play such a central role in his model. "*It is through these types of activities and interactions that individuals come to make sense of their world, understand their place in it, and change their world*" (Elliot & Tudge, 2007, p.96). Explaining this in more detail, Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, (1994) clarify that psychological processes involve psychological content, which means that they are *about* something, usually content in the outside world. This content (in the form of people, objects, and symbols in the internal Microsystem) initially only exist outside the organism in the environment. "*Hence, from its beginnings, development involves interaction between organism and environment: The external becomes internal and becomes transformed in the process*" (p. 572). However, through continuous engagement with the environment, through proximal processes, individuals begins to change their environment. The internal becomes external, and vice versa (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994).

Castells (2000 cited by Dawson, 2007, p.460) answers this question in a similar vein referring to the notion that meanings stem from shared experiences. "*So it's really the interaction and experience that makes people's minds, individually and collectively.*" Such shared experiences allow people to relate to, and identify with, one another on some level, and this fosters a common meaning or understanding of situations and shared identities. In other words, we interpret our world based on our own background, experiences, self-image, self concept, and a host of other factors (Lates, 2008).

To explore the process underlying learners' internalisations of their experiences of school violence, it is important to provide them with a platform in which to speak and explain. Kelly (1955 cited by Lincoln & Guba, 1985) claimed that it was presumptuous to assume that an individual's constructions of reality would be convergent with reality, and suggested that "*the open question for man is not whether reality exists or not, but what he can make of it*" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.70). From my social constructionist perspective, this means being aware that situations are theoretically open to as many constructions as there are persons engaged in them, or as many reconstructions by a single individual as the imagination allows.

2.6.2 NORMALISING THE ABNORMAL

It is often understood that people act in habitual patterns which become organised (Latess, 2008) and are gradually accepted as a norm. One of the reasons I have chosen to explore the topic of school violence from the perspective of meaning-making is the numerous literature that contends the youth in South African have become numb to the violence around them.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss this in terms of Kelly's notion of '*constructive alternativism*', which they explain as a personal construct that attempts to do justice to the internal world of the person. It is used when an individual comes to an understanding of the view of the world held by those people involved in a situation, rather than adopting a different perspective or ascribing structural function to external aspects (stimuli) of the environment. This concept could, therefore, support Leoschut and Bonora's (2007) observation that children exposed to criminal and violent acts in their homes and schools are often socialised into developing the perception that crime and violence are part of the normal order of things. Van Jaarsveld (2008, p.178) explains that South Africans have developed a 'culture of violence' due to "*the heightened incidence of violence in our country, which individuals have come to accept and see as a normal part of everyday life.*" Another form of 'normalising' violence in children's minds is through the quantity and quality of attention given to information and images of violence perpetuated by the entertainment industry and media (Latess, 2008; van Jaarsveld, 2008).

2.7 CONCLUSION

From the various readings, I understand that school violence is a multidimensional issue, reflecting the complexities of society (Mayer, 2010). Violence exists at multiple ecological levels relating to a convergence of risk and protective factors and processes at the individual, peer, family and societal levels (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002; Mayer, 2010; Osher, Dwyer & Jimerson, 2006; Osher et al., 2004). Violence perpetuated on school grounds is rooted within a wider social context and is inextricably linked to issues such as poverty, unemployment, rapid urbanisation, gender inequalities, erosion of family life and 'social decay' in a society in transition (Gilbert, 1996; Reppucci et al., 2002). The context of transition in South Africa, and its implications for education, plays an important role in the current research; as do the attitudes and values regarding violence which are passed down through generations.

Against this understanding I have chosen to frame my exploration within Bronfenbrenner's Bioecological Theory, operationalised by the PPCT Model, because it denotes a "*phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and groups*" (Mampane, 2010, p.48 citing Bronfenbrenner, 2005). This approach fits the current

study, acknowledging that human development is a continual, and reciprocal interaction between individuals and their various systems of environment. It highlights the multiple causes of violence and the interaction of risk factors operating within the family and broader community, social, cultural and economic contexts (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002). Furthermore, when considering how the experience of violence within the school environment shapes the way learners construct their worldview, the evolving Bioecological Theory of Human Development has much relevance (Swart & Pettipher, 2005). In the following chapter I outline the meta-theoretical paradigm and research design guiding my empirical research, as well as the analysis and interpretive process I undertook to reach the findings.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview:

This chapter provides an overview of the investigation process of the study, outlining the methodological paradigm and research design chosen to guide my efforts. The design of a qualitative study includes shaping a problem, selecting a sample, collecting and analysing data, and writing up the findings (Merriam, 2002), which I describe and discuss below. Included is a discussion of my role as the researcher, and my efforts at ensuring trustworthiness and ethical considerations.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is a process of inquiry in which we, the researchers, become “*active agents in the production of meaning. We focus our gaze in particular places. We selectively attend to certain symbols to the exclusion of others. We raise specific questions and engage with particular people and institutions. Through the choices that we make, we create knowledge*” (Suzuki, Ahluwalia, Kwong Arora, & Mattis, 2007, p.323).

3.2 RESEARCH PURPOSE

The current research is a descriptive study (Merriam, 2002) of how school-based violence is conceptualised and experienced by Grade 9 learners in a South African rural school. As such, I aim to build rich descriptions of complex circumstances that are found unexplored or lacking in literature, thereby documenting and describing a phenomenon of interest (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). “*Common to such approaches is that they seek to unpick how people construct the world around them, what they are doing or what is happening to them in terms that are meaningful and that offer rich insight*” (Flick, 2007, p.viii). It is noted that descriptive studies do not address hypothesis, correlations or causal relationships (Tripodi & Bender, 2010) and, therefore, I did not seek to examine the impacts or causes of school violence.

3.3 PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

3.3.1 METHODOLOGICAL PARADIGM

I adopted a qualitative research approach throughout this study in an attempt to explore the research question. According to Lincoln and Denzin (2003), qualitative research provides an opportunity for social scientists to explore questions that are ill exposed (citing Guba & Lincoln,

1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985), neglected (citing Bakan, 1967), or simply do not comply with experimental and other quantitative methods. I primarily choose qualitative research as this paradigm represents human beings as whole persons living in dynamic, complex social arrangements (Rossman & Rallis, 2003 citing Rogers, 2000). As a qualitative researcher I was interested in accessing experiences, interactions and documents in their natural context and in a way that gave room to their particularities and the materials in which they are studied (Flick, 2007). Accordingly I felt that *“field notes and snippets of interview transcriptions do not speak for themselves; they must be interpreted in ways that are thoughtful, ethical and politically astute”* (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.8).

I applied qualitative methodology according to the following characteristics: (outlined by Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002 and Rossman & Rallis, 2003):

- I strove to understand the meaning participants constructed about their world and their experiences;
- I conducted the research in the participants' natural setting;
- I was the primary instrument of data collection and data analysis;
- I gathered multiple forms of data (outlined in more detail below), which were interactive and humanistic;
- the research process was inductive as I gathered data to build concepts or theories (emergent nature); and
- I attempted to represent the complexity of my research problem by representing the findings in a richly descriptive and holistic manner;

3.3.2 META-THEORETICAL PARADIGM

I selected social constructionism as the meta-theory. Such inquiry is essentially concerned with illuminating the processes by which people come to describe, explain or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live (Gergen, 2003). For me, the idea of social constructionism is best represented by a saying I grew up with, originating from the Talmud (Jewish Book of Law): *“We do not see things as they are; we see things as we are”*. Or as Bruce (2007, p.57) explains it in more scientific terms, *“The way we perceive ourselves in relation to others is partly linked to individual attributes of our internal psychology and personality. It is also shaped by social and societal influences.”*

The key principles of this paradigm are founded on a relativist ontology (Burr, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Morrow, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005) in which there are as many realities as there are participants (plus one: the investigator), and that meanings are therefore co-constructed by

participants and researchers. This implies a subjectivist and transactional epistemology (Morrow, 2007 citing Guba & Lincoln, 1994). According to Kant's work, the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1966 cited in Ponterotto, 2005) a central tenet of constructivist thinking is that one cannot separate an objective reality from the person (research participant) who is experiencing, processing, and labelling it. Von Glasersfeld (1987 cited in Windschitl, 2002, p.14) suggests that the world does not harbour unambiguous 'truths' independent of human perception; rather, the world is knowable only "*through the interaction of knower and experienced phenomena.*" Another important interaction to consider is that between the researcher and the object of investigation (Ponterotto, 2005).

In the current study I focused on the 'lived experiences' of the participants in an attempt to gain an understanding of the issue of school-based violence. Therefore, it was not my intention to pursue a single 'truth', but rather to uncover the various constructions and meanings held by the participants (Merriam, 2002), which are "*often shared among the members of socially, culturally, familiarly, or professionally similar groups in some social context*" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p.227). To achieve this I was guided by literature which contends that social realities are constructed, selected, built and embellished by individuals according to the situations, stimuli and events of their experiences (Burr, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). It follows that these constructions, or meanings, are intensely personal and, therefore, will be as diverse as the people who hold them (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Merriam, 2002).

It is through the interactions between participants, and between participants and researcher, that deeper meaning can be uncovered (Ponterotto, 2005). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983 cited by Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.49) state "*there is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study it. Put simply, a relationship always exists between the researcher and those being researched.*" By allowing the participants to openly discuss and express their subjective understanding and experiences of violence occurring within the school environment, through the transactional process of a focus group, and providing thick descriptions of the co-constructed data this study provides for the characteristics of the social constructionist paradigm to unfold throughout the research process.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.4.1 INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY DESIGN

Qualitative research involves the collection and analysis of a variety of empirical materials (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000), of which I chose an instrumental case study (Stake, 2000). Merriam (2002, p.8) describes case study as "*an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution, or community*". Other authors

(Bromley, 1990 cited by Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Stake, 2000) prefer to describe case study research as a process of systematic inquiry into an event or set of related events, while according to Gerring (2004, p.342) the focus should lie in the purpose of such research rather than its characteristics, highlighting that case study research is an *“intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units.”*

I followed Yin’s (2006, p.112) suggestion of using a case study design when wanting to illuminate a particular situation, *“to get a ‘close-up and first hand’ understanding of it.”* Therefore, as an instrumental case study (Stake, 2000) I wanted to understand the phenomenon of interest within a specific context to provide insight into a larger issue.

The selected case is often a complex entity operating within a number of contexts (Stake, 2000). The phenomenon of violence, and specifically school-based violence as experienced by Grade 9 learners, is a highly complex issue which cannot be viewed in a socioeconomic, cultural and political vacuum. Accordingly, I felt that a case study could be ideally applied where the phenomenon of interest is complex and not readily distinguishable from its context (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003), with multiple variables that are unsuitable for control (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007; Yin 2003).

In adopting a case study design for this study I adhered to the key principles of focusing on a bounded system (Nieuwenhuis, 2007 citing Merriam, 1988) - namely a secondary school situated in rural Mpumalanga - investigating the phenomenon within its real-life context (Creswell, 2007; Yin, 2003) with the purpose of providing a description of real people in real situations (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Furthermore, I employed multiple data collection methods (Creswell, 2007; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Rossman & Rellis, 2003, Stake, 2000; Yin, 2006) to provide a rich and vivid description and analysis (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007) of the interactions and discussions. Therefore I believe that my choice in using a case study offers a multi-perspective analysis (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) which links well with the transactional epistemological nature of my research paradigm.

Rossman and Rellis (2003, p.105) describe the strengths of using case studies in research as, *“their detail, their complexity, and their use of multiple sources to obtain multiple perspectives.”* They further assert that case studies are descriptive, holistic, heuristic, and inductive, offering complex and multilayered insights.

3.4.2 SELECTION OF CASE: A RURAL SCHOOL

“In the case of qualitative research, the sources from which we draw and the tools that we employ in data collection determine the data that we produce, the meanings that we craft from those data, and the knowledge claims that we make” (Suzuki et al., 2007, p.296). Therefore, I gave careful consideration to selecting a case which would best address the purpose of this research (Stake, 2000) providing access to relevant participants (Grade 9 learners).

The particular secondary school I chose was easily and conveniently available to me (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). The issues of simplicity, accessibility to the participants, unobtrusiveness and permissibility (Suzuki et al., 2007) also influenced my considerations of a case. The school has a standing long-term relationship with the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria through ongoing participation in a longitudinal study. Conducting research at this school also provided me with logistic and cost benefits as I participated in academic service learning activities at the school.



Photograph 3.1 (above) The school entrance.

Photograph 3.2 (below) Learners' access to sanitation and water at the school.



According to Creswell (2007) convenience sampling can save time, money and effort, however, sometimes at the expense of information and credibility. I duly noted this limitation and attempted to compensate where I could by ensuring rigour in collection, analysis and interpretation of data. This was done by scattering the report with photographs of the school, providing the reader with a visual descriptions of the school. Photograph 3.1 was taken at the school's entrance as the learners were leaving at the end of a school day, while Photograph 3.2 shows the toilets and water tanks situated behind the classrooms. These photographs serve to provide the reader with a visual of the environment in which the school is situated, as well as to highlight how exposed the school and learners are (enclosed by only a thin, low fence).

3.4.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Within the stated case, I applied convenient, purposive sampling (Maree & Pietersen, 2007) to select Grade 9 learners. In the FLY (Flourishing, Learning Youth) Project, undertaken since 2005 as part of a module of the M.Ed (Educational Psychology) programme in the Department of Educational Psychology at the University of Pretoria, learners in a rural school participate in educational psychology services. Two-day sessions are facilitated by postgraduate students twice a year, focusing on supporting learners' career- and learning development (Ebersöhn, 2010). Refer to the research schedule in Appendix D.

Merriam (2002) suggests that since qualitative inquiry seeks to understand the meaning of an experience from participants' perspectives, it is important to select a sample from which the most can be learned. As part of FLY, learners group themselves freely with post graduate students. Therefore, the only participant selection criteria for the study was that participants were Grade 9's in this rural secondary school participating in FLY activities with me. The process of learners grouping themselves with individual educational psychology students is illustrated in Photograph 3.3.

As depicted in Table 3.1, nine learners grouped themselves with me - four boys and five girls - aged between 15 and 17 years of age. It is important to note that while English is the language of instruction at the school, it is not the participants' home language. Participants spoke mostly siSwati amongst themselves.



Photograph 3.3 Grade 9 learners grouping themselves with postgraduate students in the school's quad.

Table 3.1 Profile of study participants

(* indicates participants who verbally participated in the focus group although all were present).

Participant	1 *	2	3 *	4	5	6	7 *	8 *	9 *
Gender	M	M	F	F	F	F	M	F	M
Age	15	17	15	16	16	15	16	15	15

3.5 DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

Data gathering is a “deliberate, conscious, systemic process that details both the products – the data – and the processes of the research activities so that others may understand how the study was performed and can judge its adequacy, strength, and ethics” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.179). Qualitative researchers should gather extensive amounts of rich data with thick description (Charmaz, 2000). There are three major sources of data for a qualitative research study - interviews, observations and documents (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2002). I chose to make use of all three data sources in the current study. The focus group interview served as the primary source of data, while informal discussions with, and observations of, participants, as well as analysis of their workbook, activities served as supporting data.

3.5.1 A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Guided by the theory of social constructionism, in this study I assumed that attitudes and beliefs do not form in a vacuum, but that individuals often clarify their own opinions and understandings by listening to others' (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Therefore, I chose a focus group interview, with its critical characteristic of member interaction (Madriz, 2000; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Wilkinson, 2004), as the main strategy for data collection. Focus groups are often valued for the rich interaction they provide, fitting well with a theoretical orientation that privileges the social (Raby, 2010). As a collectivist, rather than an individualistic, research method, focus groups allow for the multi-voicing of participants' attitudes, experiences and beliefs (Madriz (2000, p.836), attempting to learn from the experiences of the individuals and the group as a whole, while the process itself brings out voices not normally heard (Latess, 2008).

A focus group interview is also ideal when making the assumption that the interaction between the participants will be productive in widening the range of responses, activating forgotten details of experience and releasing inhibitions that may otherwise have discouraged them from disclosing information (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Raby (2010) believes focus groups are especially useful for accessing the shared culture and 'indigenous' terms or categories unique to youth groups. It is also advantageous when there is limited time available for collecting information (Creswell, 2007). Madriz (2000, p.838) asserts that focus groups minimise the control the researcher has during the data gathering process by decreasing her power over the research participants. "*The collective nature of the group interview empowers the participants and validates their voices and experiences*".

To access and capture diverse perceptions held by participants, I engaged with them in an open discussion (Leoschut & Bonora, 2007 citing Schurink, Schurink & Poggenpoel, 1998) revolving around one principal question: "What is school violence?" The discussion lasted one hour, which I recorded on two digital recorders. I transcribed the interview verbatim (*refer to Appendix E*), in preparation for analysis. A fellow post-graduate student who speaks siSwati sat with me to translate what the participants were saying amongst themselves, but at times their conversations were mumbled and difficult to follow.



Photograph 3.4 (left) Engaging participants in fun activities aimed at building trust and rapport

Photograph 3.5 (right) Creating an asset flower garden

I conducted the focus group discussion on the second day with the participants (*refer to Appendix D for research schedule*), leaving the first day to engage in activities aimed at getting to know the group members, building rapport and trust. Photograph 3.4 illustrates participants decorating t-shirts to portray who they are, whilst in Photograph 3.5 I am showing learners how to create a flower garden, writing each others' assets and strengths on coloured flower petals. Rossman and Rallis (2003, p.192-3) advise that the key to conducting effective focus group interviews is to “*promote interactive talk through the creation of a permissive environment.*” With that in mind, the informal discussions and workbook activities served to create such an environment to ease the participants into the process of expressing different opinions and points of views (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Several authors note that focus groups with youth work best when used in conjunction with other data collection techniques (Raby, 2010; Wilkinson, 2004).

3.5.2 PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION

According to Merriam (2002, p.13) observational data represent a firsthand encounter with the phenomenon of interest. Therefore, he believes that observation is the best technique when “*an activity, event, or situation can be observed firsthand, when a fresh perspective is desired, or when participants are not able or willing to discuss the phenomenon under study.*” Suzuki et al. (2007) add that cultural knowledge often remains at a tacit level and can be more readily identified through the process of engagement between the participant and the researcher.

To engage with participants in a way that builds familiarity and allowed me to enter somewhat into their life-world, I chose to be what Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, (2009 citing Adler and Adler, 1987) term an active member researcher or observer-as-participant (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000).

This entails becoming involved with the central activities of the group without fully committing myself to the members' values and goals, thereby allowing me to casually and non-directively interact with the group while retaining my role as the researcher (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). I documented these observations in two ways. Firstly, I jotted down quick notes during the focus group, later adding these notes to the transcription. Secondly, I reflected in the research journal on a regular basis as I interacted with the group (*refer to appendix F*). These were coded as 'personal notes' in the analysis in Chapter 4.

I also documented observations visually (of the setting and processes) to provide rich description of the case. Ebersöhn & Elof (2007, p.204) state that "*Few other data sources can demonstrate more clearly than photographs the dynamic, committed involvement of participants in research process.*" In this study, observations were fore-grounded while photographs served to document and enrich the observational data. Following guidelines from Ebersöhn & Elof (2007, p.213) using visual data in a report can contribute to transferability of the case as they contribute detailed, rich descriptions of the setting being studied: "*providing sufficient supportive information to judge the applicability of findings to other settings.*" Furthermore, photographs can form part of an audit trail by documenting and illustrating the research processes (Ebersöhn & Elof, 2007).

There are several benefits of conducting observations within research (Creswell, 2007; Freeman & Mathison, 2009; Merriam, 2002). In this case I was able to see the participants' behaviour in their natural context, observing their cultural constructions in action. This provided me with a greater opportunity to identify aspects of behaviour that were not apparent during the formal focus group (Suzuki et al, 2007). I further acknowledged that non-verbal cues can often indicate a participant's feelings about a topic, even though he/she did not verbalise it (Latess, 2008). Noting body language and other gestural cues during an interview lend meanings to the words of the persons being interviewed (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). Therefore, while interviewing helped me to understand how participants made sense of events and experiences, the participant observations were useful in understanding how events take shape and how they affect participants, in ways the group members might not even be aware of (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

3.5.3 TASK-BASED ACTIVITIES

As the goal in qualitative research, and especially in case study design (Yin, 2003), is to gather data that are rich and descriptive and illustrate the topic of interest intensely (Patton, 2002; Polkinghorne, 2005), I included workbook activities which I conducted with the group participants as supplementary data (*see Appendix G for examples of worksheets*).

Gaining entry and developing a research process depends on the quality of rapport between the researcher and study participants (Suzuki et al, 2007), and this has to be continuously negotiated with the participants throughout the study. I, therefore, used the worksheets and activities as a means to gain entry with the group, create familiarity and to see how they make meaning of various concepts, such as school violence, safety and their connection to the school. Punch (2002) explains that learners are familiar with worksheets and task-based activities as these are often done in a school setting, therefore the interaction is between the participant and the paper, making the researcher non-intrusive. Another advantage, specifically when conducting research with children, is that worksheets provide participants with some control over use of language and expression (Freeman & Mathison, 2009).

The activities conducted with the group were as follows (*examples of these are available in Appendix G*):

- *My reflection*: a page with a mirror in the middle for participants to draw themselves. On either side were the headings *Things I like about myself* and *Things I don't like about myself*.
- *My School*: the page resembles a notice-board, each pinned piece of paper has a different heading, such as *Things I like most about going to school*, *Things I hate most about going to school*, *My favourite subjects* etc.

Hodder (2000) explains that such documents are closer to speech, and therefore require more contextualised analysis and interpretation. During the reading and immersion phase of the analysis I went through the workbooks highlighting key words which I thought might be relevant. Once themes had emerged from the focus group transcription, I synthesised data from participants' workbooks (comments and reflections) with categories.

3.6 THE DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION PROCESS

3.6.1 FOLLOWING A RECURSIVE SPIRAL PROCESS

In qualitative research data analysis is the process of preparing and organising the data, then reducing it into themes (through coding), and finally representing the data in figures, tables or a discussion (Creswell, 2007). This is not a linear process as all the elements (data collection, analysis and interpretation) are interrelated, interwoven and occur simultaneously (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Henning, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Merriam, 2002; Yeh & Inman, 2007). *"In a qualitative study, there is no clear point at which data collection stops and analysis begins. Rather, there is a gradual fading out of the one and a fading in of the other, so that at first you are mainly collecting data and towards the end you are mainly analysing what you have*

collected' (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p.321). Such was the case in my study. As I interacted with the participants through data collection, I started to learn how they make sense of their experiences, and so began the process of making analytic sense of their meanings and actions (Charmaz, 2006).

Various authors outline phases, or stages, to follow in the analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard, 1996; Charmaz, 2006; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Miles & Huberman, 1984). I believe these are all best represented in Creswell's (2007) spiral, which represents how the researcher moves in analytic circles, rather than using a fixed linear approach. With this in mind, I entered the process with raw data, engaged in numerous loops – managing, organising, describing, classifying and interpreting - and finally exited with this written account of my experience and findings (Creswell, 2007). Although I represent my efforts below in a linear, step-by-step fashion, it should be noted that in reality the process was a recursive one, moving back and forth as needed, and which developed over time (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

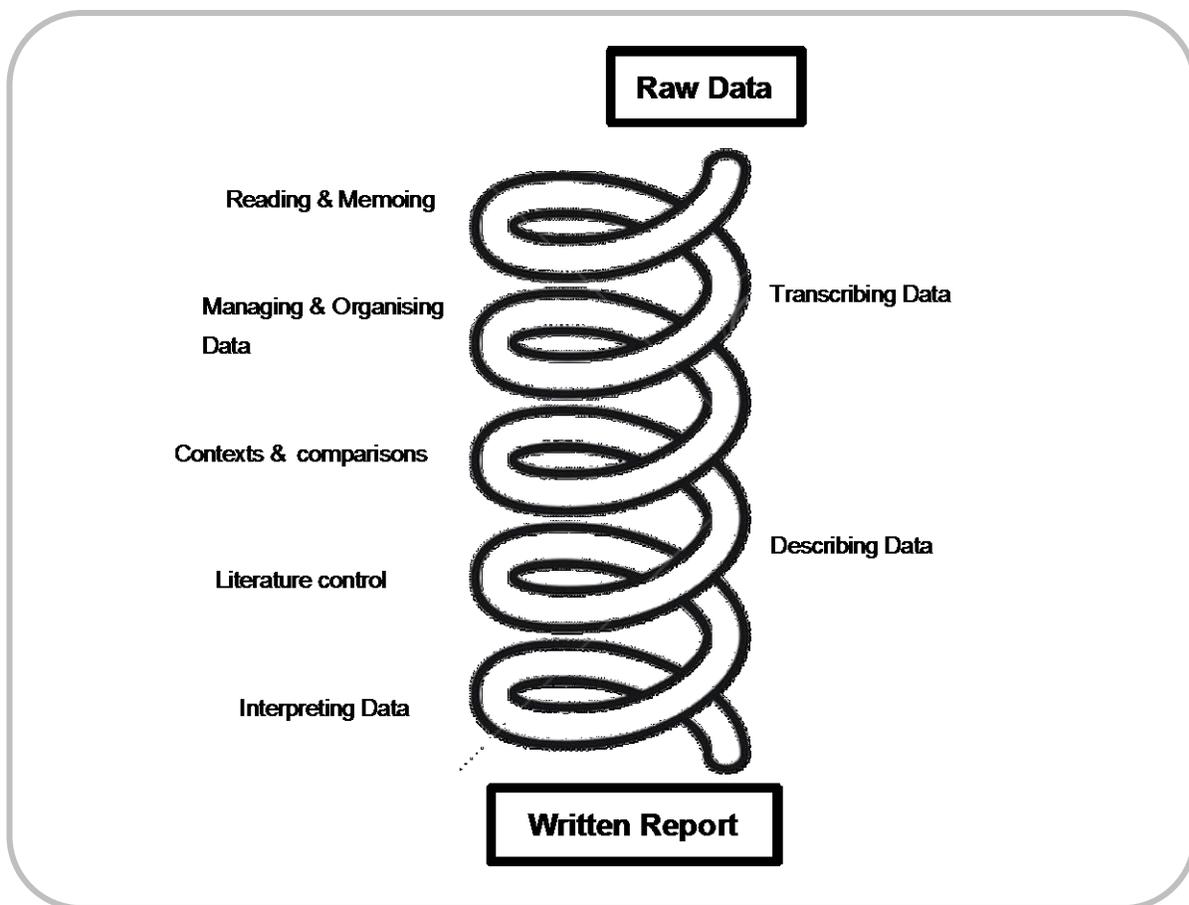


Figure 3.1 The data analysis spiral (adapted from Creswell, 2007, p.151)

3.6.2 TWO-PRONGED DATA ANALYSIS APPROACH

My aim with this study was to explore and understand school violence as constructed by participants. I used constructivist grounded theory principles to guide thematic analysis allowing me to approach the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame, or according to my preconceptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). *“Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex, account of data”* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.78).

3.6.2.1 **Constructivist Grounded Theory Principles For Analysis**

Constructivist grounded theorists attend to what and how questions, by emphasising abstract understanding of empirical phenomena and locating such understanding in the specific circumstances of the research process (Charmaz, 2008). Although I did not base my study on a Grounded Theory paradigm, I used constructivist grounded principles for analysis (Charmaz, 2000; 2006; 2008; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2005). This approach builds on a symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective and constructivist methods that assume the relativism of multiple social realities, the mutual creation of knowledge by researchers and research participants, and aims towards providing interpretive understanding of the studied world (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2005).

I transcribed recorded data from the focus group which, together with observation data, field notes and worksheets, formed the basis of analysis (Wilkinson, 2004). I began the process by immersing myself in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Terre Blanche et al., 2006) to gain a sense of the whole before breaking it into parts. During this process I also started making memo notes alongside the texts being analysed (*refer to Appendix H*). This helped me in the initial process of exploring the data (Creswell, 2007), and forming summaries or phrases (Burnard, 1996). It is important to work systemically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item, and identifying interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thereafter, I began coding and categorising, trying to remain open to possible themes and ideas emerging. *“Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means”* (Charmaz, 2006, p.46). I made cue cards with words or phrases that came from the texts I was working with (Kelle, 2007). This phase of the process was important for me as it guided my learning about research, and allowed me to begin making sense of the data and participants. *“Through this active coding, you interact with your data again and again and ask many different questions of them”* (Charmaz, 2006, p.46). The challenge at this stage was to ensure I was not

forcing theoretical concepts on the data, *“The most basic challenge in grounded category building is to reconcile the need of letting categories emerge from the material of research (instead of forcing preconceived theoretical terms on the data) with the impossibility of abandoning previous theoretical knowledge”* (Kelle, 2007, p.192).

3.6.2.2 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon. The process involves the identification of themes and recognising patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday, & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). According to Creswell (2007, p.151) category formation and developing themes represents the heart of qualitative data analysis where *“researchers describe in detail, develop themes or dimensions through some classification system, and provide an interpretation in light of their own views or views on perspectives in the literature.”*

Here I started grouping the cards with words, phrases and ideas together, reducing them down to central themes. *“Reduction of the words and phrases involves crossing out repetitions and similar words and phrases so as to produce a list of headings that account for all of the data”* (Burnard, 1996, p.279). The aim is therefore, to identify key issues (Burnard, 1996) in the data. I like Kelly’s (2006a, p.357) recommendation of ‘unpacking’ data – laying out the meanings of words and images into different piles. *“Apart from reflecting instances that show a thematic similarity, this is also a stock-taking activity.”* I did this by means of a visual display of the cards on a white board (refer to Appendix J). Such data display permits conclusion-drawing and action-taking, as by looking at it helped me to understand what is happening, and to take action based on that understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p.23).

Thick descriptions present details, emotions, and textures of social relationships (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Denzin (1994 cited by Rossman & Rallis, 2003) notes that an event or process cannot be truly interpreted or understood until it has firstly been well described. It is not overlooked that researchers always have to draw on existing stocks of theoretical knowledge to understand, describe and explain empirically observed phenomena (Kelle, 2007). Moving beyond categories to themes, descriptions and interpretations I consulted various literature to guide me on conducting qualitative thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). In this report I present main themes with categories, providing a definition as well as inclusion and exclusion criteria that guided the process.

3.6.3 DRAWING MEANINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

In this stage I needed to move the analysis to a higher level of integration and synthesis, attempting to find meaning beyond the specifics of the data (Creswell, 2007). Burnard (1996)

explains that the task is to answer the 'so what?' question, while Creswell (2007) urges the researcher to consider 'lessons learned'. *"Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, making sense of findings, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, extrapolating lessons, making inferences, considering meanings, and otherwise imposing order"* (Patton, 2002, p.480). Rossman and Rallis (2003) further explain that as the interpretation tells a story, my emphasis must lie on illuminating, understanding and exploration.

As I learned how the research participants possibly made sense of their experiences, I began to make analytic sense of their meanings and actions (Charmaz, 2006). To do this I attempted to stay close to the data, and approach it from a position of empathic understanding (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). For me the process of uncovering the meanings within the data followed a journey of experience which parallels this vivid description:

"Methods extend and magnify our view of studied life and, thus broaden and deepen what we learn of it and know about it. Through our methods, we first aim to see this work as our research participants do – from the inside. Although we cannot claim to replicate their views, we can try to enter their settings and situations to the extent possible. Seeing research participants' lives from the inside often gives a researcher otherwise unobtainable views. You might learn that what outsiders assume about the world you study may be limited, imprecise, mistaken or egregiously wrong" (Charmaz, 2006, p.14).

The social constructionist paradigm, which views research as an interactive process between researcher and participants (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Zyromski, Bryant & Gerler, 2009) was carried through to the analysis and interpretation of the data collected. For holistic interpretation in this study, it was essential that I comprehended contextual understanding and made sense of my participants' 'voices' within situated events (Kelly, 2006a). Therefore, the resulting tale of results and meanings are in fact *"the researcher's story about the stories people have told her"* (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.11). To ensure the meanings were carried through the entire process I used the language of the participants, where possible, for the labels and categories; and tried to move beyond merely summarising content, but rather to think in terms of processes, functions, tensions and contradictions (Terre Blanche et al, 2006).

Just as I was challenged with the two hats of researcher and student (see 3.9 *Role of Researcher*) when interacting with my participants, the analysis and interpretation phase played its part too in testing my ability to engage, yet at the same time detach, myself from the data. *"Just as our personhood affects the analysis, so, too, the analysis affects our personhood. Within this circle of*

impact is the space between. The intimacy of qualitative research no longer allows us to remain true outsiders to the experience under study and, because of our role as researchers, it does not qualify us as complete insiders” (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.61). To complete the spiral of analysis and interpretation, I present a written account of the data (Creswell, 2007).

3.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

I have so far outlined (with motivations), my choice to approach this study through qualitative and social constructionist lenses, as well as my direction with regards to research design and data collection strategies. However, I realise that no approach is a panacea, and I noted and acknowledged the various limitations and concerns inherent in my study.

3.7.1 CRITIQUE OF PARADIGMATIC ASSUMPTIONS

3.7.1.1 **Limitations Of Qualitative Research**

Creswell (2007) warns that engaging in qualitative research requires a strong commitment with regards to time and resources. I also noted that qualitative inquiry emanates from multiple paradigms (Ponterotto, 2005) each with its own criteria for good research and guidelines. Therefore, it was important for me to clearly understand and state the purpose, goals, methods and procedures I had in the current study, and especially the paradigmatic assumptions in which I anchored the study (Ponterotto, 2005).

When engaging in qualitative research it is always important to be aware of one’s subjective influence on data gathering and the analysing processes (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Morrow, 2007; Yeh & Inman, 2007). Many researchers turn to qualitative methods in the hope of generating richer and more finely nuanced accounts of human action, however it is essential to keep in mind the issue of scientific validity through reflexivity, multiple voicing and literary styling (Gergen & Gergen, 2000). As Yeh and Inman (2007) explain, as a researcher (and primary instrument of collection) it is essential for me to understand how I shape, create, and construct evidence, interpretations, analysis, and theory in qualitative analysis. This is especially relevant when the participants’ culture, language, beliefs, and norms differed from my own. To limit or control this issue, I made use of self reflexivity (also termed self awareness by Creswell, 2007), which is an ongoing activity during the research process (Yeh & Inman, 2007). (*Refer to Appendix F for extracts from the research journal*). Other strategies, which assisted me towards ensuring a clearer and more accurate understanding and reflection of what was being shared, were making use of member checking (Yeh & Inman, 2007), employing multiple data collection procedures (Creswell, 2007) and including photographs of the research setting and process in the final report (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2007).

3.7.1.2 Understanding The Social Constructions Of Children In Research

A constructivist approach necessitates a relationship with the participants in which they can present their stories in their terms. This required me to listen to their stories with openness to feeling and experience. Charmaz (2000) warns that researchers are sometimes prone to framing their questions in ways that cloak raw experience and mute feelings.

To truly represent the constructions of school violence as expressed by the participants it was imperative that the paradigm of social constructionism was carried through into the analysis and interpretation process, ensuring that I did not impose my own (adult) views and interpretations (Punch, 2002). With its focus on social meaning, the social constructionist approach relies on the use of language and other symbolic forms in data collection and analysis. How a person relates to the world is largely a function of the cultural context, particularly, those discourses which are central to structuring the world and the individual's place in it (Greene & Hill, 2005). This was a limitation in the current study as participants and I did not share a common language or culture. It is, therefore, likely that barriers of language, culture and background significantly influenced the research process and findings.

Researching children's experiences is a project that is fundamentally problematic because it is a highly inferential project (Greene & Hill, 2005). A limitation of documenting people's constructions and experiences of their world is that participants "*can report on their motivations and emotions only to the extent that they are aware of them and only in the manner that they have come to interpret them*" (Greene & Hill, 2005, p.7). My aim was to learn about participants' experiences by enquiring into their active engagement with their material and social worlds, through actions or words (Greene & Hill, 2005). However, as an adult I can never truly be a child again and this inherently biases my understanding of their subjective world (Punch, 2002). Davis (1998, p.332 citing Ritala-Koskinen, 1994) wisely asserts that perhaps researchers should consider that "*there are no authentic voices of children to be discovered, only different versions of childhood.*"

3.7.2 CRITIQUE OF THE SELECTED RESEARCH DESIGN

3.7.2.1 Limitations Of An Instrumental Case Study

The criticisms aimed against case study research, are usually due to its dependence on a single case, and the difficulty of demonstrating validity, reliability and causal links (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). There are also claims that this type of research provides too narrow a perspective and is incapable of providing a generalising conclusion (Stake, 2000). However, others argue that detailed descriptions and narratives allow readers to reason through analogy - forming interpretations and decisions regarding the applicability of the case learnings, which may shed light

on, and offer insights about, populations or set of circumstances believed to be sufficiently similar to the study sample (Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

Gergen and Gergen (2000, p.1032) point out that “*descriptions and explanations can be valid as long as one does not mistake local conventions for universal truths.*” I was cognisant of that claim in the current study. Furthermore, I agree with Stake (2000) that case studies are valuable for suggesting complexities for further investigation, and helping to establish the limits of generalisability, and therefore I was guided by his wise words: “*The purpose of a case report is not to represent the world, but to represent a case*” (Stake, 2000, p.448). Therefore, I made every effort to provide detailed and rich descriptions and photographs regarding the school and learners that participated in the study to allow readers to reach their own conclusions regarding transferability.

3.7.2.2 Constraints Associated With The Case And Participant Selection

My main motivation for choosing this specific secondary school was because it was convenient and suited the limited-scope nature of this study. However, this did place some constraints on the research as I was there in the dual role of researcher and psychology student, creating a complicated facet to my engagement. In addition, allowing participants to choose me, instead of the other way around, meant that I could not select according to pre-set criteria and, therefore, had no guarantee that the participants would consent to being part of my research, or would share (or be able to share) information about a sensitive topic with me. My biggest challenge in this regard was language and culture barriers, and it required substantial time and effort to build rapport and trust. I had only two days to get to know participants and create an environment where they felt ‘safe’ enough to talk openly with me. In hindsight, this proved to be a limiting factor. The result was that only a few of the participants verbally participated in the discussion, biasing the results towards group members who were proficient and confident enough to speak English. As Morrow and Richards (1996, p.103) explain: “*children are not used to being asked their opinions and to relate their experiences to unknown adults*” and therefore advocate that research projects allow sufficient time for a relationship to develop between the researcher and participants.

3.7.3 CRITIQUE OF SELECTED DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

3.7.3.1 Limitations Of Focus Group Interviews

Concerns regarding this method of data collection usually focus on the small, homogenous sample size resulting in limited generalisability (Latess, 2008), and the influences inherent in group processes such as group think, group members colluding to silence, intimidate or harass a particular participant (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Raby, 2010; Wilkinson, 2004). In addition, is the tendency of children and youth to misrepresent themselves in focus groups (Raby, 2010) to

influence the researcher or the other group members. In any interview situation one can expect that the presence of the researcher or facilitator will interfere with the 'authenticity' of the social interaction (Madriz, 2000). In research with children it is even more pronounced as children live in an adult-dominated society in which they learn to comply with adult request and demands. Therefore, in an effort to please the adult or for fear of saying the 'wrong' thing, decide to say or behave according to pre-set expectations.

The school environment, in particular, is a place organised and controlled by adult teachers, and research conducted at school should take into account that children may feel pressure to give 'correct' answers to research questions (Punch, 2002). The challenge is how best to maximise children's ability to express themselves at the point of data-gathering; enhancing their willingness to communicate and the richness of the findings. I had to be cognisant of these concerns, as well as being aware of how non-verbal cues from myself, or between the participants, could influence the discussion (Latess 2008).

To counteract some of these issues, it is important for the facilitator to have the necessary skills and ability, involving and including all group members (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Wilkinson, 2004). I felt that I had sufficient skill and experience in this regard. Furthermore, various authors points out that focus group research is not intended to be generalised to other settings, but instead its interactive and context-specific nature serves as a platform for a descriptive analysis (Latess, 2008; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Wilkinson, 2004) allowing for the transferability of interpretations.

3.7.3.2 Disadvantages Of Participant Observation And Task-Based Activities

There are several benefits of using participant observations in research, mostly that it is a strategy that provides the researcher unobtrusive access into participants' everyday spaces. However, even observations are imbued with limitations. When starting the study I noted that Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009) expressed that participant observation is tantamount to an oxymoron, as it implies simultaneous emotional involvement and objective detachment.

Freeman and Mathison (2009) also warn that observing participants while they are unaware holds notions of power and authority, inclusion and exclusion, and can confuse child and adult roles and responsibilities. As a social constructionist I was aware that the interaction between myself and the participants during the study can change behaviours in ways that would not have occurred in the absence of such interaction (Angrosino & Mays de Perez, 2000). However, by making use of multiple data collection tools and regularly noting my own thoughts, behaviours and assumptions in a research journal I attempted to maximise observational efficacy and minimise any investigator bias (*refer to Appendix F for extracts from the research journal*).

Finally, although the task-based activities provided for time to build trust and rapport with participants and served as an alternative form of expression to those learners who were not comfortable engaging in the focus group, the tasks did require a reasonable level of literacy and language proficiency. I was aware of this limitation and made every effort to make worksheets visually appealing, and using straightforward instructions. I also engaged members in the group in conversation to gain their personal descriptions and interpretations of items mentioned in the worksheets (Punch, 2002), as illustrated in Photographs 3.6. Unfortunately, this strategy was not feasible with all the group member due to time constraints. Photograph 3.7 illustrates the feedback circle conducted at the end of each afternoon to gain input from group members regarding the day's events.



Photograph 3.6 (left) Engaging with participants to understand their personal interpretations of the worksheets and activities.

Photograph 3.7 (right) Reflection circle conducted with group members.

3.7.4 CRITIQUE OF QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis is by nature inherently subjective, and thus open to various errors (Burnard, 1996, p.280). Firstly, the copious amounts of data collected require extensive reduction into manageable yet comprehensive portions. *“The great tension in data analysis is between maintaining a sense of the holism of the data – the text – and the tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data – to separate them into constituent elements, thereby losing the synergy of the whole, and often the whole is greater than the sum of the parts”* (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007, p.470).

I am aware that decisions regarding which data to attend to and select for further analysis and interpretation were influenced by my personal visions, values and constructions of meaning (Miles

& Huberman, 1984). Cohen et al. (2007, p.495) further explain that projection and counter-transference are common place in qualitative analysis, therefore *“the researcher’s analysis may say as much about the researcher as about the text being analysed, both in the selection of the levels of analysis and the imputation of intention and function of discourses in the text.”* This was especially true with the current study. By using constructivist grounded theory principles in analysis I recognise that I played a significant role in shaping the data and ensuing analysis through my observations and interactions with the participants. *“Data do not provide a window on reality. Rather, the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural and structural contexts. Researchers and subjects frame that interaction and confer meaning upon it”* (Charmaz, 2000, p.523). For this reason I present this written report in the first person throughout.

This leads to the second pitfall of using thematic analysis techniques. The researcher presents a weak and unconvincing analysis: *“where the themes do not appear to work, where there is too much overlap between themes, or where the themes are not internally coherent or consistent”* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.94). I tried to address this issue by broadening my reading of literature to include not only studies that validate my research but also those that contradict findings. In addition, during the process of analysis and interpretation I made sure to consider alternative meanings or variations in the account produced (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To address criticism in literature that qualitative analysis strategies (especially thematic analysis) are too open and flexible, I made sure to be clear and explicit about how I approached the data and followed guidelines set out in literature (*refer to Appendix I for criteria which guided the analysis process*).

Finally, it has been pointed out that thematic analysis has limited interpretive power beyond mere description. However, if researchers are rigorous in their approach qualitative methodologies can produce an insightful analysis that answers particular research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8 ENHANCING TRUSTWORTHINESS

Multiple criteria are often employed to ensure standards in qualitative research (Yeh & Inman, 2007). However, conducting qualitative research according to a social constructionist paradigm often clashes with the conventional criteria of rigour such as validity, objectivity and reliability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 2003). It is argued that the assumption of multiple constructed realities, uniqueness of context and the interrelatedness of values and inquiry within research contradict the traditional questions of truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality formed from within the modernist paradigm. Lincoln and Denzin (2003, p.173) explain this dilemma aptly by stating: *“Relativism does not sit well with attempts to establish ‘truth’”*.

I agree with the argument that, according to the relativist view, research accounts are simply representations of a temporary consensus regarding what is to be considered true by participants at that time, in that context. Therefore, in this study I attempted to remain faithful to the five point criterion proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) for naturalistic inquirers to counteract the confusion: Credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity. As Merriam (2002, p.15) eloquently states: “*In qualitative research, it is the rich, thick descriptions, the words (not numbers) that persuade the reader of the trustworthiness of the findings.*”

I used triangulation of data collection methods and auditing (described by Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as providing a methodologically self-critical account of how the research was done) to establish credibility and dependability. I provided thick descriptions of the research process and maintained an audit trail to establish transferability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981 cited by Lincoln & Guba 1985; Kelly, 2006b). I maintained authenticity by representing the range of different realities (Seale, 2003 citing Guba and Lincoln, 1994) which emerged in the study. I attempted to facilitate a more in-depth understanding for the group members of the phenomenon being studied (ontological authenticity), as well as an appreciation of other members' viewpoints (educative authenticity). I carried out member checking of themes and categories with the participants to ensure the authenticity of the results (refer to Appendix K). In addition, I included various photographs in the report to visually document the setting and research process, enriching the case study, as well as enhancing authenticity and transferability of the findings (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2007).

It is argued that by increasing the number of data sources in a study, researchers can gain a more complex and nuanced appreciation of a phenomenon of interest (Suzuki et al, 2007). Furthermore, it was important to ensure that this study was undertaken rigorously – a standard for practice which assesses the extent to which an outsider would agree with results of the study, given the data collected and displayed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Strategies taken to ensure rigour included: making my position as the researcher clear; relying on multiple methods for gathering data; and diligently documenting the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting the data. Another method for ensuring careful and rigorous analysis of the data was making use of “*detailed notes or memos that address hunches, questions and reactions and interpretations*” (Yeh & Inman, 2007, p.388).

Given the interpretive nature of qualitative research, the values and beliefs of the researcher can influence the study in important ways. This was expressed in my choice, and framing of, the problem, the paradigm and theory chosen to guide the investigation, as well as the values inherent in the chosen context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Therefore, throughout this

study I have acknowledged and described by own values and assumptions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ponterotto, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003).

3.9 ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

“Researchers themselves are an important part of the research process, either in terms of their own personal presence as researchers, or in terms of their experiences in the field and with the reflexivity they bring to the role - as are members of the field under study” (Flick, 2007 p.ix). I perceived my role as a paradoxical one, explained by Corbin Dwyer and Buckle (2009, p.55, citing Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) as follows: *“...it is to be acutely tuned-in to the experiences and meaning systems of others - to indwell - and at the same time to be aware of how one’s own biases and preconceptions may be influencing what one is trying to understand.”*

In addition, social constructionist inquiry involves gathering and testing realities co-constructed with participants, which necessitates person-to-person data collection. This interaction revolves around building a relationship of trust, as each participant (and researcher) take turns giving, sharing and teaching each other. Lincoln and Guba (2003, p.229) believe this creates vulnerabilities as *“knower and known exchange roles, barter, trust, and reconstruct identities.”* Various authors similarly warn that it is essential to take heed of the power dynamics (occurring in the relationship between researcher and participants) that will influence the data obtained and the subsequent interpretations made (Davis, 1998; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Suzuki et al, 2007). As a white, female researcher/student coming into a rural, African secondary school, the power dynamic was obvious and unavoidable. Literature states that making use of a focus group method is ideal in situations where inequalities exist between young participants and an adult facilitator by tipping the balance of power away and creating a comfortable, engaging environment (Punch, 2002; Raby, 2010; Wilkinson, 2004). I also attempted to alleviate any possible deception and promoted participation by being genuine and authentic in my presentation of myself, as well as by providing participants with clear and fair explanations of the purpose of my study and their role in the engagement. *“Achieving trust demands forthrightness, clear and fair explanation of the purposes of the research, and authentic presentation of the researcher’s self – conditions which require time to fulfil. The normal constraints in the fieldwork that relies on the human instrument intensify as the time available shortens – hence the need for powerful self awareness before entering the field”* (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p.230-231).

My role and interaction as a researcher was somewhat complicated by the fact that I was also engaging with these learners, simultaneously, as an Educational Psychology student conducting assessments as part of an academic service learning module. As the activities for the academic

service learning and the data collection overlapped, it was difficult for me to separate my roles and reflections completely. Instead, I maintained the same professional, ethical standards of interaction throughout my time spent with the participants (*refer to Appendix F for extracts of research journal*).

Following recommendations from literature (Davis, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ponterotto, 2005; Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Suzuki et al, 2007) I made use of a research journal, noting as much information about my engagement with the participants, as well as my thoughts and feelings regarding these interactions and observations. *“Reflexivity in the setting begins with the researcher reacting to the participants words and actions, which trigger thoughts, hunches, working hypotheses and understanding of the setting and the participants. Constructs are generated or patterns identified to explain what is being observed”* (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p.50). Throughout the research process I kept in mind Rossman and Rallis’ (2003, p.179) wise words that in research discovery and learning are integral and interlinked: *“Data gathering entails diligently recording and reflecting, recording those reflections, and reflecting on those recordings.”*

In reflection, the process of data collection proved to be time consuming and challenging, especially as I was also focused on attaining academic service learning tasks at the same time. Wearing the hat of both student and researcher simultaneously was laborious and, even during the data analysis process, I found it difficult at times to separate my researcher and psychologist-in-training observations and reflections accordingly. Language and culture also proved to be a larger barrier than I had initially anticipated, and I had to double my efforts to build trust and rapport with participants before I felt we were truly starting to connect. But my biggest lesson learned through the planning and collecting phases of my research was experiencing first-hand the complexities of finding balance in my role as a researcher. As explained by Suzuki et al. (2007), we are neither cameras, passively capturing a snapshot of the social landscape, nor mirrors, reflecting back an objective reality. Instead, we are active agents seeking to learn about our world through each piece of data that we collect. *“But just as the methods we chose influence what we see, what we bring to the study also influences what we can see”* (Charmaz, 2006, p.15).

Being a qualitative researcher is not simply being a scientific observer claiming scientific neutrality and authority, as clearly neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world. It was important for me to always remember that: *“Researchers and research participants make assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses and pursue purposes that influence their respective views and actions in the presence of each other”* (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). Furthermore, was the issue of circularity of qualitative research, which Yeh and Inman (2007, p.384) describe as the *“complexity, depth, and comprehensiveness of qualitative*

research as it emerges from its connectedness across researcher, method, analysis, and developing theory.” Every step of my journey, I needed to be cognisant of situational and context variables, my own values and assumptions as well as ongoing ethical considerations. I realised that the research process requires examination and re-examination on multiple levels at different points in time (Yeh & Inman, 2007), it is certainly not a linear endeavour or simple experience.

3.10 MAINTAINING ETHICAL RESEARCH

The essential purpose of research ethics is to protect the welfare of research participants (Wassenaar, 2006). In social research, ethics are not only embedded in the methodology but also in the practices, politics and presentation of research results (Lincoln & Denzin, 2003). According to Freeman and Mathison (2009) treating children and young people as competent social actors, rather than passive recipients of social norms, creates new ethical challenges for researchers. In this study I took heed of ethical guidelines pertaining to how I treated participants, how I could preserve information about them confidentially, and the nature of the researcher-participant relationship. These concerns can be divided into three broad categories: informed consent, confidentiality and protection (Davis, 1998; Neill, 2005).

3.10.1 INFORMED CONSENT AND VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

“Having the opportunity to give or deny informed consent is not only a right in relation to research which children share with adults, but also contributes to their wellbeing, through giving respect for their sense of control” (Hill, 2005, p.68 citing Weithorn & Sherer, 1994). Haverkamp (2005 cited by Morrow, 2007) suggests the best time for informed consent is at the beginning of the research relationship. In my study all participants were asked to sign the assent forms before any informal or formal interactions began. Due to the existing relationship between the school and the Department of Educational Psychology, parents (and/or care-givers) of learners at the school had granted general permission at the beginning of the year, through the Student Governing Body (SGB), for educational psychology services and research to be conducted at the school. It was therefore possible to send letters of consent, containing relevant information about this particular study, home with participants at the end of the first day. (Examples of both the participant assent forms and the parent consent forms are provided in Appendix B and C, respectively).

Request for informed consent was followed according to literature guidelines (Davis, 1998; Hill, 2005; Leoschut & Bonora, 2007; Morrow & Richards, 1996; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The letters, and my verbal explanation, informed participants (and parents/care-givers) about the study’s purpose and intended audience. I also highlighted what their agreement to participate would entail; that their consent had to be given willingly and that they could withdraw from the study at any time

without prejudice. In summary, I made sure that I “*provided potential participants with clear, detailed and factual information about the study, its methods, its risks and benefits along with assurances of the voluntary nature of participation, and the freedom to refuse or withdraw without penalties.*” (Wassenaar, 2006, p.72).

At the start of the focus group interview, I showed the participants my digital audio recorder, explaining how it works and what I would be using it for. During this informal discussion I made sure that all group members were familiar with the device and gave their full assent for its use. When engaging with the participants I wanted to involve them as much as I could in the research process, making it a useful experience for them too by creating a sense of control over their own individuality, autonomy and privacy (Hopkins, 2007; Morrow & Richards, 1996).

3.10.2 CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

I treated the information acquired throughout the research inquiry ethically and confidentially. Although it is difficult to guarantee participants complete confidentiality and anonymity when conducting focus groups (Lincoln & Guba, 2003; Raby 2010 citing Hofmeyer & Scott, 2007; Wilkinson, 2004), participants were assured in the letter of assent, as well as before commencing with the activities, that their identities would not be divulged in the analysis, interpretation or reporting stages. Therefore, the names of the participants have not been disclosed. Participants did, however, agree to be photographed during the engagement and for these photographs to be included in the report. Although this compromises their anonymity somewhat, it does acknowledge their role within the current study and helps to enrich the study. All original documentation with the potential of compromising participants' identity will be safely stored away or destroyed to maintain confidentiality once the research has ended. In addition, despite my efforts to appropriately conceal names and identities it is possible for individuals close to these participants to recognise the expression, or view, of a particular source. “*Consequently the trust relationships which are built must necessarily be negotiated with full disclosure of the risks which respondents are taking*” (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p.230)

3.10.3 PROTECTION FROM HARM

The topic of school-based violence could touch on sensitive experiences, leading to emotional discomfort or vicarious trauma. “*The perception that children are vulnerable and that interaction between researcher and child involves power relations, creates an obligation on adults to ensure children do not suffer harm when participating in research*” (Davis, 1998, p.328). Therefore, it was important for me to be constantly aware that taking part in the study may have a significant impact on the participants at the time, or at a later date (Neill, 2005). I followed recommendations to

facilitate a careful debriefing at the end of each data collection session (Neill, 2005) and to make myself available to participants should they wish to talk to me privately (Raby, 2010 citing Hofmeyer & Scott, 2007). Furthermore, a referral system was established with the school support team should any participant present such a need.

3.11 CONCLUSION

Through this chapter I have outlined the meta-theoretical and research paradigms that guided and shaped my inquiry. According to Latess (2008), social abstractions (like education – or in my case, school violence) are best understood through the experiences of those individuals who are stakeholders and are living the experience. She further states that when implementing any kind of reform effort, it is important to hear the voices of those who will ultimately be affected by the change. By making use of a focus group within a case study, my aim was to provide the participants with a forum to share their views, opinions and concerns on the matter of school violence openly, and to be heard.

CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS: VOICES OF RURAL SCHOOL LEARNERS ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

Overview:

This chapter represents my engagement with collected data, identifying themes and categories in an attempt to answer research questions. Coding data sources (transcripts of the focus group, as well as workbook activities) resulted in three primary themes representing learners' perceptions about school-violence: Violence as behaviour; Violence as experience; and Power and authority. Analysis of participant observations and personal notes in the research journal served to validate themes, and add to descriptive detail and texture to the participants and their context. Visual data (photographs and workbook activities documenting the research process and setting) similarly enrich the description of themes.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the analysis and interpretation was to provide thick descriptions of the participants' experiences. According to anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973 cited by Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006, p.321) this means providing "*a thorough description of the characteristics, processes, transactions, and contexts that constitute the phenomenon being studied, couched in language not alien to the phenomenon as well as an account of the researcher's role in constructing this description.*"

As a proponent of social constructivism, I made use of both inductive and deductive approaches. First, by applying guidelines of grounded theory analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2005; Kelle, 2007) I investigated the data and constructed meaning. The grounded theory approach also assisted me in assuming the relativism of multiple social realities concerning the learners in the case study, and recognising the mutual creation of knowledge by me as the researcher, and by the learners as the participants (Charmaz, 2000; Charmaz & Mitchell, 2005). By means of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Burnard, 1996; Miles & Huberman, 1984) I developed analytic interpretations. Consequently, as described in Chapter 3, I was able to code, classify and interpret categories, which emerged according to their applicability with regard to my research questions (Joubert, 2008).

Themes and categories were gleaned from the following data sources: transcription of focus group interview (refer to Appendix E), personal notes and field notes from the research journal (refer to Appendix F), task-based activities from the activity workbook (refer to Appendix G) and visual data. Refer to analysis guide below:

Analysis Guide:	
<i>FG - Focus group interview</i>	<i>PN - Personal notes of Researcher</i>
<i>P- Participant</i>	<i>Av - Avie (Researcher)</i>
<i>WB1-Workbook activity: My Reflection</i>	<i>WB2-Workbook activity: Things I hate about school</i>

4.2 OUTLINE OF THEMES AND RELATED CATEGORIES

The current research yielded three primary themes and seven categories, as presented in Table 4.1 below:

Theme	Violence as Behaviour	Violence as Experience	Power & Authority
Category:	Violence is beating children (physical behaviour)	2.1 It's hard, hurting (negative emotions)	3.1 School discipline
	They call you names (verbal behaviour)	2.2 We're scared (coping mechanisms)	3.2 The police protect
		2.3 We're just playing (positive emotions)	

Table 4.1 Visual representation of themes and categories

4.2.1 THEME 1: VIOLENCE AS BEHAVIOUR

This theme is defined as acts and behaviours that cause direct injury or harm (physical or psychological) to another.

<p>Inclusion criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reference to school violence in the form of actions being done to learners, by both teachers and peers; • Verbs which indicate an action (direct or indirect) that caused harm, injury or discomfort to participants

According to the participants behavioural violence at school is perpetuated by teachers (both male and female) as well as learners (usually older or peers). The first vignette illustrate participants' explanations that both peers and teachers are perpetuating school violence, while the second vignette presents participants' explanations of what violence means.

Av: But now, who does this at school?

P7: other learners

Av: Are they older, or the same age as you?

P9: older or the same

Av: Boys or girls?

P9: sometimes the boys are beating the girls

P3: Yes!

.....

Av: Who else does the beating and shouting?

Grp: yes, also the teachers... yes ..

.... Av: Is it the men teachers or women teachers?

P3 & P9: The men and the women

(FG)

Av: What does violence mean?

P9: Abuse

Av: But what does abuse mean?

Group: beating them ... gossiping ... punishing... (shouting out words)

(FG)

Av: So when you say the violence is hitting, but it is also the bad words?

Grp: Yes (nodding)

(FG)

Category 1.1: Violence is beating children

This category involves conflict between two or more individuals in which at least one uses physical means (bodily force or weapons) to cause intentional harm, or at least threaten such harm, to the other. In these cases, the harm itself is also physical in nature (De Wet, 2007). During the entire discussion, participants spoke of violence as a hurtful, physical act which inflicts injury and causes physical pain: “*they’re beating us with this*” (points to belt buckle) (FG-P9); “*she hit him like this on his head*” (FG- P3); “*it’s hard, hurting*” (FG-P2). When challenged to find the right words to describe what they were experiencing, the participants often resorted to gestures, demonstrating to me what was happening – holding up fists, kicking into the air and making whipping/hitting actions on

themselves or each other. The following extracts of my personal notes in the research journal indicate instances where participants physically demonstrated their understanding of school violence.

... P8 pinches upper arm on self and P3 to show me how the teacher does it;
... P2 indicates his back making whipping actions;
... P9 animates hitting / slapping with an open hand, making a whack/pow sound as he does so).

(FG-PN)

The participants also used the words ‘violence’, ‘abuse’, and ‘beat’ interchangeably, without making any noticeable distinctions. When asked the siSwati word for ‘bullying’ they provided “*Kushaya*” which translates ‘to hit or beat’. Similarly, the word “*Kuhlukumeta*” (translation – to abuse) was used for ‘violence’ (FG). Participants also listed an array of items which are used to inflict abuse, including various body parts (hand, fist, foot): “*with sjambok*” (FG-P1); “*.. and kick*” (FG-P9); “*they are beating us with this* (points to belt buckle) ... *and a stick*” (FG-P9); “*..and the duster, the duster from the front*” (FG-P1); “*P8 demonstrates pinching upper arm on self and P3*” (FG-PN).

Category 1.2: They call you names

This category involves the “*marginalization or degradation of an individual by the use of insults, humiliation, or emotional blackmail*” (De Wet, 2007, p.675). The girls in the group first mentioned gossiping as a form of school violence, however the boys elaborated: “*They say... like ... you’re foolish*” (FG-P9); and “*Stupid!*” or “*You look like a monkey*” (FG-group); “*They say we have a big head*” (FG-P9). The examples of verbal abuse given seemed to refer mostly to derogatory put-downs of a person’s academic performance or physical appearance. The participants included such verbal behaviour as violence because of the negative outcomes: “*Is bad. They call you names, it hurts*” (FG-P9); “*I don’t like people gossip (sic) me*” (WB1-P5).

4.2.2 THEME 2: VIOLENCE AS AN EXPERIENCE

This theme is defined as emotional expressions associated with acts of school violence and how learners respond, or cope, emotionally when they experience violence at school.

Inclusion criteria:

- Words referring to emotions (positive or negative) such as “*bad, sad, unhappy, hurts or happy, free*”
- Nonverbal behaviour (gestures, facial expressions, body posture) that displays an emotional response to what is being said / discussed.

The following extract illustrates how a participant conceptualises violence as an experience which illicit negative emotions.

Av: How do you know when it is violence?

P9: They are sad. You are not happy.

(FG)

Category 2.1 It's hard, hurting

This category involves participants' expressions that acts of school violence result in negative emotional and physical consequences. When I asked how I would know that an action signifies violence, a boy explained: *"It's hard... hurting"* (FG-P2). However, participants noted that school violence not only causes physical pain and anguish, but also negative emotional feelings: *"person is sad"* (FG-P9); *"I don't like fighting [fighting]"* (WB1-P7); *"I don't like to fight. I don't like to see people fighting"* (WB1-P1); and *"I don't like some joking to other one."* (WB1-P2). A learner further explained that if violence at school were to stop: *"The people will feel free. Have happiness"* (FG-P9).

In a workbook activity which asks what the learner hates most about going to school, various responses indicated: *"is beaten up by teacher"* (WB2-P1); *"to bet (sic) me"* (WB2-P9); *"to beat someone"* (WB2-P8). The group participants stated that they want things (school violence) to change: *"I feel painful. Me ... I want it to ... stop!"* (FG-P3). When asked why he wants the school violence to stop, another participant stated: *"because I don't want to kill the other people"* (FG-P1). Exploring what could be done to reduce school violence, participants suggested organising a meeting for teachers and parents: *"I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children ... stop! And the other learners also."* (FG-P3) another suggestion was to *"sit and talk ... solve the problem"* (FG-P9).

Category 2.2: We're scared

This category denotes how participants' responded or reacted to school violence. Participants communicated that although incidents of violence experienced at school were bad and made them (and others) unhappy (refer to Category 2.1), they were unable to seek help or support from family members. This was expressed by one participant when asked if he is able to talk to his parents about what had happened to him at school:

Av:.. and do any of you tell your parents?

Grp: (shake heads)

P9: .. it's too difficult.

(FG)

When faced with incidents of violence (whether they are being victimised or witnessing someone else) participants seemed to resort to two tactics – laugh it off or call for help (in most cases the police): “*I want to call the police*” (FG-P9); “*...they were fighting, and then the one that have been beaten call the police.*” (FG-P9). When asked what the police would do to help, the response was: “*the police will discipline... the police are going to punish them*” (FG-P9). (Refer also to Category 3.2). The following vignette demonstrates how learners were unable to express their feelings behaviourally (crying / sadness) when beaten, or react with inappropriate behaviour (laughing) at others who are being beaten.

Av: then do people cry in the classroom? What happens?

P9: No, you don't cry. If you cry they beat you again.

P3: yes.

Av: and if you are quiet... they stop?

Grp: nod heads

Av: What happens to the other people in the class?

P9: They are laughing.

Av: So, do you also do that when other people are being hit?

P9: yes ... we are laughing (others in group nodding yes)

Av: Why?

P3: We're scared

(FG)

The participants seemed to know who the perpetrators of violent behaviour are, discussing names of teachers and peers amongst themselves, yet seemed to find it difficult to share this knowledge with me. The following vignette, a reflection in the research journal, demonstrates this apprehension. During the focus group discussion a participant pointed to a male teacher, who was talking to someone across the quad from where we were seated, and whispered to me “*that one*” (FG-P9), then remained quiet for a fairly long period of time.

P9 pointed towards a teacher explaining that he was one that hits a lot. I looked up briefly and then realised that this impulsive revelation was immediately followed by a few stifled giggles and smirks from the group. Then quiet. It took me a while to kick-start the discussion, but P9, who had been so verbal throughout our discussions, was looking down at the floor, randomly picking at some grass. He didn't rejoin the conversation for quite some time.

(PN2, 15 April 2010)

Category 2.3 We're just playing

This category includes instances where behaviour is not deemed violent, but simply playful and fun. Over the two days I spent with the group of learners, I observed that their communication included strong physical and verbal gestures, such as hitting one another, pushing someone away or calling each other names and laughing. At one point during the group discussion one of the female participants hit a male participant on the head. A fellow female group member pointed this out to me. A discussion ensued as they explain that the difference between an act of violence and 'play fighting' is the person's emotional response during and after the incident, as illustrated in the vignette below. Therefore, when play-hitting both parties are happy, whereas when violence has been inflicted the person feels sad and unhappy.

P3: she's beating him!

Av: I see, hey! P8 you just hit him ...

P9: (who had been hit) Yes!

Av: Is that not violence?

P8: (smiles)

P3: she hit him like this on the head (demonstrates on P9's head)

Av: Why do you hit other people?

P9: but sometimes you are playing, you see ... (hits P8 'gently' and they both laugh and wriggle).

Av: oh, I see. So is that also violence or not violence when you just play-hitting?

P9: no it's not violence.

... Av: How would I know the difference?

P9: when they are playing .. you see that they are happy

... Av: and if it is violence, what would I see?

P9: Person is sad.

(P1 and others demonstrate a 'sad' face for me)

(FG)

4.2.3 THEME 3: POWER AND AUTHORITY

This theme is defined as instances when violence is used at school by people who wield some form of power or authority over another person, or when violence is used for purposes of punishment, discipline or to protect. I define the term discipline as attempts to bring behaviour under control (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1982), and the “*use of a wide range of techniques to manage, govern, control, or correct student behaviour*” (Bear, 2010). Whilst the term punishment refers to “*any unpleasant or undesired event or consequence that follows a behaviour*” (Bear, 2010) in order to decrease the occurrence of such unwanted behaviour.

Inclusion criteria:

- Acts of ‘school violence’ situated in the classroom and carried out during the normal teaching process by a teacher or other authority figure;
- Acts of ‘school violence’ carried out within school grounds or buildings by an adult authority figure for the purpose of disciplining or punishing for action or behaviour deemed inappropriate, or unacceptable.

An important facet of this theme is that it highlights instances when, according to the participants, the use of violence is necessary or appropriate. Although the vignettes and comments below describe instances of violence which occurred on school grounds, and caused pain and distress to the recipients, such acts were deemed by the group participants as acceptable. It is especially important to note that all such instances provided by participants were wielded by adults in a position of power and authority. In the following extract it seems that participants link violent behaviour with wanting power and authority.

When asked why the participants thought people hit others: “They think they’re the boss”

(FG - P9)

Category 3.1 School discipline

This category involves participants’ comments regarding forms of ‘violence’ or ‘abuse’ carried out by teachers in the classroom to maintain discipline or to punish. The following vignette illustrates how participants relate acts of discipline and punishment as forms of violence:

Av: Punishing? Like what kind of punishment?

P3: clean the windows, pick up paper clean the class...

Av: So they make you work? is that violence?

Group: (they all nod, yes)

(FG)

Forms of corporal punishment mentioned included using sticks and sjamboks, hands to hit, slap and pinch, as well as hitting fingertips or knuckles with board-dusters or belt buckles (refer to Category 1.1). Reasons and explanations for what brings on such punishment fall into two main categories: misbehaviour and appearance. Misbehaviour was indicated by inappropriate or disrespectful behaviour, or the absence of expected behaviour and attitudes, as apparent in the following:

P9: "We are making noise ... The teacher say we must stop and we didn't.

We sit there and we are talking and talking.... and then she is beating him"

P1: .. also if you didn't do homework.

(FG)

Similarly, appearance was reflected in inappropriate, missing or torn school uniforms. The following vignette presents instances where participants received punishment for infringements regarding school clothing:

Av: What makes the teachers hit with a stick?

P3: Tie (points to her tie)

Av: Not wearing a tie?

P3: Yes

P9: and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...

P3: .. and if I don't have school shoes

(FG)

Other forms of discipline mentioned were sending learners back home when their uniforms were not acceptable (appropriate) or suspending them due to bad behaviour. This was demonstrated in a discussion about two boys who were fighting at school (see vignette in category 3.2), when asked what disciplinary measure was taken by the staff: "They suspend him." (P8-FG). Further illustrations of punishments incurred for uniform infringements are provided below:

*Av: If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and shout at you?
P9: or they tell you, you must go back home*

.... P3: Yes, you go out the school.

(FG)

It seemed that, on one hand participants deemed such acts of discipline and punishment necessary to maintain discipline and order in the school. However, on the other hand they did not like these punishments occurring at school. Participants demonstrated some yearning for alternative methods to corporal punishment (*refer to comments in Category 2.1*).

Category 3.2: The police protect

This category signifies instances where participants referred to acts of discipline or punishment imposed by the police for the purpose of protection. Interestingly, participants conveyed that when discipline and punishment is carried out by the police it is done so in the interest of protection, and, therefore is acceptable. This sentiment is demonstrated by the following statement: *“The police will discipline the person that is hitting you ... the police are going to punish them”* (FG- P9). An interesting story unfolded about an incident of two older boys fighting on school grounds during school time. This interchange, presented in the vignette below, illustrates participants’ view that violence (such as beating) is an appropriate resolution when meted out by adults in society who are vested with the power and authority to discipline and bring about order.

P9: one of the boys called the police.

Av: and then the police came? (all nodding) And they took him away?

P9: ... and they beat him (demonstrating hitting actions with hands, fists)

Av: Oh I see. Where here or at the police station?

(boys motion towards the next building)

P9: ... there ... staffroom.

Av: and then they beat up this boy? What did they beat him with?

(boys start demonstrating motions of hitting, kicking and punching)

Av: and what happened to the other boy? The one that called the police?

P9: no nothing

Av: [the boy that was beaten] ... and he had to carry on being in school until he went home?

P9: yes

Av: Did he stop beating other people afterwards?

P9: he was better...

Av: so you think it worked that the police came and hit him?

P9: Yes! (the others nod in agreement)

(FG)

It was also interesting that during informal discussions with the group, (talking about career choices participants wanted to pursue), a brother and sister (P2 & P3) chose jobs in the police force, while one girl (P5) stated that she wanted to be the President of the country. Their reasons for these choices were because they wanted to protect people, make their communities safe for children and so that others would look up to them. The following reflection notes from the research journal depict this conversation.

We spoke about what careers they were wanting to pursue for the future. A few were in the health professions and two in law enforcement and military. One even stated she would like to be the President of the country, but when I asked them why, their responses seemed to focus more on their passion to help or protect others and to make things better.

(PN1, 14 April 2010)

4.3 MY OBSERVATIONS AND INVOLVEMENT

4.3.1 ENTERING THE PARTICIPANTS' LIFE-WORLDS

The nature of qualitative social research is inherently subjective (Burnard, 1996). Furthermore, conducting research from the social constructionist lens means acknowledging that the results and findings of the study are co-constructions between myself and the participants. *“Just as the methods we chose influence what we see, what we bring to the study also influences what we can see. We are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world”* (Charmaz, 2006, p.15). Realities and various pre-assumed roles are created by researchers and their respondents as both the researcher and the participants are aware of their socially constructed roles as an interviewer and an interviewee (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). The issue of researcher membership in the group, or area being studied, is relevant to all approaches of qualitative methodology, as the researcher plays such a direct and intimate role in both data collection and analysis (Corbin Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). As I stated earlier, I entered participants' life-world as both a researcher and a student of Educational Psychology. While I tried to clearly separate for the learners what activities were going to be used for research purposes, I found it difficult to separate the emerging psychologist from the novice researcher within myself. In this regard I noted:

I introduce myself, explain a little about what I am studying and why I am there. I look around the circle - some smiles, blank faces ... quiet. God! I am trying so hard. Stop! Just be yourself. Deep breath.

(PN1, 14 April 2010)

Corbin Dwyer and Buckle, (2009, p.55) further state that “*the personhood of the researcher, including her or his membership status in relation to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the investigation.*” As a white, female with a university education coming from a big city, I was very aware of being an outsider to my participants. Such differences between myself and participants in race, class, gender, age and ideologies may have affected what happened during the interview (Charmaz, 2006). As mentioned, I spent limited time with the participants (*refer to research schedule in Appendix D*) and it was evident that language and cultural barriers were contributing to (what I perceived as) strained communications. Their quietness, especially when it came to explaining or clarifying a question, increased my inclination to make assumptions and interpretations, as evident in the reflection below:

It was the same two or three people representing the rest and I wondered whether the others did not participate because they did not understand me, or they were not comfortable expressing their ideas in English, or even not expressing them at all?

So distracted - looking at others, at own feet .. disinterested? Scared to talk? Don't understand?

(PN-FG)

To compliment the verbal data I gained from the focus group, I thus included observations of the participants' non-verbal behaviour during our engagement in the focus group – a source of data which Onwuegbuzie and his colleagues believe is often neglected by many researchers in the final reporting (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009). Indicators such as gestures, glances, and changes in tone of voice are some aspects that alter or emphasise what people say and do. This nonverbal communication provides a depth to the emotions underlying one's experience and is often more important than what is being said orally (Yeh & Inman, 2007). Wilkinson, (2004) also urges researchers to pay attention to observation of 'what is going on' in the focus group itself. However, all observations and interpretations should be considered within the context of a qualitative study. As Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg (2005, p.704) stress, despite research agendas and personal expectations, researchers can never be certain about their familiarity, or even

awareness, of the cultural settings, roles, or discourses with which the participants enter the interview setting.

4.3.2 OBSERVING DISTANCE AND SILENCE

As a qualitative researcher I was dependent on participant engagement. Therefore silences, pauses, refusals to answer, and misunderstandings (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005) all contributed to the results and themes. There were several instances during my engagement with the learners, where they became silent and contributed very little to the conversation. Gubrium and Koro-Ljungberg, (2005) suggest this could signify participants' attempts to control the interview or engagement by not answering certain questions, refusing to follow up on proposed leads and probes or simply resisting engagement with the topic or researcher.

"Misinterpretation of meaning is a potential problem in any research, but the risk grows tremendously when language is a barrier" (Esposito, 2001, p.570). During social constructionists research it is crucial to note and acknowledge the importance of language as it functions within social relationships (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). The language and cultural disparities between researcher and participants could lead to inaccurate analysis and interpretation of data (Suzuki et al., 2007). It is possible that the silences and perceived aloofness were due to participants not understanding me, not being confident to express themselves in a different language, or feeling uncomfortable talking about a sensitive topic with a stranger. My perplexity over some responses is demonstrated by the following reflection:

"it's too difficult" to talk about? To explain to me? To live through?

(PN2, 15 April 2010)

Onwuegbuzie et al., (2009) advise that the proximity and demographics of the participants' seating arrangement could provide a window into any relationship amongst response patterns, demographic characteristics and seating patterns. Therefore, starting the focus group I noted the seating arrangement of the group as follows:

The group was sitting in a straight line, leaning against the wall (not really in a circular formation which would have been more conducive to talking), and I was seated on a chair, higher than them, facing in - rather than being physically part of their group. They had also separated - boys facing me and to my right with the girls further down, with one boy sitting on his own to my left.

... I also realised that our spot was hardly private, but actually very exposed. Other learners were within earshot, and the learners in my group were often distracted by what other groups were doing, or chatting to those walking past us.

(PN2, 15 April 2010)

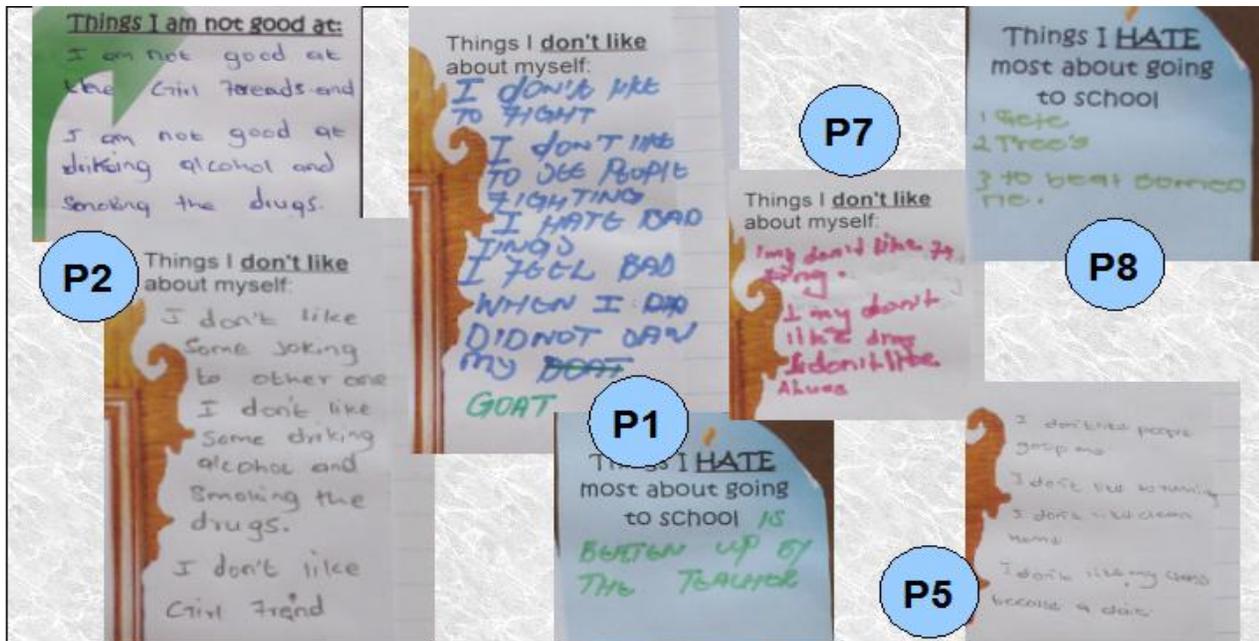
Settings themselves and how they are used, carry with them particular rules and norms of behaviour, action and interactions (Freeman & Mathison, 2009) and can have a significant impact on the nature of the focus group interaction and discussion (Hopkins, 2007). Therefore, the open and exposed environment during the group discussion could have influenced my perception of the participants' distance and silence. Certain questions during our discussion seemed to entice participation, such as when two participants started explaining and demonstrating how the teacher hits them on their hands, I noted: *"the girls and boys around P1 and P9 sit up and lean into the conversation, also showing me on their hands how they get hit."* (PN-FG).

However, other questions were left hanging and unanswered, with personal observations such as: *"All quiet. Some looking far away, some looking down at their feet..."* (PN-FG); and *"some people shake their heads, some nod. No-one looks up"* (PN-FG). Examples of questions resulting in unresponsiveness were:

- If you get beaten in class then afterwards, do you go to your friends or .. do you tell your parents? What happens?
- What about other things .. is there ever like drugs, weapons .. things like that in the school?

I believe the majority of unanswered questions were on a slightly more personal level, requiring participants to share private thoughts and emotions. Other questions required participants to divulge their involvement or knowledge of behaviours that could perhaps get them into trouble. This reluctance to share could also point to the inadequate level of trust and rapport which I had managed to establish before initiating the focus group. Furthermore, participants may have been concerned about their relationships with the other participants, or with the facilitator and the long-term ramifications of what they divulge during the discussion (Hollander, 2004). Punch (2002) also maintains that children are often not used to expressing their views freely with adults because of their position in an adult-dominated society.

Raby, (2010, p.3) notes that although minority voices can be muted within focus groups, sometimes this can be informative in itself because “*knowing what is (and is not) expressed in a group context may be as important as knowing what is expressed in a confidential one-on-one interview.*” This can be seen with regards to Participants 1, 2 and 7 who remained quiet and mostly uninvolved during the focus group, yet shared their views on the topic of school violence in the workbooks as illustrated in Photograph 4.1 below.



Photograph 4.1 Snippets of worksheets demonstrating participants' written views regarding school violence

4.3.3 OBSERVED CONTRADICTIONS

Despite the learners verbally referring to school violence as a negative and bad thing (*refer to Theme 3: Violence as experience*), and stating that they want it to stop: “*I feel painful. Me ... I want it to ... stop!*” (FG-P3), there were several moments when I witnessed participants in the group acting out the exact behaviour they had described to me as ‘school violence’ on other learners. Such observations and comments include:

Talk of gossip and teasing, yet they talk and laugh at each other ... are they teasing each other as we speak? Do they realise the contradiction of what they say vs what they do?

Also demonstrate on each other & not softly! Is that not violence when one enacts it?

Teacher is shouting in class behind us ... is someone getting hit? Group looks around. Quiet. Some giggle into their hands. (PN2, 15 April 2010)

For me, this illustrated a disparity, or inconsistency, in their responses, which made me question whether I was missing a crucial link or explanation to understanding their construction of school violence. Raby (2010) however, also noted in her focus group study that familiarity between participants led to playful teasing between them, finishing each others' sentences and challenging each other.

4.4 DELIMITERS AND CONSTRAINTS OF THE RESULTS

Several authors have attested to the constraint of group dynamics in focus groups (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Raby, 2010; Suzuki et al, 2007; Wilkinson, 2004). I experienced several of these in my interaction with participants, such as domination, silences and contradictions. Language often hampered our communication, and although I made every effort to reflect and clarify comments and notes with the participants, there were often times where I was not really sure whether participants understood me, nor I them. There were times in the focus group where the discussion stalled and I engaged in long monologues urging some response from the participants.

Focus groups with children and young people who know each other, often features excited exchanges between participants - interruptions, cross-talk, loose conversational style, and slang (Raby, 2010). Such language usage was present throughout my data collection and often in siSwati (a language I do not understand). Suzuki et al., (2007) warn that data collection during focus groups can be somewhat chaotic, and often consists of conversational cross-talk between participants, which is difficult to capture in the transcription (Raby, 2010). This likely influenced the analysis process and interpretation in the current study.

Optimally, during the focus group the researcher processes the meaning of the participant's comments and is able to adjust questions and comments fluidly in response to unanticipated answers (Esposito, 2001). However, without an interpreter at the time of data collection, there were times when I was not able to guide and respond to the participants spontaneously. I tried to compensate for this by involving a siSwati speaking colleague during the transcription process. Unfortunately, due to noise distractions, she was unable to make out the majority of casual conversations and comments. A recommendation could be to make use of an interpreter during the data collection. As Silverman (2000) points out, much of what is observed in formal and informal settings inevitably consists of conversations, which are not always feasible to include in transcriptions and notations. However, when using interpreters it should be noted that the truth value of translated data is only supported when the participants' expressed meaning is understood by the listener. It is a reality of cross-cultural research that not all concepts and ideas are universal, and therefore, not everything is translatable (Esposito, 2001).

And finally, as mentioned previously, my engagement with the school and learners was part of a larger academic service learning module conducted alongside a group of fellow colleagues. Although participants in the current study willingly signed assent forms and were provided with clear information about their voluntary participation in the research, I am aware that their participation was heavily influenced by instruction from their teachers. The school and teaching staff highly value the long-term relationship with the University of Pretoria, and the learners mentioned that they were instructed by staff to fully co-operate with us and be on their 'best behaviour'. I therefore acknowledge that, together with the short time frame available to build trust and rapport, the replies and comments provided by the participant for my study could have been influenced somewhat by context variables such as the Hawthorne effect (Greig, Taylor & MacKay, 2007; Maree & Pietersen, 2007).

4.5 CONCLUSION

Charmaz, (2006, p.46) teaches that "*we learn through studying our data.*" She adds that research is not simply about strategies to gather data and analyse it, but what the researcher does, how she does it, and why she does it which emerges through her interaction in the research setting, with her data, colleagues and herself (Charmaz, 2008). In this way, the purpose was not to collect bits and pieces of 'real life' but to place real-life events and phenomena into some kind of perspective (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly, 2006). Furthermore, the limitations of the data collection and analysis processes employed in the current study highlight the importance of taking into consideration the cultural factors present in any social research. I have therefore learned that "*culture certainly does not constitute only race but includes aspects such as rituals, norms, gender, language, beliefs and artefacts. Most importantly, culture is a process happening in a given context*" (Tabane, 2005, p.87).

I have presented data in this chapter grouped around three themes. These themes and relevant categories represent the experiences and constructions of school violence from the perspective of Grade 9 learners from a rural school. Using vivid vignettes (retelling experiences and moments through my participants' words) and personal observations I have attempted to provide a detailed and plausible account of data, the participants and their context to ensure rigour and coherence in findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984).

CHAPTER 5: SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE INQUIRY

Overview:

In this chapter I explore the significance of the findings against current literature, identifying similarities, contradictions and new insights. I then reflect on the possible contributions of the current study, and implications for scholars and practitioners in the field of school violence and promoting safe schools. I close the report with recommendations for new lines of inquiry.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study focused on one case as unit of analysis: a group of Grade 9 learners in a rural secondary school in Mpumalanga. Through a focus group discussion, participant observations and workbook activities (enriched with visual data) I presented the participants' construction and understandings of school violence according to three themes: Violence as behaviour; Violence as experience; and Power and authority.

The descriptive nature of the research question required a particular line of inquiry, directing the study in the qualitative research domain entailing field research with learners in a rural school. From the beginning of the study I intended to present the voices and experiences of the learners as expressed by them, to enter their life world, and, I therefore chose to be guided by the principles of social constructionism. I made use of multiple methods for data collection and offered detailed descriptions of the case, participants, contexts as well as my involvement to ensure trustworthiness and rigour in the process and findings. Searching for heightened inferences and meanings I made use of constructivist grounded theory principles during data analysis, allowing themes and ideas to emerge from the data. I now complete the study by interpreting participants' expressions of school violence, aligning their views with those in local and international studies.

Although in the previous chapter I presented each theme and category as separate entities, their interrelatedness offers further illumination of learners' expressions and constructions of what they experience. Interpretation involves the synthesis of data into larger coherent wholes (Mouton, 2001), producing findings that serve to confirm, contradict or add to existing literature. Research is

a process of creating knowledge by setting questions which explore issues and by actively engaging with the research participants (Fraser, 2004). Therefore, the culmination of this research is my insight into the topic of school violence, as well as my personal growth as a novice researcher. This was achieved through personal engagement with the participants, the literature and the process of inquiry itself, and is reflected in my presentation of implications and recommendations for future research.

5.2 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

5.2.1 ALIGNING FINDINGS WITH CURRENT LITERATURE: EXPECTATIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS

The study of school violence emerged from fields outside of education, such as criminal justice, which have veered research on school safety toward an emphasis on criminal violation and physical assault (; Furlong & Morrison, 2000; Skiba et al, 2004). As various disciplines increasingly joined the fold to contribute multiple perspectives, more sophisticated theoretical models of school violence have created an awareness of the centrality of school climate and daily disciplinary issues (Osher et al, 2004; Skiba et al 2004). Although the most common form of school violence is learner-on-learner, educator-on-learner violence (in the form of intimidation, sexual harassment and corporal punishment) has also gained prominence and attracted attention (Burton, 2008; Ward, 2007). Similarly, themes of disciplinary practices enforced by teachers (corporal punishment), and learners' seeming acceptance of violence as an 'normal' occurrence featured prominently in the findings of this study and are discussed in more detail below. The findings also highlighted various systemic factors that played a role in influencing participants' conceptualisations of school violence, with the pervading climate of violence within the school featuring as the principle context.

5.2.1.1 Corporal Punishment

Participants in the study spoke not only of bullying and fighting among peers, but also (and more extensively) of forms of corporal punishment (physically and verbally) inflicted on them by teaching staff. It is unfortunate that although effectively illegal in South African schools, corporal punishment is very much in use around the country (Burton, 2008; Khan, 2008), occurring in both rural (De Wet, 2007; Morrell, 2001) and urban schools (Smit, 2010; Steyn & Naicker, 2007). According to Morrell (2001) although the practise has been mostly phased-out of middle-income former white schools, corporal punishment is still very evident in township and rural schools and is inflicted on African boys and girls equally. The participants in the current study relayed various stories about being pinched, slapped or struck with a sjambok or board duster in class for misdemeanours ranging from homework not done and sloppy appearance to insolence and even for fighting at school (*refer to Category 3.1*).

Various studies have been conducted to highlight that corporal punishment and harsh discipline in schools perpetuates a culture of violence among learners (Burnett 1998; Harber, 2002, 2004; Steyn & Naicker, 2007) and leaves an “invisible scar” that affects many aspects of the child’s life (Harber, 2002). *“This consistent exposure to violence – along with poor role-modelling and parenting and teaching styles that are punitive – allows the child to develop a repertoire of behaviours that include aggression as a way of dealing with conflict and difficult life situations”* (Khan, 2008, p.2). This was also evident in the current study with participants demonstrating reliance on physical and verbal aggressive behaviours to cope with violence in their school environment (*refer to Category 2.2*). Without positive displays of constructive conflict resolution strategies within the school, learners in the current study thus also resorted to violence (physical, verbal and relational) to deal with difficult situations.

Participants in the current study wanted violence they experienced at school to stop. The theme that emerged that violence is a negative experience highlights a yearning for alternative school climate where teachers and learners could sit and talk openly about problems (*refer to Category 2.1, where the participants discussed calling a meeting between parents, teachers and learners to discuss the problem of school violence and find alternative solutions*). This, too, is in line with other studies showing that children often feel anger, hurt, sadness and powerlessness in relation to corporal punishment, and expressed the desire for more consultative forms of discipline (Morrell, 2001, Parkes, 2007).

The issue of punishment and discipline in schools is not only controversial, but also raises several contradictions within literature, as well as in the current study. Despite their protestations regarding punishments inflicted on them in school, participants in this study also asserted that punishment and discipline are necessary and appropriate in some instances. From their retelling of events (*such as the boy who was caught fighting and then ‘disciplined’ with a beating in the headmaster’s office described in Category 3.2*), it seemed that the use of violence by those in authority (such as headmaster and police) is appropriate when used to correct bad behaviour or protect others. This paradox is also evident in various other studies conducted in South Africa (Morrell, 2001; Parkes, 2007; Smit, 2010) and Botswana (Tafa, 2002), with respondents claiming that although corporal punishment is unlawful and “*not right*”, it is “*the only way to ensure that learners will listen and respect the teachers*” (Smit, 2010 p.136). Parkes (2007, p.412) explains that although her participants overtly rejected gang violence, they often deemed violent action as necessary for retaliation, retribution and justice, stating that violence is a tool to defend, protect and punish, “*life in a violent context may increase the potential for young people to employ violent practices within their*

own social relationships, in, for example, the way they resolve conflict, impose punishments and negotiate social positions.”

I further found it interesting that participants' comments yielded almost identical findings to that in Morrell's study (2001, p.296) on how the use of corporal punishment is perceived by learners, yet the two studies were conducted almost ten years apart. *“With the exception of Indian and white females, most groups, but especially African and white males and African females, continue to regard beating as the most effective punishment.”* He adds that the two main reasons provided by participants for the use of corporal punishment at school was that teachers know best, and to learn about what is right and wrong, one has to suffer (Morrell, 2001). Burnett (1998) explains this phenomenon in a different way, stating that learners' relative powerlessness against harsh disciplinary measures, together with the over-riding ideological justification within the community that punishment is essential for ensuring conformity, establishes a cycle of violence where such punishment is sanctioned as sound educational practice.

Perhaps the issue to consider then, is not the actual act of punishment that constitutes violence, but the intent and attitude of the act as perceived by the learner or child? Many educators believe that corporal punishment administered justly (with love) and in an environment of mutual trust, is necessary, right and acceptable (Morrell 2001). I question, though, how often both learner and teacher come into a disciplinary situation with the same frame of reference and understanding? This questioning highlights another interesting observation in the current study, of whether learners in the case demonstrated a normalisation of violence at school.

5.2.1.2 Normalising Violence

While spending time with the participants I noted how they hit and teased one another (*refer to discussion on observed contradictions in Chapter 4*), and it was intriguing to understand that they explain these behaviours in terms of intent and consequence. According to them, when the act of hitting or teasing is done by a friend and the people involved are laughing and smiling, then it is not considered violence but 'just playing' (*demonstrated in Category 2.3*). This is in line with Carter (2002, p.29) who also found that her participants frequently engaged in banter of hostile and abusive comments amongst themselves: *“When boys became caught up in a highly charged exchange of cussing, they might protest, ‘it’s only a laugh, Miss’; ‘he’s my mate, Miss’ or ‘we’re only playing’.”*

Adolescence is a time for developing a sense of self and identity, and it is quite common to see minor struggles for dominance or social competition occurring to gain status within peer groups (Lleras, 2008). In an extensive study of masculinity and crime, Messerschmidt (1993 cited by

Morrell, 2002) argued that violence was part of a vocabulary used by young men to live their masculinity. While rough-and-tumble play is mostly ignored in early childhood, it can re-emerge in adolescence resulting in serious fighting, as physical prowess becomes a way to stake a claim to dominance within the group. Lawson (2005) asserts that such aggressive rivalry is more commonly seen in communities where the social order is in flux, as adolescents are frustrated by feelings of resignation, fatalism and hopelessness. Findings in the current study thus add to literature highlighting that there is a blurred line between what defines play-fighting versus bullying or aggression. This begs the question: do those involved (learners and teachers) in incidents of school violence know the difference between play-fighting and bullying?

In her exploration of classroom relationships and identity formation in a boys' comprehensive school in the English West Midlands, Carter (2002, p.28) was motivated by personal concerns that aggression had become normalised noting that it was: "*so intrinsic to the culture of the school that it was apparently no longer visible to, or questioned by the majority, including teachers.*" However, she further concluded that on a personal level, for many of the learners aggression remained a potent and destabilising force. Parkes (2007) also refutes findings stating that children and youth have been desensitised to violence simply because they engage in it. She concludes that as children struggled to position themselves in relation to violence, they end up both contesting and perpetuating forms of violence. This is similar to Latess' (2008) point that powerlessness is evident when people in society do not have the means to participate in decisions that might affect them, therefore they accept that their voice of dissent will be ineffective and unheard. It could, therefore, be argued that by submitting to school violence they experience, participants in the current study probably perpetuate the violence.

Lawson (2005) describes normalisation of violence as children becoming habituated to the violence they are frequently exposed to and therefore projecting an indifferent or nonchalant attitude towards violent events. I did not observe this ambivalence in the current study's participants. In fact, as in the case of other studies (Morrell, 2001; Parkes, 2007) participants were very much aware of violence occurring in their school and voiced concerns about wanting it to stop. Therefore, when considering participants' conceptualisations of, and reactions to school violence, I posit that it is not violence itself that learners normalise, but rather the reasons or motivations provided to use violence. This might shed light on participants' opinions on the acceptability of violence when used by people in authority for inappropriate behaviour (*refer to Theme 3*).

Bronfenbrenner (1995; Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994) talks of meaning-making in terms of frequent exposure to proximal processes in the child's environment. This means repetitive experiences with

violence at school used for the purpose of control provides 'social scripts' for violent resolution of conflicts, as well as an apparent endorsement of the various motives and tactics employed (Lawson, 2005). Findings from the current study indicate that learners seem to be socialised to accept violence as a 'functional tool' to obtain social control and order, as well as being an effective instrument in the hands of adults who have a relatively high ranking in the social hierarchy. "*People that are exposed to chronic poverty often have less resources or mechanisms which could be employed to exercise control over their lives, while violence seems to be effective and one of the few available options*" (Burnett, 1998, p.790). I reached the same conclusion in the current study: that by observing adults in positions of power and authority engaging in violent behaviour, learners internalise the idea that violence constitutes a justifiable means to dominate others and control a situation, bringing order and obedience. This likely also links to participants' idealisation of police services and other professions that carry a sense of authority and power (*refer to Category 3.2*).

In discussions about the concern that learners are normalising violence, I believe it is crucial to bear in mind the embedded systems with which the child interacts. "*Often, cultural norms regarding child discipline, personal defence, and acceptable social boundaries must be challenged and changed*" (Risolo & Patella, 2005, p.115). Prime examples of 'condoned' aggressive and intimidating behaviour abound in children's everyday life worlds, such as on the sports field and in popular entertainment (music and movies).

5.2.2 SILENCES IN THE CURRENT STUDY

School violence touches every individual and school in its own unique manner and case study social research usually provides simply a snapshot of a particular context in time. Therefore, it is expected that this study would yield certain knowledge silences and gaps emphasised by other studies. Two such themes, which featured extensively in literature readings, but remained unvoiced in this study, pertain to gender differences in school violence and the presence of weapons and drugs at schools.

5.2.2.1 **Gender Differences**

Numerous studies discuss the need for differentiating along gender lines when studying the phenomenon of school violence claiming that girls and boys experience, and perpetrate, violence differently (Bhana, 2005; Burton, 2008; Galezewski, 2005; Morrell, 2002; van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2009). "*Instances and patterns of violence are inevitably gendered—they bear the imprint of gender in every respect: who commits and who receives the violence; the type of violence; the weapon; the place of the violence; the reason for the violence*" (Morrell, 2002, p.38). Bhana (2005 citing Connell, 1995) even claims that violence is rooted in unequal gender power relations, which

are exacerbated by social constructions of masculinity and femininity. Galezewski (2005) agrees with this notion adding that differences are somewhat based on learned behaviours and stereotypical societal expectations regarding the behaviour of boys and girls.

However, in the current study I did not discover any such gender disparity. Participants spoke of both male and female perpetrators and were adamant that gender does not matter, as both boys and girls were equally victimised. This was also evident to me when interacting with participants, observing both boys and girls in my group hitting, kicking and verbally insulting each other. In his investigation of South African schools, Morrell (2001) notes that while white girls (especially in single-sex schools) were generally spared corporal punishment and other harsh treatments, their African counterparts were not. He, therefore, contends that in rural contexts, gender differences might not stand out with regards to behaviour and violence.

Several definitions of school violence as set out in literature include sexual harassment and rape (Braun, 2007; DoE, 2005; van der Westhuizen & Maree, 2009), however this was absent in my study. Neither male nor female participants made mention of any form of sexual behaviour or coercion when explaining school violence to me. I am aware of the various limitations (*discussed in more detail in Chapter 3*) including time and rapport-building that could have hampered revelation of such a sensitive issue. There is also literature advocating that when discussing sensitive topics, such as sexual violence, single-sex focus groups promote greater disclosure (Hollander, 2004). It is likely that speaking with the female and male learners separately, or even conducting individual interviews with some of the participants, different results could have emerged.

5.2.2.2 Access To Drugs And Weapons

In Burton's (2008) study, it was reported that more than a third of secondary school learners (34.5%) knew others who had come to school drunk, and a similar percentage knew others who had come to school high on drugs. In addition, more than half (52.3%) knew learners who actually smoked dagga on the school premises and 12.2% have seen other learners using hard drugs at school. Of equal concern was that almost a third of secondary learners (31.2%) reported it was easy to get a knife at school, and 7.5% thought it would be easy to get a gun at school. These figures indicate that the availability of drugs and weapons is becoming an increasing problem in schools and has a definite link to the prevalence of school violence. Other literature raise similarly concerns (Braun, 2007; Brown, 2006; Furlong, Morrison & Pavelski, 2000; Steyn & Naicker, 2007).

Although participants in the current study tentatively mentioned use of alcohol and marijuana on school grounds, as well as the presence of knives, overall this theme did not feature prominently in findings. It was only briefly discussed following my questions in this regard and was not introduced

by the participants themselves. There was also no mention of gang-related violence, which was found prevalent in other studies of school violence (Harber, 2001; Lawson, 2005).

5.2.3 SYSTEMIC INFLUENCES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

It has been stated previously in this report that the best way to explore how children acquire violent repertoires, is by understanding the ecology of contexts in which they grow up (Ward, 2008). *“Youth narratives and experiences map in detail and in colour the connections between their internal lives and their environmental context – looking at interactions, relationships, causality, and influences between the multiple ways they describe their experiences, and their life contexts and behaviours and the impact of social institutions”* (Powell, 2003, p.198). This study viewed participants as active players in shaping, and being shaped by, their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1995) and, therefore, paid close attention to the various systemic and interrelated contexts which guide participants in their conceptualisation of school violence.

5.2.3.1 **School Climate**

Schools are the key site where young people negotiate their understanding in the world and develop their capacity for social engagement and meaning-making (Jefthas & Artz, 2007; Powell, 2003). However, schools can also be viewed as important contexts for indoctrination, reproduction of social relations and sites of systemic violence (Harber, 2004; Powell, 2003). An important finding of the current study is that school climate and values of fairness and justice regarding disciplinary practices influence violence within the school (*refer to Theme 2*). School environments are intimately interwoven with their communities and environments (DoE, 2005). Therefore, the prevailing values and social attitudes within the school often reflect those of the surrounding community, contributing to the academic climate and policies with the school (Lleras, 2008).

In responses and explanations by participants I noted a sense of powerless, as well as a lack of support within, and outside of, school (*refer to Category 2.2*). The interaction between teachers and learners is particularly important in facilitating learning, supporting desired behaviour, and connecting the child to the school (Osher et al, 2004). Ripski and Gregory (2009, p.369) explain that a learner who feels that rules are not enforced justly may experience school as an emotionally unsafe place. *“Given these negative perceptions, it is likely that these students fail to form bonds with school personnel that would help them feel connected and increase their engagement. In classrooms, students could attribute the unfairness to the teacher and become less invested in the instruction.”* South African teachers also assert that poor support from the school as well as community leads to inconsistent, inconsequent disciplinary style within the classroom and is a significant contributing factor to escalating violence in the school context (Du Plessis, 2008).

Participants in the current study remarked that it was difficult for them to speak to their families or teachers, and that they preferred to call the police for help. This shows how school violence together with perceptions of unfairness and vulnerability can most likely lead learners to lose trust in the school system, which seemingly fails to protect them from threats or attacks by others *“Moreover, students who view the school as unfair are likely to lack supportive relationships with teachers who might act as sources of safety when students feel defenceless (sic)”* (Ripski & Gregory, 2009, p.370).

The theme of unsupportive school climates with inadequate cultures of learning also featured in Lubbe and Mampane’s (2008) findings. They conclude that risk conditions at schools relate to unsafe discipline policies, corporal punishment and an emphasis on compliance, conformity and obedience. At-risk interpersonal practices occurring at schools include discrimination, segregation and labelling of learners (Lubbe & Mampane, 2008) as well as failure to confront issues of racism and sexual harassment (Harber, 2001). Therefore, it is not simply a case of impoverished physical school infrastructure or poor classroom management practices that contribute to learners’ perceptions of school violence, but the *“irrelevant, alienating and even threatening nature of schooling”* (Harber, 2004, p.10) itself.

5.2.3.2 Peer Influences And Family Support

The peer group within the classroom provided yet another important social context (Osher et al, 2004) and participants demonstrated how learners exert considerable influences on one another’s behaviour via their interaction in the focus group and task-based activities. The school is the primary context for social relationships and interpersonal rivalries (van Jaarsveld, 2008), and adolescence is the prime age for establishing social hierarchies and impression management (Lawson, 2005). Participants claimed that violence at school was used to gain and maintain status and power and to assert oneself, as one participant explained that people hit others because: *“They think they’re the boss”* (FG-P9, refer to Theme 3).

The power of peer influence was also evident in participants’ reaction to incidents of violence in the classroom (perpetuated on them or others), when they often resorted to unconstructive coping strategies (refer to Category 2.2). Perhaps witnessing others being victimised reminds participants of their own powerlessness and vulnerabilities, which in turn provokes their violence (physically or verbally) reaction to cement a position of apparent power, at least above the person being victimised.

5.2.3.3 Societal Attitudes And Socialisation

There is a widespread belief that violence in schools is caused by societal cultures which encourage, tolerate and demand violence. “*Solving conflict and problems through violence has long been a core element in South African culture, and as a result, violence is used as a method of solving conflict and reaching goals in schools as well*” (Van Jaarsveld, 2008, p.179). This ‘culture of violence’ is reflected in the findings of the current study, with participants claiming that violence is necessary to maintain order and discipline (*refer to Theme 3*). There are also many studies ascribing youth violence to the influence of the media, which portray violence as an acceptable way of resolving conflict (van der Westhuizen & Maree; 2009; Zulu et al., 2004). Barker and Ricardo (2005) note that in both urban (townships) and rural areas in South Africa, wielding a weapon is often perceived as a sign of status, male affluence and power. Images and values of popular culture subtly define what is important, the ways in which we interact and the meanings we construct (Powell, 2003). The ubiquity of violence in entertainment seemingly communicates a clear consensus to children that violence is a common, legitimate and sometimes glamorous way of handling conflict and differences.

Rapid social changes within communities (either positive or negative) have been found to create instability, which in turn could produce acts of violence (van Jaarsveld, 2008 citing Moore *et al*, 2003). South Africa’s move towards democracy has impacted significantly on educational policies and schooling (van Jaarsveld, 2008). Government has embarked on various nation-wide efforts to introduce democratic values of equality and respect into the schooling system (example, outlawing corporal punishment). Despite such policies and guidelines for schools and communities on creating safe learning environment (DoE, 2006, 2008; Joubert, 2008; Morrell, 2002), the findings of this study indicate that rural schools remain violent spaces. Participants alluded to educational practices and discipline strategies entrenched in ideals of authority, obedience and conformity.

5.2.4 INSIGHTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

I have come to the same conclusion as Morrell (2002) and Bhana (2005) that violence - and in this case, school violence - is invariably bound up with issues of power. Participants in the current study learned that violence is a means to enforce power, to shift power and to resist power. Therefore, when used by someone in a position of authority to enforce order, violence is acceptable. Morrell (2001) speculates that high rates of economic and social disintegration in many communities, and the history of apartheid inequities have led to a brittle emasculated masculinity with a sense of powerlessness. This results in children and youth with an increasing propensity towards using violence to regain a sense of power and control over their lives.

An important insight is the way in which learners in the current study differentiated between play-fighting and violence. According to them, it is possible to distinguish between the two forms by observing the reactions of those participating. Therefore, if there is no intention to hurt or harm, both would be smiling or laughing – compared to feeling and looking sad, angry or hurt. This finding correlates with a study on school bullying conducted by Varjas et al. (2008) which found that a significant discrepancy existed between learner responses and adult-generated views of bullying, especially regarding perceived power and the intent to inflict harm. Many school violence prevention programmes urge teachers to observe and respond to teasing, pushing and other behaviours that are consistent with the definition of bullying (Risolo & Patella, 2005). While I agree that it is important for teachers and other adults to be observant and react accordingly to violence, this finding shows how easily interactions between learners can be misinterpreted and perceived as bullying, resulting in punitive measures on a child who may genuinely not understand what he has done wrong. This potentially creates a sense of inconsistent and unfair discipline practices among the learners, and a disconnection from the learning environment.

5.3 ADDRESSING THE RESEARCH QUESTION

The primary question driving my research was: ‘How do Grade 9 learners in a South African rural school experience school violence?’ To answer the above, the following sub-questions were explored:

5.3.1 HOW DO GRADE 9 LEARNERS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL SCHOOL CONCEPTUALISE VIOLENCE?

Findings from this study validate my working definition of school violence (discussed in Chapter 2) derived from the World Health Organisation (Dahlberg & Krug, 2002), namely: of physical and verbal behaviour, which was intended to hurt or humiliate, and results in negative physical and emotional feelings. Their conceptualisation of school violence in terms of corporal punishment, bullying, gossiping and intimidation are also in line with numerous other studies (Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2009; Pichler et al, 2005).

From the learners’ perspective then, it seems that the two most important factors in distinguishing a violent act from a non-violent one are the intention (reason for inflicting it) and the negative consequences (how it is received/ perceived by the recipient). Learners also included corporal punishment as school violence. On the other hand, learners did not regard beatings inflicted by people in authority (especially the police and the headmaster) to protect or enforce order as school violence.

5.3.2 WHICH SYSTEMIC FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CONCEPTUALISATION OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE?

The different contextual factors which emerged from the findings provide a glimpse into the life worlds of South African learners in a rural school. The following significant and interrelated contexts emerged as being the most influential in learners' conceptualisations and experiences of school violence.

Firstly, on the Microsystemic level, the school was the primary environment, and included teacher-learner relationships and the over-riding policies and attitudes towards forms of violence and discipline within the school. In this regard some teachers, especially in impoverished communities, model relationships vested in power and status contributing to violence at schools by being violent (for example by using corporal punishment and turning a blind eye to bullying or sexual harassment). This in turn probably establishes a school ethos intolerant of difference and insistent on conformity, obedience and hierarchies (Morrell, 2002).

It is important to acknowledge that problems of school violence do not originate solely within the school – systemic issues such as community and family breakdown are often contributing causes of the violence that plays out within the school system (Braun, 2007). Unfortunately no specific data emerged in this study regarding family and community variables, per se. Participants, however, did speak of the lack of support from the family system regarding incidents of bullying or corporal punishment (*refer to Category 2.2*), as well as being disciplined harshly at school and sent home if their school uniform was not in a good condition (*refer to Category 3.1*). In rural schools there is a pressing need for developing sound relationships between the teachers, learners and parents, which the participants also spoke of (*refer to Category 2.1*). However, low literacy levels, combined with embarrassment about financial status, poverty and health issues could hamper these relationships (Saloojee, 2009),

On the Macro-level, findings point to the ideological system of social and political values underlying the goals of education. In South Africa, existing inequalities in the distribution of educational resources to rural schools, as well as laws governing education have affected the school climate and environment (Joubert, 2008; Zulu et al, 2004). Zulu et al (2004) believe that school violence and its negative impact on a culture of teaching and learning in a school is symptomatic of deeper seated problems within a society. I tend to agree with these statements, however community or societal factors did not feature in the results possibly due to the limited scope of the study (*refer to 4.4 Delimiters and constraints of the results*).

5.4 CONTRIBUTIONS AND SIGNIFICANCE

Until recent decades, children were silenced, their voices unheard and their experiences largely concealed in the knowledge created by sociologists, anthropologists and historians (Thorne, 2002). Research with children and young people is crucial as it advances understanding of how they experience their world (Lewis, 2004). Outcomes of such research can impact directly, or indirectly on the lives of those researched, and are therefore invaluable in contributing to theoretical debates. However, moving the voices of children and youth towards the centre of the study of violence is described by some as a paradigm shift (Powell, 2003). This study contributes towards understanding the complexities of violence in South African schools by giving voice to learners in a rural school. As a case study it allows for an in-depth understanding of learners' conceptualisations of school violence and the various systemic factors they express as linked to their experiences. As no adult-created definitions were presented to participants, this study provides insight into the life worlds of South African learners.

Reference to literature in this study has highlighted that school violence is an urgent concern both locally and globally, and there have been concerted efforts to make a stand against it. Harber's (2002, p.8) review of literature discusses some of the possible ways in which schools have become violent environments and is intended to "...*explore what it is about schooling as a system that can lend itself to a violent interpretation in the hope that understanding what is bad in the social construction of schooling will help in the creation and expansion of what is good.*" In a similar vein my exploration of school violence can contribute to this understanding of what is 'good' and, thereby, assist in creating safer educational contexts. But it is important to note that the way in which the problem of school violence (or safety) is tackled depends on one's assessment and understanding of it (Morrell, 2002). I contend that learners need to be heard and made more 'visible' to adults in the school environment, and therefore, I present findings to assist school districts, administrators, and teachers to organise safety efforts which take into account the perspectives and opinions of learners. By placing school violence within a larger context, acknowledging the effects of inequality and lack of opportunities, and resources, in a transforming democracy this study contributes to thinking constructively about a problem.

Quantitative, self-report surveys have dominated research in this field, and it has been noted that, "*the failure to consider the factors that make a key contribution to violence and its prevention may create serious problems of construct validity for school violence surveys*" (Skiba et al, 2004, p.150). The fact that some of the responses in this study differed somewhat from adult-generated views of school violence, and provided new insights, supports the use of qualitative methodologies, and

indicates a need for increased learner contributions in future research on the topics of school violence and safety.

A further contribution of this study is that it adds support to current literature urging school-family-community partnerships to address the issue of school violence, by highlighting the various systemic levels of influence that play a role in ways violence is established and reproduced in classrooms. Furthermore, this study supports evidence of the continuing prevalence of corporal punishment in schools and how it is experienced by learners.

Most importantly, I believe the findings of this investigation have significant implications for school practice by amplifying a different perspective of school violence in which power, control and status feature more prominently than the act of violence. School violence is perpetuated by both peers and teachers. Violence is used to gain status and power. Violence is used to control behaviour and bring about discipline and order. Therefore, the violence learners experience has a duplicitous role: used negatively to cause harm, and positively to enforce order and protect.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.5.1 FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There were several limitations in the study which could be addressed in further studies. Owing to South Africa's diversity, it is often assumed that demographically socio-political and economic differences in the country would impact differently on the various population groups in the country (Steyn et al, 2010). Future research could extend on the current study through comparative case studies of how learners in various school contexts (public and private, co-ed and single-sex, as well as rural, suburban and inner-city) define and experience school violence to ascertain universal and unique themes and perspectives. I followed a case study design to provide in-depth descriptions and not for generalisation purposes. Therefore, a variety of similar studies conducted in differing contexts could provide a more vivid picture, and a pool of empirical data, from which to draw hypotheses and conclusions.

The limited time available during this study influenced my choice of data collection strategies, which also limited the depth of responses. I would, therefore, encourage researchers to spend more time with participants and make use of a variety of child-centred strategies such as drawings and ethno-drama. In addition, language and cultural barriers need to be taken into consideration, and perhaps decreased with the assistance of an interpreter. I also recommend future researchers to consider gender sensitivities in the composition of focus groups. Individual interviews could also be included to gain insight into more personal experiences of school violence.

Various themes that emerged in the study highlight the need for further discussion and insight regarding the ways in which school violence influences learners' social constructions of masculinity and femininity, especially taking note of the power dynamics underscored in this study. It would be valuable, therefore, to further investigate learners' notions of what constitutes masculine power.

For some time qualitative researchers have also been interested in documenting the processes by which social reality is constructed, managed and sustained (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000). In this regard I believe using the lens of Social Identity Theory to understand data in this study could provide valuable insights and perspectives. Another direction for further research to address school violence and safety is to understand learners' conceptualisations through the lens of asset-based, positive psychology. In this way understandings can be generated on how learners define concepts of safety, school connectedness and democratic values in school contexts where violence is prevalent and those where it is not. Alternatively, safe schools (rather than violent ones) that have succeeded in creating disciplined yet democratic learning environments can be explored, asking learners to define what a safe, caring school is and how they have contributed (or could contribute) to their current school environment.

The current study supports literature that asserts a link between school violence and feelings of hopelessness among learners. It would be interesting to investigate children's hopes, dreams and expectations within the context of school violence, with special cognisance of the ensuing debates of normalisation of violence in youth.

5.5.2 FOR SCHOOLS: MICRO-SYSTEMIC INTERVENTION

Findings of this study have several implications for school-based interventions aimed at addressing school violence. Firstly, the findings reveal certain discrepancies between learners' responses and adult-generated views of school violence in the literature, especially regarding views on the intent and consequences. I, therefore, recommend that role-players in schools to take note of such distinctions and ensure that learners' views and opinions are represented in school rules, guidelines and discipline policies.

Secondly, it is evident that school climate plays a significant role in the existence and severity of school violence. Resnick and colleagues (1997 cited by Allen, 2005) indicate that the most powerful indicator of adolescent well-being is a feeling of connection to the school. I too, maintain that learners who feel connected by others, accepted for who they are, who believe they are being fairly treated and are proud to be school members are less likely to engage in risky, destructive behaviours. It is, therefore, crucial for intervention programmes to consider the current school discipline policy, teacher-learner relations, and learner's attitudes towards school (see Northfield &

Sherman, 2004 on ways of promoting a classroom community). Lawson (2005) very succinctly states that from an ecological-developmental perspective the role of the school in violence prevention is actually the promotion of competence and well-being.

Furthermore, teachers play a crucial role in the identity development of children and adolescents, they shape and mould their thinking and behaviour in the hope of creating responsible, thinking young adults. In resource scarce communities (possibly lacking in educated, employed adults) teachers become even more critical role models for learners. While many studies on school violence focus on introducing physical safety measures and educational programmes for the learners, I believe that an additional focus should be on empowering teachers not to resort to harsh discipline and verbal intimidation in the classroom. Risolo and Patella (2005) ask how teachers expect learners to stop hitting or bullying each other when such behaviour is condoned within the school in the form of corporal punishment? Perhaps, rather than focusing resources on 'fighting' school violence and negative elements, schools could focus on building positive relationships from within, promoting democratic values and encouraging good citizenship. Such interventions can be founded on human rights and include structuring social hierarchies which empower learners and encourage participation (such as student bodies).

Lastly, I encourage schools to forge positive relationships with parents and the community at large. Schools are embedded within communities, and therefore reflect community-level processes. Like other studies, the current study demonstrates that attitudes, values and norms outside of the school impact strongly on the behaviour of both learners and teachers, and this is especially evident with regards to violence. Effective solutions to school violence require comprehensive, inclusive programmes that promote collaboration and openness between school administrators, teaching staff, parents, learners and community members. The importance of community is not a new idea in education, and it has been often noted that in community-oriented schools children feel a sense of belonging, of commitment and a sense of shared enterprise around academic achievement (Baker, 1998).

All of the above recommendations are particularly relevant for the field of educational psychology. I maintain that the role and responsibilities of an educational psychologist is (in collaboration with stakeholders) to develop pro-active/preventative, as well as reactive strategies to address varied forms of school violence.

5.5.3 FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: MACRO-SYSTEMIC INTERVENTION

The South African government has invested great hope in education as a basis for broader societal transformation (Ngcobo & Tikly, 2010). However, each school exists within a unique context of

community values and norms, which in turn have been shaped through generations by socio-economic and political events. It is clear that no single intervention strategy will solve heterogeneous problems. Yet the Department of Education maintains expectations of transformation by disseminating national policies which potentially clash with traditional values held by many teachers and parents (such as corporal punishment and outcomes-based education) - especially in rural schools. As Joubert (2008, p.16) cautions: *“The flaw in all the departmental documents is that they ignore the fact that schools need the support and assistance of the district offices and PDEs in implementing these very ambitious safe school programmes and projects.”*

The current study highlights the necessity that government departments heed the opinions of marginalised groups (learners, teachers and parents in rural communities) when developing policies and programmes regarding the issue of school violence. Failure to incorporate and acknowledge an often ignored segment of any society may lead to findings, conclusions and decisions that are either erroneous, or that reflect only the views and experiences of a subset of individuals (Cronin, 2004; Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard & Henry, 1997). As Williams (2008, p.172 citing Loomba et al., 2006) comments: *“social change is only meaningful for ordinary people when they participate directly in its genesis, form, substance and direction.”*

I emphasised that schools reflect what is happening within the home and community. Thus I deduce that findings of the current study plausibly represent a microcosm of what is happening in the totality of learner’s lives. If this is indeed the case, then one can expect that participants’ conceptualisations and experiences of violence extend beyond the school grounds into the home and the community. Therefore, to truly understand the issue of school violence requires collaboration between the various government departments – such as education, health, social development, economic development. Collaboration could ensure guidelines, support programmes and policies that collectively work at empowering and mobilising communities. Similarly, the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (2005, p.3) urges government to look beyond the ‘deficit’ approach when discussing rural schooling and development: *“While acknowledging the importance of history and quantitative factors, the committee believes that it is important to see beyond the numbers and negative ‘deficit’ views to recognise the positive capabilities and assets of rural people and the inherent worth of indigenous knowledges (sic) and practices.”*

5.6 CONCLUSION

Furlong, Morrison, Cornell and Skiba (2004, p.11) comment that: *“School violence and safety research will move forward and make unique scientific contributions only if it develops a core literature that critically examines its measurement, methods, and data analysis techniques.”* It is

their opinion that as the field of education moves beyond acknowledging the presence of a social problem (school violence) toward understanding the complex dynamics underpinning its occurrence, such an analysis is increasingly necessary. The current study adds to contemporary literature's understanding of learners' perceptions of school violence from a systemic perspective.

In concluding the report, I would like to emphasise that the limited scope of this research necessitated that I focus predominantly on school violence, paying minor attention to the interrelated and interdependent systems in which it is embedded. However, it is widely acknowledged that the problem of school violence is intricately woven into broader social patterns and issues, and I am aware that a multitude of factors interact in a child's life-world to produce violence. Smit, (2010, p.146) notes in her conclusion that: "*Sadly, it would seem that the inability of one generation to unite in creating or preserving a culture of responsible education might be removing the opportunity from the next generation, of knowing the benefits of discipline and respect in a responsible, supportive learning environment.*" Children in today's society are faced with the daunting task of adjusting to a world that is no longer predictable or secure (Allen, 2005).

Unfortunately, many South African communities are still deeply entrenched in conditions of poverty and inequalities which only serves to further embed the maintenance of power relations in the country's social fabric (Fataar, 1997). South Africa's education system is changing and has a unique opportunity to entrench democratic practices, specifically with respect to discipline and punishment (Morrell, 2001, p.298), but this can only be achieved by addressing and challenging current social structures and attitudes that maintain violence –within and outside of the school environment. Education should be viewed as one aspect of a long-term, collaborative and holistic development strategy and not a panacea for, broad social change (Fataar, 1997).

"The domain of qualitative inquiry offers some of the richest and most rewarding explorations available in contemporary social science" (Gergen & Gergen, 2000, p.1025). My aim in tackling this topic from a qualitative methodological paradigm was to provide rich descriptions, opening new perspectives on school violence and generating further debates and research. By engaging participants in open and extended dialogue, I hope to have opened spaces or avenues for their meaning-making, and perhaps even given rise to reconstructions and contemplations. Walkerdine (2002 cited by Powell, 2003, p.197) stated that adding a new voice to a conversation, a new point of view, does more than just increase the content in a linear way. By including a voice that has previously been excluded contains the *"potential for changing the entire discussion."* I realise that my study is simply a small ripple in a large pond of academic literature, but even small ripples cause some change in the water's surface.

5.7 REFLECTION

“Although we usually think about writing as a mode of ‘telling’ about the social world, writing is not just a mopping-up activity at the end of a research project. Writing is also a way of ‘knowing’ – a method of discovery and analysis. By writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it. Form and content are inseparable” (Richardson, 2000, p.923). This statement reminds me, at the end of my journey, that writing a research report is in fact a process of inquiry, a way of gaining insights not only about my chosen topic but also about myself. In such instances, hindsight is a gift. As I look back over my early written notes - my planning, my trepidations, the ideals and assumptions about the focus groups and time frames - I realise how much the research project changed over time, and how I have grown as a researcher.

My expectation when starting this study was simply to draw a description and definition of school violence according to learners in a rural school; to view and understand a common phenomenon from another, often ignored, perspective. However, I realise that I walked away with a lot more insight into the wider context of school violence, and many more questions than I had started with. Listening to the participants and observing their interactions and responses I am left wondering about the role that violence and aggression play in fulfilling a need in children and youth (and probably in society as a whole) to gain some power or status to balance their feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness in a fast changing world. While most studies seem to place learners in a dichotomous role of either victims or perpetrators, I often found myself swinging between the two, and inevitably landing somewhere in the middle.

It intrigued me that the participants did not regard their own physically and verbally aggressive behaviours with peers as violence, explaining it rather as playing. This insight brought home to me the assumptions and perceptions I had carried into the research engagement, and reminded me how often as adults we tend to gloss over the opinions and perspectives of children. I was also puzzled by the apparent paradox concerning corporal punishment. On one hand the participants complained that the beatings and punishments were hurtful and humiliating, and expressed the desire for them to stop and be replaced by more ‘humane’ consultative measures. But they were just as adamant that the only way to stop violence was through violence, and therefore, it is at times necessary to inflict such beatings on someone who lacks discipline. This brought to mind a comment that Harber (2002, p.7-8) made about the irony of using power within schools to stem violence and bring about discipline. He pointed out that when adults respond to violence in schools (if they respond at all) it is to the children who are violent. Therefore, when a child manipulates another into doing something, it is called extortion; but the same demands by an adult is called

correction. When a learner hits another learner it is assault; but a teacher hits a learner for his 'own good'. When a learner embarrasses, ridicules or scorns another learner it is harassment, bullying or teasing, yet often a strategy employed by teachers for classroom management techniques. De Klerk and Rens (2003) argue that education, and schools in particular, are losing their human values and moral essence, but sometimes I wonder if it is not common sense that we are lacking? I do not question that values and education are (or should be) inseparable, but boundaries often blur when it comes to who is responsible for establishing and maintaining pro-social behaviours in children - parents, teachers, the community?

My final thoughts are concerning the future of South Africa. Several authors have written about the prevailing sense of despair and negativity among youth in this country, resulting in a large number of school drop-outs, a culture of crime and a general lack of motivation. Similar to my experiences with youth in prison, the participants in this study also shared their disillusionment in an unjust and unequal society, yet the difference was that despite these disappointments they still carried a spark of hope and optimism. Although we did not get a chance to talk about the meaning of values such as honesty, integrity and respect, through my brief interaction with them I sensed that, despite their contradictions and occasional horsing-around, the participants knew what these characteristics entailed and, in their own way, were striving for them in their life. Perhaps that is the thread of transformation that educators, researchers and administrators should be pulling on to unravel the fabric of school violence?

In my personal journey, it was the issue of control and power that featured most prominently. Young (1996 cited by Hinson Shope, 2006) contends that transformation occurs when an individual encounters a different perspective to her own, which teaches her the constrained partiality of her own standpoint and experiences. There were often times when I felt despondent because the study was not going as I had planned. My perceived feelings of failure to connect with the participants, gathering insufficient data or frustration with emerging themes was simply reactions to a sense of losing control over the process. I realise now that, as researchers, it is necessary to free ourselves from our pre-identified power positions, and that multiple voices and perspectives often strengthen qualitative research (Gubrium & Koro-Ljungberg, 2005). Or as my co-supervisor Prof Ebersöhn, so often encouraged: "*Just trust in the process.*" And so, I did.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A	ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE
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**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Learner

Re: Participation in focus group discussions for research study

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria busy with my masters degree in Educational Psychology. I would like to understand more about school violence and how it affects you the learner. So I have decided to conduct my research here at your school. I want to hear about your experience, what is happening in your school and why you think it is happening. This research is separate to the career and learning assessments we will be doing together while I am here as well.

My study will involve talking openly together as a group (over two days) and sharing experiences about school violence. Your participation is not compulsory. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to continue, it's ok. You can ask to leave the group and your decision will be respected.

Remember, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I just wanting to share ideas with you and hear what you think about school violence. Your ideas will help me with all the information I need to put together a report for the University called a Dissertation, so that other people can also learn about what I have learned.

It is important for you to know that the report will not show the name of your school or your name, or any details that can identify you specifically. That information will be kept private and confidential. Your parents / caregivers as well as your teachers have been given a letter explaining why I am here, so they will know you participated in this group, but they will not have access to what you said or showed me. The only people who will know what was discussed in the group is all of you sitting here. So remember, it is important that if you choose to participate in the group, you must respect the other participants and not share what is said in the group with your friends, family or anyone else who was not in the group.

My intention is not to make you feel sad, uncomfortable or scared in any way, but we will be talking openly about experiences of school violence, and sometimes talking about such things can make a person feel sad or bad. If at any time you do feel upset for any reason, please talk to me. I have also arranged with your Life Orientation teacher, to be available if you might like to talk to someone about the feelings that you have as a result of our discussions.

After you have read and understood all this information about the research and what you will be required to do, please complete the bottom section of the page and **sign if you would like participate** in this research study. If you do not want to participate, just leave the form blank.
Thank you very much for your interest in the study and the support that you are giving me.

Avie Cherrington

Motlalepule Ruth Mampane

Researcher

Supervisor

083 475 8852

→.....←

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of your School: _____

**I HAVE READ THE LETTER AND WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
STUDY AT MY SCHOOL**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Parent / Guardian

Re: Permission for your child to participate in a research project

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria. I am busy with my masters' studies in Educational Psychology. To complete my study I am required to conduct research into a topic of interest in my professional field. The aim of my study is to help me better understand how learners in a South African school define and experience school violence. The study involves various activities and group discussions with the learners (held over two days) which will take place during school time.

I do not foresee that your child will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, the activity will require him/her to talk openly with other learners about his/her ideas and experiences of violence at school. While I will encourage everyone in the group to be respectful and ask them to not share what is said in the group with others, it is not something that I can guarantee.

Participation is voluntary and if any learner feels, at any time, that he/she does not want to participate, he/she will be able to leave the study without penalty or punishment. Furthermore, I have spoken to the Life Orientation teacher who is willing to help those learners who feel uncomfortable or upset as a result of participating in this discussion.

The name of your child will remain confidential. This means that when I write the results of the study I will not mention the name of your child or the school, and any comments he/she made will remain anonymous. My supervisor will be the only person with access to the information, but even she will not know the names of the learners.

I would appreciate your consent and assent as the parent / guardian of the learner to allow him/ her to participate in this study by signing the form at the bottom section of this page.

I will explain the research process to your child beforehand and will ensure that he/she gives his/her assent as well.

Thank you,

Avie Cherrington, Researcher

083 475 8852

Supervisor - Ruth Mampane

Lecturer, University of Pretoria

Tel: 012-420 2339, Fax: 012-420 5511

→.....←

I.....

Parent/guardian of (name of learner)

Have read and understood what the study is about and hereby **give** consent and assent for **him/ her** to participate in the study (circle the relevant option) through focus group discussions.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

Research Planning Schedule:

First Visit

April 14, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & explain next two days
Explain goals of project & discuss informed consent / assent
- 10h30: Hand out t-shirts, begin craft activity
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Tour of school with participants
- 12h30: Snacks & reflection circle
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues



April 15, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30: Summary of previous day
- 9h45: Work books handed out and activities explained
- 10h30: Random individual discussions
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Continue with workbooks and individual discussions
- 12h30: Snacks and focus group discussion
- 13h00: Reflection circle & closure
- 14h00: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Second Visit

August 4, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
- Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & recap from previous session
- 10h30: Hand back booklet, allow time for decorating cover & completing worksheets from previous visit
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: My flower garden posters; Individual discussion & feedback with quadrant maps
- 12h45: Snacks & member checking
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues

August 5, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30 - 12h30 Career expo Grade 12's to Grade 9's
- 13h00: Reflection circle with group & closure
- 13h30: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Transcription: Focus Group Interview

15 April 2010

NOTE: *Bold comments in this font are transcribed from siSwati conversation*

Someone in background: (Don't tell her... Don't ask she will write your question)

(00:10) Av: **Ok, right. So can you all hear me? Good.**

Thank you everybody. (Let me ask) So now, what I wanted to talk to you about... I want to understand ... I've spoken to children at other schools and they all tell me that there is a lot of violence that goes on in schools and sometimes it is difficult for them to do their school, and to really do as well as they want to because it is difficult. So I want to find out from you guys what it is like here in this school. So when I say to you 'school violence'... what does that mean to you? (pause)

What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ... (pause)

(00:55) P9: Abuse of children

Av (repeat): Abuse of children.

(pause)

[P8 & P3 talking softly] *Speak out loud.*

Av: What's that?

[SiSwati - mumbling]

Av: What's that? P3 what did you say? Just say it out loud. There's no right or wrong. I'm here to learn from you. I don't know what is right. (pause). What does it mean to you? If I say school violence... teach me, what is it? (pause – everyone is looking away or at the floor).

You said before it is the 'abuse of children'. What is abuse? What does it mean? (pause) Say it in your language and ask someone to translate for me. Just tell me. If it's hard for you to say it in English, just say it in your language. (long pause)

(01:49) P9: They are beating people...

Av: Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).

(02:04) P1 (very quietly): with sjambok...

Av: ... with a sjambok?

P1: yeah (nods).

P9 to group: *[Talk people you will be in trouble ... I hope she broadcasts you in the news (daring the group)]* Giggling. P3, looks intently at me, seems like there are words on the tip of her tongue. She gestures with her hand in front of her mouth.

Av: ... yes, tell me P3. You're dying to say something.

P9: *[Whispers]*

(Pause)

P8 mumbles something under her breath.

Av: I can't hear you P8...

(she looks at me and P3, shakes her head & looks down)

[This one is delaying us we want to finish writing] [grp converse in siSwati]

(silence. The grp look around at others playing around us or at their feet)

(02:45) P3: Xenophobia!

Av: (repeat) xenophobia? So that's also violence? Ok, that's good ... so does that mean ... what does xenophobia mean? That they come from another country?

(group nod... some say 'yes' softly)

Av: Which other country?

Group call out: Zimbabwe

Av: ... yes.... (pause) Do you have that in your school? (pause). Are there learners here from Zimbabwe?

Group: ... yes, and from Swaziland....

Av: yes, and from where else?

Someone in grp: and Botswana ...

[Get out of here.... to someone walking past]

Av: .. but what happens? Do they abuse children, or do children abuse them? which way does it work?

[I will beat you] [This thing does not count]

...talking softly/can't hear ...

(03:39) Av: And does it happen in the school grounds, or outside... where does it happen? The abuse ..?

P9: In school and outside.

Av: Both, hey?

P9: Yes, both.

Av: Tell me what happens in the school. Have you ever seen people or instances? Tell me a story, has there been violence in the school?

(pause)

Av: You've been here a long time, have you ever seen violence inside the school? Tell me the stories... have you seen people, or heard people tell you stories? You don't have to tell me names, just what happens.

(pause)

(04h43) Av: Do things happen or do they not happen? Yes, no? (some look at me nodding, some look away. No-one answers). Have you all seen things, yes or no? (pause)

Av: What about you boys, do you see problems of violence in the school?(pause) ... No?

(silence)

Av: is it something we shouldn't talk about? Is that why? You all look away or smile, why is it difficult? (teacher shouting in background). Is it difficult because you are scared something will happen if you talk about it, or difficult because you don't want to remember it? Why is it difficult?

(pause silence)

Av: what about you P4? (pause – no reply) Is it difficult? Why?

Av: Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes?

So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?

P3: We tell them ... (pause)

Av: yeah, we tell them what?

P3: to stop it.

Av: yes we must stop it, but how do we stop it if we don't know that it happens? Because I am going to leave here and I'm going to say: No, it doesn't happen here... they all say to me, no it's fine. So I'm going to say to people in government and university: Don't worry about {name of school}. In Mpumalanga, it doesn't happen. Is that what you want me to go and say? (pause)

Because that's the information you're giving me. So if you wanna make a difference ...(pause) ... this is your chance. What can we do about it? (pause) If it happens, I need to know that it happens, so I can tell people.

(silence)

Av: Remember you don't have to tell me names, nobody else hears this, it's only me. They won't know it's this school. (pause.... long silence).

Where's P5... you wanted to be president, hey? (P9 laughs quietly, P5 smiles shyly). And you're sitting there very quietly. What would the president do? Do you think the president is happy about this? Do you think the president doesn't have children who go to schools? If you were president what would you do, wouldn't you want to change it?

(08:30) P3: Invite them to meeting

Av: Yeah, invite the meeting? Who would come to the meeting? (others whisper, answer softly). Who would you invite ... all the learners, or the teachers, or people outside? Who would you invite to your meeting?

Grp: Teachers ...

Av: Um uh. And ... (pause).

(P3 softly says something)

Av: The mothers and fathers... parents (repeating what is being said)? Ok, thanks P4. And what would we talk about?

(silence)

[It's not coming out (making fun of her because she was struggling with words)]

Av: (picking up words in conversation) Oh, about the xenophobia. Ok so what are we going to say to them? What about the xenophobia are we going to say to them? (pause) we say what.. you must stop it... what are we going to say? Tell me. (pause)

We have this meeting and everybody is here. What are we going to say to them? (pause)

[Talk, speak up]

(10:05) P3: I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (*struggling with words*)

Av: ... so the parents must tell the children ...

P3: yes ... stop! And the other learners

(P8 giggling)

Av: (repeats) ... stop. And if I'm a learner ... yes, so you must stop being violent with the other learners just because they come from another country doesn't mean you must hit them, hey?

Group: yes ... yes.

Av: But now, if I'm the child, and I say: But I'm not doing anything... what am I doing? What would you say? What am I doing that tells you that it's violence? What am I doing that is violent? (pause) ... What does violence mean?

(silence ... *talking softly in siSwati*)

(10:59) P9: abuse ...

Av: But what does abuse mean? (pause) like what do they actually do? Show me or tell me ...

P9: beating them ...

Av: (repeat) ... beating them, yeah.

Girls: gossiping ...

Av: (repeat) .. gossiping, ok...

Boys: yeah ... gossiping.

(*grp talking in siSwati*)

Boys: .. punishing ...

Av: (repeat) punishing ... yes, like what kind of punishment?

(*talking in siSwati !?*)

P3: clean the windows and clean the class ...

(11:39) **Av: Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean**

(*siSwati !!*)

Av: so is that violence?

They nod...

Av: yeah? Ok. And tell me, so you said .. let's take these .. so you said beating, so that's when you hit someone? What do they hit with? You said shambok, stick ... (P1 & P9 nod, yes) .. anything else they use?

(12:04) P1: Sjambok!

Av: yes, shambok... and a stick? (group: yes ...)

(P9 animates hitting / slapping with an open hand)

(12:12) Av: with hands?

P9: *(makes whack/pow sound as demonstrates)* Yes!

Av: show me ..

P1: *(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)*

Av: ... and a fist P1? Yes, the fist .. ok. I see so sometimes they use the hand like this (demo an open-handed slap) and sometimes ...

P9: *(kicks with feet/leg)...* and kick ...

Av: .. and sometimes they kick, hey?

P9: yes, kick ... *(P1 also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)*

Av: good, thank you.

(12:29) P2: .. it's hard, hurting ..

Av: It's hard P2? .. Hurting ... how hurting? With the body or with something ...

P2 points to his back *(whipping action)*

Av: here on the back?

P2: ya.

Av: hmm, that's good. I didn't know. So they hit you on the back. where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Where on your body? (pause) where do they do it? Where, where, where ... show me...

(Grp point to different parts of body ...)

Av: everything, your head and your face? Everything ...

Grp: yes!

(12:59) P3: and in the stomach.

Av: and the stomach also? ...

P9: and on the bum.

Av: do they? Do they turn you around and bend you, like this? (demo hitting someone with open hand on the bum).

Grp: yes ...

Avie: and the back, P2, you said also on the back?

P2: yes on the back like this ...

Av: really, on the back? ... and boys and girls also?

Grp ... yes ...

Av: ... Also the girls?

Av: ... and boys? (grp nods). Do you think it is different, the way they do it for boys and for girls? Or is it the same?

P9: it's the same.

Av: so they don't care that if you are a girl ... they do it less ..

P9: ... they don't care ...

Av: does it matter?

P9: .. no it doesn't.

Av: no? The same thing. It's not different for boys and girls? (they nod) ok.

(13:47) Av: and tell me, when you say things like bully. What is bully? What does it mean? (pause) .. when somebody is a bully?

Someone in group: bully ...

Av: ya, when they are bullying... you said here gossiping and bullying... so what is a bully

(grp is talking softly – not sure what?)

Av: .. is it also beating?

Group: yes! *(loudly and firmly)*

(talking in grp siSwati)

Av: so what is it though? What does it mean if someone is bullied? Who is the bully?

(14:16) P9: I can think of the word in siSwati ... bullying

Av: what is the word in siSwati for bullying?

Grp: Kushaya ... (to hit/beat)

Av: (writing it down) And what's the word for violence?

Amos: Um ...?

Av: oh spell that ...

Grp: ...k ... u ...a.. h ...*(get confused)*.. *Kuhlukumeta (to abuse)*

Av: you write it for me ... I'm not writing it properly.

P9 writes it down the others look over his shoulder.

(P7 says something in siSwati)

Av: ok ... so that's violence hey? And beating and things like that? And what about things like gossiping. Is that also violence?

P9: .. i think so ...

Av: cause gossiping is what? (pause) when people talk about you, hey...

Grp: hmmm *(in agreement)*

Av: so is that also violence?

P3: yes!

(15:15) Av: yeah. And what do they say? (pause) what do they say that's violent? That's horrible? (pause) what kind of things do they say? (pause – everyone is quiet, look at floor or away.)

Av: Like what are the mean things they would say that hurt? (pause)

(15:38) Av: what hurts more the things they say, or when they hit? (some heads shaking some nodding) ... (pause) what do you think P7? What is ... worse, the hitting or the talking? What hurts more?

P7: (thinking)

(15:59) Grp members (probably P3 and P9): The hitting (others add in) hitting... hitting..

Av: and for you? (looking at P7)

P7: ... hitting ...

Av: ok, you also think the hitting? So the hitting is more bad than the ... bad words. So the bad words is not as bad?

(16:14) P9: is bad! They call you names ... it hurts. They say like ... you're foolish ... (struggling for words, pained expressions on his face)

Av: yeah, so they're saying you're stupid? You're a fool?

Others: yeah ... stupid!

(You are a fool everything!)

Av: do they ever ... do people say things to you about your family or something?

P9: yes ... (???)

Av: it hurts, yeah? Do people

Grp: yes ...

Av: yes ... it also hurts ... yeah? Do people do that? (nodding heads ... pause)

Av: tell me some of the things you've heard people say... maybe they say it to other people, it doesn't matter what do you think is the most hurtful things to say? (pause)

(17:00) Grp: you look like a monkey ...

Av: like a monkey? Oh no.

P1 and P9 start making monkey movements (scratching body, facial expressions)

Av: (someone in grp whispers baboon) ... like a baboon?

Grp: yes ...

Av: yeah. That's hurtful.

Grp shouting out words ... like giraffe ... like bird...

Av: um-hmmm

P9: they say you are 'uyaphapha' – you are flying like a bird ... *(uyaphapha means you are all over the place almost usually in an annoying manner/sometimes it means you cannot be trusted e.g. with a secret cause you don't know when to stop)*

Av: oh .. wow, ok. (someone says something...) what? They say ...

(The girls giggle and no one translates for me ...)

Av: yeah ... is it bad? Yeah? ... But now who does this in the school? Who does the hitting and the bad words? (pause) don't tell me names, tell me is it other learners, is it ... who? Who does it?

One of boys (P7?) others learners ...

Av: Other learners? Yeah. Are they older, or the same age as you? ... younger ...

P2: ... yes ...

Av: Younger, P2? (he shakes his head) older or the same?

(17:56) P9: older or the same ... everything

Av: (looking around the group at the heads nodding ...) older ... yes, older ... ? is it always the older children? From the time you start at school, is it always the older children?

Av: is it sometimes children on the same grade as you?

Grp: (nod) ... yes

Av: yes, also?

Grp: yes ...

(... must agree to everything she...)

Av: hey girls, who is it? The other learners ? are they older or the same grade?

Girls: older ...

Av: and do you get the older girls that beat the girls, or is it the boys that beat the girls also?

P9: boys ...

Av: so the boys beat the boys, and the girls beat the girls? Is that how it works?

Grp: nods ...

Av: do you ever have the girls violent for the boys?

(18:49) P9: yeah, sometime the boys are beating girls.

P3: (shouts loudly) Yes!

Av: ok. So sometimes you have the boys beating the younger girls, and sometimes it's the girls beating the girls ?

Group: yes ...

Av: do you ever have the girls beating the boys?

P9: ye-es ...

Av: so it works ... like ... all the time, hey?

P9 & P1: (fighting sound effects and making hitting motions with their hands and feet)

(Mumbling something in SiSwati)

Av: what else? Is there anyone else at school ... do the teachers ever? Who else does beating and shouting? Violence? Is it just the learners, or is also the teachers?

(19:26) grp: yes, also the teachers ... yes ...

Av: also the teachers?

(19:28) P9: yes, they are beating us with this (point to his belt buckle)

Av: With the belt buckle?

Boys: (nodding) ummm, yeah!

Av: when do they do that?

P1: .. and a stick ...

Av: a stick? The teacher's do that?

(19:39) P9: and the duster ... the duster from the front ...

Av: oh the board duster?

Boys: yeah!

Av: where? ...

(P9 demonstrates by stretching one hand out and hitting it with the other hand)

Av: oh, like that ...

P1 holds out his hand palm facing up, with the fingers all clumped together and pointing upwards.)

Av: so they either do it on your knuckles when your hand is flat, and sometimes you have to put your fingers up like this and they just do it on your fingertips?

Grp: (loudly) yes! (the girls and boys around P9 and P1 sit up and lean into the conversation, also showing me on their hands how they get hit, pained expressions on their faces).

Av: oh, it's sore, hey?!

Grp: yes ... (nodding)

Av: is it the men teachers or the women teachers?

P3: the men and the women ...

(20:00) P9: the men and the women...

Av: all of them?

Grp: yes.

Av: oooh. So when you come to the school do you just learn which is the teachers that hit and which are the teachers that don't?

P9: yes ...

(There is one)

P9: (pointing to a male teacher across from us outside a classroom, smiling and whispering conspiratorially) ... that one ...

Av: that one?

P9: yes ...

Av: are all of the teachers .. or some of the teachers that don't?

Grp: (discusses some names of teachers amongst themselves....)

P8: (demonstrates pinching upper arm on self and on P3)

Av: oh, she pinches your skin?

Grp: yes!!

Av: where does she do it on your body? On the arms?

Grp: yes, here ... (demonstrate on themselves)

Av: Ow!

(P8 and P3 also pinch on their flanks)

(20:42) Av: .. and here on the side of the stomach, also? ... ouch! That's sore, hey?

Grp: yes ... (quietly)

Av: and then do people cry in the class, what happens?

P9: o, you don't cry. If you cry (P3; Yes!) ... they beat you again.

(P3 laughs)

Av: oh really? So if you cry or you make a sound, they beat you more?

Grp: yes!

Av: ... and if you're quiet, they stop?

Grp: yes (quietly now, looking down)

Av: I see. That's difficult then, you have to keep it all in, hey?

Boys: yes ... (nodding heads)

Av: and what happens to the other people in the class? What do you do if somebody does it to P1? You're in the same class.

P9: they are laughing.

Av: laughing ...

Grp: yes...

Av: why are they laughing?

(saying something softly ... they are laughing at you!)

Av: so do you also do that when other people are being hit? Do you also laugh?

(look at each other and smile)

P9: we are laughing (looking down at his shoes)

(Others laugh softly ...)

Av: why? Why you do that? (pause) .. are you scared? ... why do you laugh when other people hurt, cause you didn't like it when they laugh when you are sore? ...(pause) But you do it.. so why do we do it? Are you scared, P3? (she nods)

What happens if you don't laugh?

P3 (quietly) we're scared ...

Av: hey? Do you sometimes feel you have to laugh? Even if you don't want to? (pause) ... Hey, if somebody else is being sore? And what happens afterwards when the person leaves the classroom? (pause) Does anybody go to them, or do people just ...(shrug shoulders) ... leave them and say bad things to them... or what happens?

(They are all quiet)

Av: like if you get beaten in the class then afterwards, do you go to your friends, or do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens?

(all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)

Av: dunno?

P9: it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)

Av: now tell me, do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?

(22:45) P9: yes! They say we have a big head.

Av: yeah?

Others: yes ...

Av: So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...

Grp is nodding ...

Av: so the teachers they do the hitting, but they also do the bad words?

Grp: yes ... nodding ...

Av: and the other learners, they do the hitting and the bad words? Other learners?

Grp: (softly) yes ... (nodding)

Av: yeah, both? And is it ever any other people that come in here and do violence? Into the school, from the outside? (pause)

(... no response)

Av: is the school locked? Do people come in, do people go out? What happens here? Because it looks very open to me, hey? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?

(23:30) P9: allowed to leave the school when it's break time

Av: ok. So do people come in to the school that are not learners? Does that happen here?

(Everyone quiet ... very little reaction or response from grp)

Av: No? Some of you are shaking heads. So does it not happen? (some nodding now and softly saying yes ...)

Av: what kind of people come in? Like adult or other learners (children)? What do they come in for? (pause) ...

(24:12) Av: so tell me when the teachers do the hitting, why do they hit? What happens and then they hit you, why? What do you do?

(P1 shows how the teacher hits)

Av: no before they hit you so why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?

(24:30) P9: we are making noise

Av: oh, if you're making noise in the class?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok ... so tell me a story when you made noise in the class. What happened? Tell me.

(24:46) P9: the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.

Av: were you talking to a friend sitting next to you? Yeah .. .and so the teacher shouts at you and says to stop talking, and you carry on and then what happens, does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?

Boys: (pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...

Av: where you are sitting, just hits you? Just like that?

Av: P3, tell me a story. You say that teachers sometimes do that (pinch own arm) pinching. What happened, what did you do? (pause) why does she come around and pinch you like that?

(P3: shakes her head.)

Av: so tell me when someone got hit with a shambok, what happened? What did they do that was so bad? Hey?

Boys: it's painful ...

Av: yeah, it's painful? But what do you think ... did you do something wrong? I'm trying to understand why they hit learners. What do you do that makes them angry that they hit like that? Like what kind of punishment... so you say if you talking in class, you get hit like this, hey? What makes a teacher hit with the stick.... what do you do wrong?

(26:03) P3: (point to her tie) your tie ...

Av: So when you are not wearing a tie? Yeah? So if you some to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?

Grp: nods heads

P3: ... you go out the school ...

Av: they tell you you must go out the school? .. really?

Grp: yes .. you must go home ...

Av: So if you don't have a tie ?

P3: yes ... (laughing)

Av: what else? (looking at P2) Do you get hit because you don't have a tie?

P2: (nods and smiles)

Av: where is your tie? (he is not wearing one) ...

P9: and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...

(P2 takes tie out of his pocket to show me) **it's in your pocket, ok ...**

Av: what happens if your clothes are ruined? (P2 shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side).

P1: .. also if you didn't do homework

Av: oh ... if you didn't do homework?

(26:38) P3: If I don't have school shoes ...

Others: yes...

Av: really? So your uniform, they're very angry about uniform? If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?

P9: or they tell you, you must go back home ...

Av: and what do you tell your parents? Cause sometimes you can't get new things. Sometimes it just gets damaged, hey?

(They shrug quietly)

Av: and do any of you tell your parents?

(Some people shake heads, others nod a little)

Av: what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)

P9: .. it's too difficult ...

Av: it's too difficult?

P9 .. yes (pause)

Av: and what else, what else do people do that makes you get hit? So it's the clothes, if you don't do your homework, if you talk ... is there anything else?

(grp quiet)

Av: if you're laughing in the class...

(28:02) Av: Do you sometimes ... is there ever when other learners do the beating cause the teachers in the class are not in the class ? ... where does the hitting happen with the other learners ?

Where do they hit you or do those things ... the older kids? Is it in the class, in the field .. is it where? Where does it happen?

(talking in siSwati a bit)

(28:40) Av: and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)

(No response)

Av: hey? Like in the city schools sometimes they have those. Do you have them here? Drugs and weapons ...

(Grp shaking heads ...)

Av: yes ...? (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) what do you guys say? No?

(someone in group says Yes)

Av: let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?

P9: ..no.

Av: no? (look at P2) Do you know?

(P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)

Av: yes? And you girls? Do you know people in the school that do drugs? (no answers) .. alcohol?

(29:17) Grp: yes ...

Av: alcohol, yes?

Grp nods

Av: ok, what kind of drugs?

P2: dagga ...

Av: dagga...? smoking drugs?

Other boys in grp: ya!

Av: is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?

Grp: (nod) yes ...

Av: normal cigarettes ... ? Does that happen in the school?

Someone in group ... says yes, the learners ...

Av: the learners? Do you see it here?

Some are shaking their heads ...

Av: no? Ok. Do you ever the alcohol in the school? Learners drinking alcohol in the school?

Grp: .. yes ...

Av: yes? (P8 shakes her head and says no) P8 you say no? Ok.

Av: and what about teachers? Do you see teachers drinking alcohol in the school?

(29:56) P9: no ...

(talking siSwati in group drinking in school, you are lying)

P9: (making smoking gestures & laughs)...

Av: ah, smoking?

P9: yes, she's smoking yeah ...

Av: but sometimes do the teachers come to school and they're drunk?

Grp shaking heads ...

Av: no? You haven't seen that? Ok.

Av: Do you see learners coming to school who are drunk?

(some say yes ... some shake their heads)

Av: no? Ok ... what about weapons? There's shambok and there's a stick. Do you ever see any other weapons in the school?

Boys: knives ...

Av: you see knives in the school? Sometimes learners have a knife?

Boys nod ...

Av: what else? Guns? Do you ever see guns at the school?

Boys: no!

Av: no? Girls do you ever see knife or guns?

(no answer)

Av: P6 have you ever seen it? Did you ever see anybody at school with a knife?

P6: ... (quietly) .. yes ...

Av: ok, so a knife, yes but guns, no...? so we have a knife but no guns, hey?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: so why do you think learners do that? Why do you think learners hit other learners? What makes them do that?

(31:11) P9: they think they're the boss.

Av: because they think they're the boss?

Boys: Yes ...

Av: yeah ... What about the girls? Why do the girls do it? ... hey? (girls are talking amongst themselves quietly). Hey, P3, why do you think people hit other people?

(P3 smiles and shrugs her shoulders)

(pause)

(31:41) P3: I feel painful ...

Av: You feel painful when they do it?

P3: me, I want to ... stop

P9: I want to call the police ...

Av: you want to call the police, hey? (grp nods) what will they do?

P9: the police will discipline you ...

Av: you .. or the person hitting you?

P9: the person that is hitting you ...

Av: yeah...

P9: the police are going to punish them ..

Av: have you ever had that here at this school where someone called the police?

P9: yes!

Av: yes? (grp nods)

Av: what happened?

Someone whispers ... take them away ...

Av: they take them away? (pause) what happened? What this person do? ...

P9: they are hitting them ...

Av: who was it? Someone in the school? (grp nods) Was it a fight.. what happened before the police came?

P9: .. they fight ...

Av: yeah ...

P9: they were fighting, and the one that have been beaten call the police.

Av: and who was it? Was it people / learners in the school?

Grp: yes ...

Av: where were they fighting?

(Boys pointing towards the open field used for sports)

Av: here, in the field?

P9: yes they were there ...

Av: oh, was it boys or girls?

Grp: boys ...

Av: two boys?

Grp ... yes

Av: how old were they? ... (whispers) Older than you?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and how did they fight? What with body? With weapons ...

P1 shows his fists ...

Av: fists? Like this... ? (boys nod & agree) ok,

P9: the teacher called them

Av: yeah ... and where were you? Were you in the class?

P9: naaaahh (shaking head and pointing to corridor in front)

Av: outside here ... ?

P9: yes, we were watching ...

Av: Did you also see it P2?

P2: yes ...

Girls ... and me ...

Av: shew, and then what happened?

P9: one of the boys called the police ...

Av (repeat) one of the boys called the police, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and then the police came (nodding) and they took the other boy away?

P9: yes, and they beat him ...

Av: and then they beat the boy? Wow.

(Boys: demonstrating beating actions with hands.)

Av: oh I see. Where here or at the police station?

(Boys motion behind them toward staff room)

P9: staffroom ...

Av: oh they come here, take the boy to the staff room

P9: yes...

Av: and then they beat up this boy?

Grp nods ... yes ...

Av: ok. What did they beat him with?

(Boys start demonstrating motions of hitting, kicking, punching ...)

Av: they kick him and hit him?

Boys: yes... (making fight motions and sounds ... talking among selves, laughing ..)

Av: and what happen to the other boy? (pause) the one that called the police?

P9: no nothing ...

Av: nothing, he was ok?

Grp; yes

Av: and what did the teachers do while boys were fighting? Hey... what did you say P8?

P8: they suspend ...

Av: but while all this was happening, did the teachers come and stop it or did they just stay in side?

P9: to stop it ...

Av : they tried to come and stop it?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... shew. Were you scared watching it? Hey ...

P9: .. yes ... (shyly)

Av: did you know the boys? (no response) Do you know why they were fighting?

Grp: shaking heads

Av: you don't know why? Did you just sort of see it start and then you knew there was a big fight?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: and what happened to that boy who was beaten by the teachers afterwards, did you see him afterwards?

Nodding heads

Av: did he come back to class? ... (some shaking heads) so what happened?

(35:30) P9 (whispering) he was in class ...

Av: he came back, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and he had to carry on being in school until he went home?

P9: yes ...

Av: and did he stop beating other people afterwards or was he doing better or not?

P9: better ...

Av: was he?

Grp: nodding ...

Av: so you think it worked? That the police came and the teachers were hitting him? Is that a good thing or not a good thing?

Grp: yes (nodding)

Av; it is? What would you have done P8? If you were the headmaster and you saw two boys fighting like that?

(36:12) P8: I'd call the police

Av: you would call the police also? But you are the teacher, you're the headmaster ... you are the person in charge of the whole school... the principal... (pause). You call the police and then what would you do? ...hmmm ... (pause) do you think the teachers and other people should stop hitting?

P9: yes ...

Av: what else could they do if they get angry? What should they do if they don't hit?

P9: sit and talk ...solve the problem ...

Av: solve the problem in other ways?

(someone in group talking with someone outside the grp in siSwati – I think?)

Av: so now tell me does it ever happen that in the school that you have incidents of like boys touching girls or doing things that they're not comfortable with? (pause) Like the girls do you ever have that?

Grp quiet, looking away

Av: have you ever heard of girls at the school that get abused in the school in a sexual way? Touched, or raped ... does that happen at the school? Have you ever heard that or seen it? (pause) ... yes or no ...

P9: No.

Av: (looking around group...) No? Have you ever heard of ... No? Girls? Have you ever heard stories about girls getting raped at the school? ... Touched funny ... touched in ways they're not comfortable with?

Grp shaking heads quietly

Av: tell me is that violence, or is that not violence? What do you think?

Grp: .. it's violence ...

Av: is it ...? (pause) If that happens at a school, is that violence or is it not violence? ... teach me ... (grp quiet) or is that not so important? (pause) What about teachers using their power over other learners to do things that they don't want to do, has that ever happened?

(Grp quiet)

Av: no? (someone nods ...) tell me like what? ... (no response) What about outside of the school? You said sometimes you have people come and they steal your goats and things, hey? What kind of violence happens outside of the school?

(No response from grp – some talk quietly, others look away.)

Av: ..hmmm? ... No? ... Ok, so I want to finish off and thank you so much for all this information. I want to go one by one and just ask you a question and you can either answer it in English or in your own language, it doesn't matter someone will translate. Ok? So if I say to you explain or describe violence. If I came from another country, and I didn't know what it means, ok? So I want you to say "I think violence is ..." and tell me what you think, ok?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok start with you P2. So you say: I think violence is ... tell me what you think (pause).. finish the sentence.. you can finish it n English or in your own language, it doesn't matter..

(quiet ...) say: I think violence is ... (pause) anything, anything you want to say. What's the first thing that comes in to your mind when I say violence at school

P2: I don't understand...

Av: ok, I say what comes to your mind, what do you think about when I say school violence ...?

P2: nothing ...

Av: nothing? But we just spoke about all these things, hey? What's the worst thing for you about the violence or maybe say to me ... do you want it to stop? Do you want school violence to stop?

P2: yes!

Av: ok, why? I want school violence to stop because ...

P2: because beating the children ...

Av: because beating the children, and what does that do? Why do you want it to stop?

P2: violence.

Av: yeah. What does violence do?

P2: crime

Av: crime... so you think violence makes crime? (he nods) and you want it to stop then? Ok, thank you. And P7?

(in the meanwhile, P9 and P8 are talking and P8 hits P9 on the head...)

P3: she's beating him!

Av: I see, hey! P8 you just hitting him ...

P9: yes ...

Av: Is that not violence?

P8: smiles

P3: she hit him like this on the head ... (demonstrates in the air)

Av: I know what did he do?

(they all laugh)

Av: hey? So is that not violence?

Grp: yes .. is violence ... so do you also hit people?

Grp nod head (some smiling)

Av: yeah? Who here hits other people have you ever hit other people, P6?

(grp calling P6 and translating)

Av: P6, have you ever hit other people?

(P6 they are talking to you)

P9: (translating for P6) yes ...

Av: why do you hit other people?

P9: but sometimes you are playing, you see ... (hits P8 'gently' and they both laugh and wriggle).

Av: oh, I see. So is that also violence or not violence when you just play-hitting?

P9: no it's not violence...

Av: so how do you know the difference? What's the difference if I do this (pretend to smack someone next to me)and I hit her hard and it's sore but we're friends or if I do this ... how do you know what the difference is, for instance if someone is play-hitting or if it's violence hitting?

P9: they are sad, you are not happy

(42; 48) Av: oh ok, but sometimes your friends hit you and it also hurts...

Grp: nodding & softly saying yes ...

Av: is it a different hurt? (grp nodding) How would I know the difference if I came? How would I know if I see people hitting how would I know which one is just play-hitting and which one is bully-fighting? Cause I don't know who is friends, you see? So how would I tell the difference?

P9: when they are playing .. you see that they are happy ...

Av: oh ok, so do I have to look at after the person gets hit? What they look like?

P9: ummm (affirmative)

Av: oh I see, ok. So if you hit P8 and she is smiling or she just does ... like ignore you ... then I can look at her and I can see it's ok, that was just play hitting?

P9& grp: yes ...

Av; and if it's violence, what would I see? The person looks sad?

Grp: yes ...

Av: show me sad... what is a sad face? Cause you're not allowed to cry hey?

(P1 and others demonstrate a 'sad' face – their eyes are downcast, they are frowning ...)

Av: sad ... angry? .. ok, so pouting like that with your lips out .. show me P1... how would I know that you've been hit.. violence not play? if someone hits you bad how would I know? Show me what you would look like ... head down, eyes down.. and you're all quiet?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... so if your friends saw you they would know that you just got hit by someone?

P9: yes ... (others nod)

Av: yeah, they would know? And you know if you see your friend? Do you know the difference?

Grp nod

Av: yeah? Ok I get it.

Boys: yes ... smiling ...

Av: so anybody else ... tell me P7.. .you want violence to stop because ? (pause) ... P1? You want violence to stop because ?

P1: because I don't want to kill the other people ...

Av: ok, and if we stop it then what?

P9: the people will feel free. Av: you'll feel free and you'll laugh .. ?

P9: yeah

Av: nice ...

P9: have happiness ...

Av: oh ... nice, you'll have happiness. What do you think P3? Talk, you have such brilliant ideas, hey? You must speak up .. you have such nice ideas... you mustn't be scared to talk, hey? You want school violence to stop because .. ?

(P3 discusses with P8, searching for the right word ...)

Av: say it in your language if it's easier ...

(They say you must say "you want violence to stop because ...She says she doesn't know)

Av: (Utsi akati??) you want it to stop hey?

P3: yes ...

Av: it's not good? (pause) and P4? (talking among themselves in siSwati) You want it to stop because? Hey ? (pause ...)

P4 whispers something ...

Av: because you'll be happy? (she nods and shyly looks down)... yeah? ... ok. Any thing else you wanna say to me? Anything I didn't ask?

P9: nothing ...

Av: nothing ... ?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok. So when I come back in august what are some of the things you want to work on? Are there specific things you want to do? To work on or learn about? ... in your life ... ?

P9: anything ...

Av: anything? What is important to you?

Someone in Grp: I want to learn and stay in school ...

Av: yes, that's important, hey? What's stopping you from having a good future?

P9: if you become pregnant ...

Av: yes, that's a problem ... do you have girls in the school that get pregnant and then they can't come back?

Grp : yes ...

Av: ok, thanks everyone.

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Will I be chosen? (participant selection)

What a bumpy ride, but we finally get to the school. It is exactly as I had imagined. Simple, but surrounded by beauty. We walk behind our lecturer, apprehensive. Not really sure what is happening next. Awkward, I feel so out of place. We stand in the open 'quad' area between a u-shaped building waiting to be 'chosen' by the Grade 9 learners. They group together and we face off - a group of eager faces staring at each other on either side of the staff, who are introducing themselves and explaining what is about to happen. They stare at us, we smile and stare back. It seems almost comical, really. The moment finally arrives My heart leaps into my throat! My mind fills with 'what ifs...?'

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Reflection: The ice has melted

It had been an unpredictable day, starting off awkwardly but finishing on a positive note. The whispering, shy girls had bravely increased their interaction with me and those who were quiet were now persevering with broken English in an eager attempt to be heard and included. We moved the picnic blanket to a spot in the shade and sat down with the sponsored liquid-fruits and chips. It felt so comfortable and familiar – the awkwardness and distance of that morning long forgotten.

Girls were lazily leaning against each other, and the boys (again seemingly uninhibited by western gender stereotypes) were lying casually across one another. The group a tangle of legs and hair and wide smiles. The conversation flowed more easily about casual topics such as school and friends, boyfriends and future goals. I became eager about tomorrow's research focus group and tried to test the water a bit asking about crime in the community. They explained that there was quite a bit of theft (especially by foreigners, they added) of livestock and material goods. We spoke about what careers they were wanting to pursue for the future. A few were in the health professions and two in law enforcement and military. One even stated she would like to be the President of the country, but when I asked her why their responses seemed to focus more on their passion to help or protect others and to make things better.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

They have taken a lot longer on the written activities than I had estimated and it was already time for the break and then the focus group. Despite my concern that my group members had not shown me much openness that day, and my feelings that they would struggle with English, I decided to persist and stick to my original plan.

After the break, it took me quite some time to coax them into leaving their activity books and joining me for the discussion. There was very little space with shade and I was not sure where to place the blanket. I urged them to help me find a spot, but my urgency was clearly not theirs.

Eventually I simply put the blanket out on the shaded concrete against one of the classroom walls and invited them (with cold fruit juice in hand) to sit with me. As soon as I had poured the drinks, and began explaining about the digital recorders I realised I had not made a good choice and it would likely affect the quality of my discussion - but I continued regardless. The group was sitting in a straight line, leaning against the wall (not really in a circular formation which would have been more conducive to talking), and I was seated on a chair, higher than them, facing in - rather than being physically part of their group. They had also separated - boys facing me and to my right with the girls further down, with one boy sitting on his own to my left.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

The following are short notes / reflections of the focus group discussion:

* Girls are whispering, giggling and looking at me ... is it about the topic or something completely unrelated? Wish I knew what they're saying!

* Pg - group leader? Giving instructions to others... translating, instructing... warning?

* So distracted - looking at others, at own feet .. disinterested? Scared to talk? Don't understand?

* Talk of gossip and teasing, yet they talk and laugh at each other ... are they teasing each other as we speak? Do they realise the contradiction of what they say vs what they do?

* Like to demonstrate - language barrier? - more get involved when I ask to 'show me'. Even facial expression (angry) with physical action of hitting, kicking etc.

* Also demonstrate on each other & not softly! Is that not violence when one enacts it?

* Topic of parents / home = sore point? Look away, quiet .. withdraw.

* "it's difficult" to talk about? To explain to me? To live through?

* Teacher is shouting in class behind us ... is someone getting hit? Group looks around. Quiet. Some giggle into their hands

My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



Handwritten text on the left side of the page, including 'I like to play football', 'I like to watch TV', and 'I like to go to school'.

Handwritten text on the right side of the page, including 'I don't like to go to school', 'I don't like to watch TV', and 'I don't like to play football'.

Hobbies & Interests

Things I like to do:

Things I can do well:

Things I am not good at:



Handwritten text describing hobbies and interests, such as 'I like to play football', 'I like to watch TV', and 'I like to go to school'.

Things I LIKE most about going to school

Things I HATE most about going to school

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



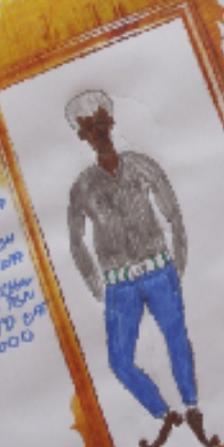
Handwritten notes and drawings on a board, including 'I like to go to school', 'I don't like to go to school', and 'My favourite teacher is Mrs. ...'.

My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



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Handwritten notes and drawings on a board, including 'I like to go to school', 'I don't like to go to school', and 'My favourite teacher is Mrs. ...'.

Focus Group Interview – Analysis

Physical Violence
 Verbal Violence
 Emotional/Responses to violence
 Using violence to cope

Reasons for violence

7 June 2010

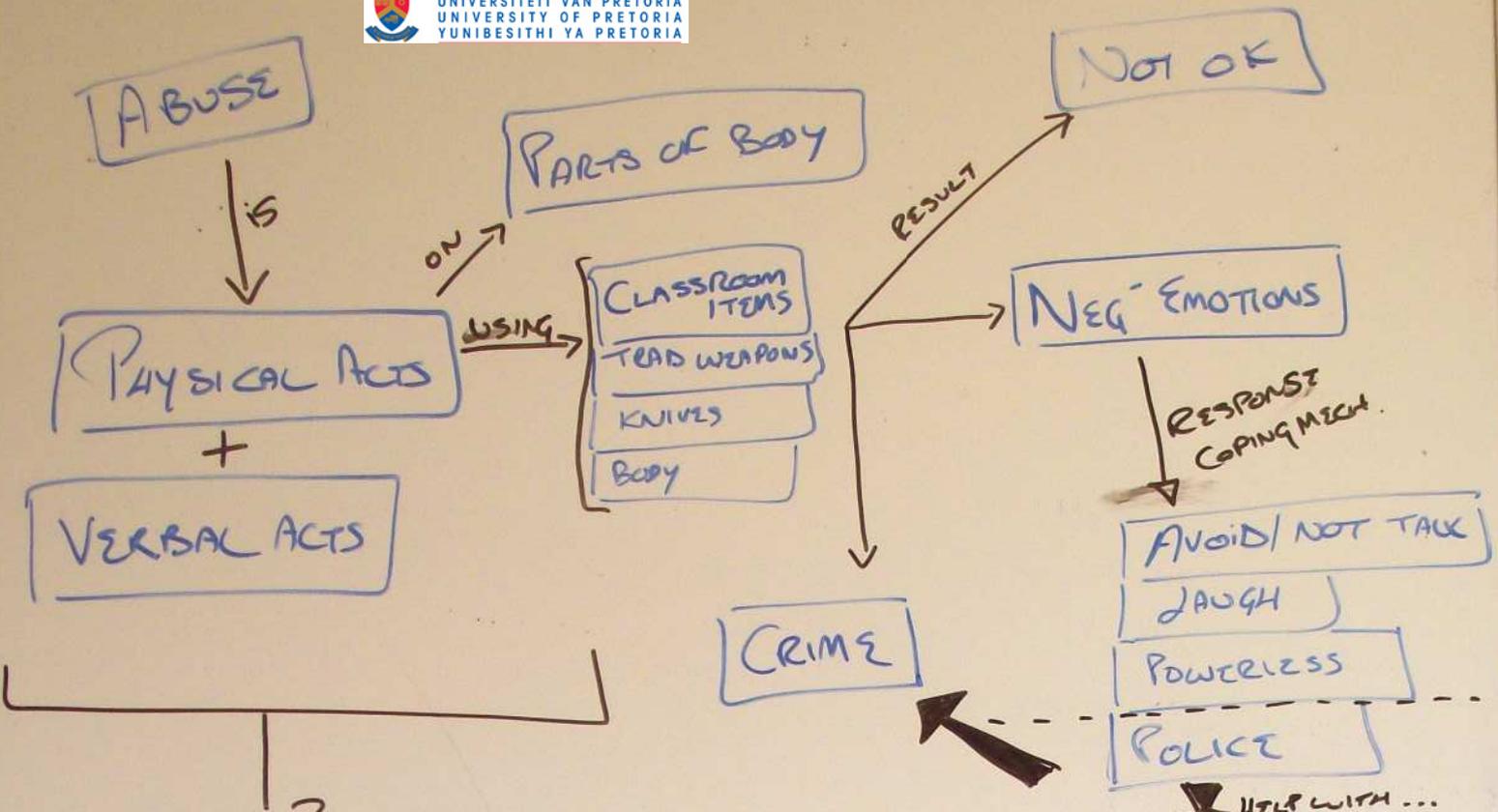
Avie	What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ...	
P9	Abuse of children They are beating people...	Phys violence / Aggression
Avie:	Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).	
P1	(very quietly): with shambok...	Traditional weapon (Masepover?)
P3	Xenophobia!	Foreigners / outsiders
Av:	From which country?	
Grp	Zimbabwe yes, and from Swaziland... ... and Botswana ...	
Avie	where does it happen? The abuse ..?	
P9	In school and outside	
Avie	Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes? So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?	.
P3	We tell them ... (pause) to stop it. .. a meeting ...	Taking authority / action Negative response
Av	Who would you invite to your meeting?	
Grp	Teachers ..	
P4	The mothers and fathers... parents	
Avie	What are we going to say to them? (pause)	
P3	I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (struggling with words)	

	... yes ... stop! And the other learners	Don't like it / Negative response
Avie	... What does violence mean?	
P9	.. abuse ...	Physical / Power
Av	But what does abuse mean? (pause)	
P9	beating them ...	physical
Grp (girls)	gossiping ...	verbal / relationships
Boys	.. punishing ...	
P3	clean the windows and clean the class ...	discipline authority
Av	Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean So is that violence? (they nod in agreement)	
Av	You said beating – what do they use?	
P1 & P9	shambok, stick.... (P9) animates hitting / slapping with an open hand	traditional weapons physical
Av	With hands? ... Show me ..	
P1	(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)	Emotion linked to action
P9	(kicks with feet/leg)... and kick ...	
Av	.. and sometimes they kick, hey?	
P9	yes, kick ... (P1) also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)	Physical
P2	.. it's hard, hurting ..	
Av	Hurting ... how hurting?	
P2	Indicates his back (whipping action)	physical
Av	where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Grp point to different parts of body ...) Head ... face ...	
P3	...and in the stomach	
P9	...and on the bum	

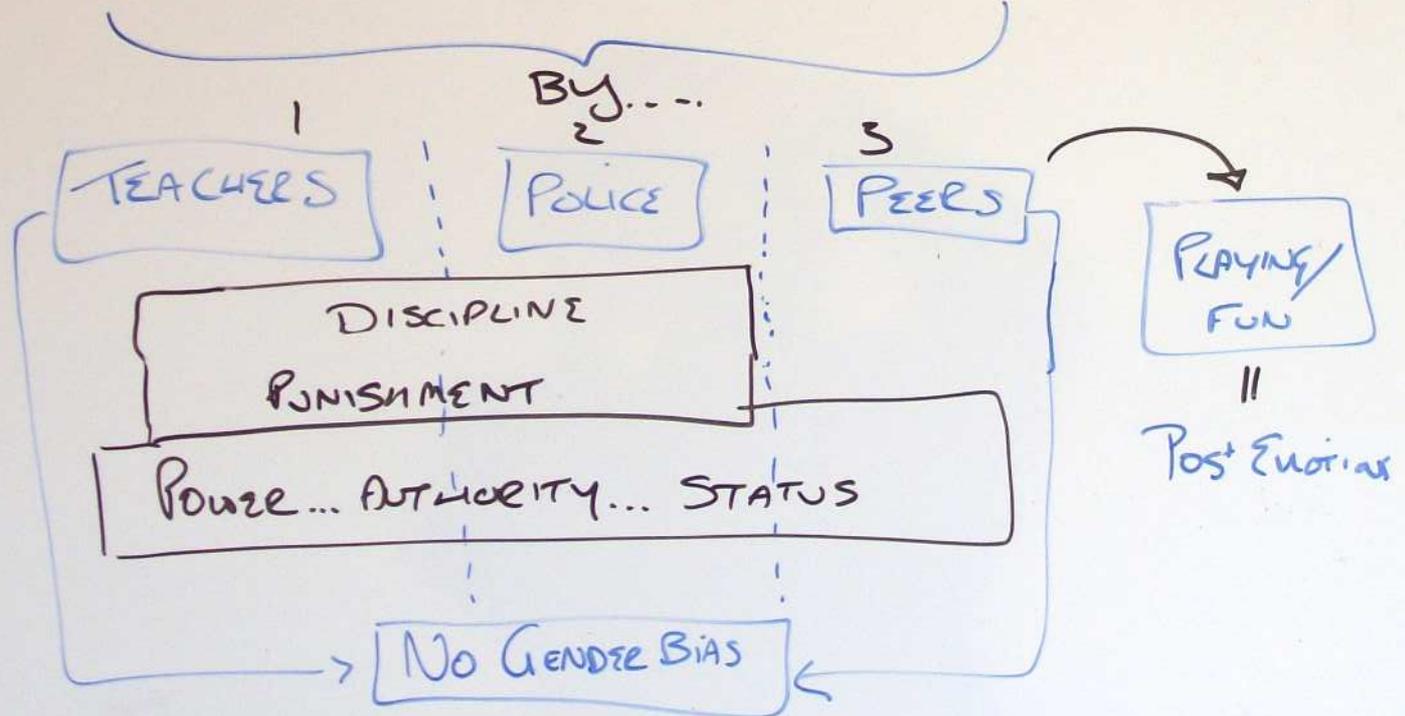
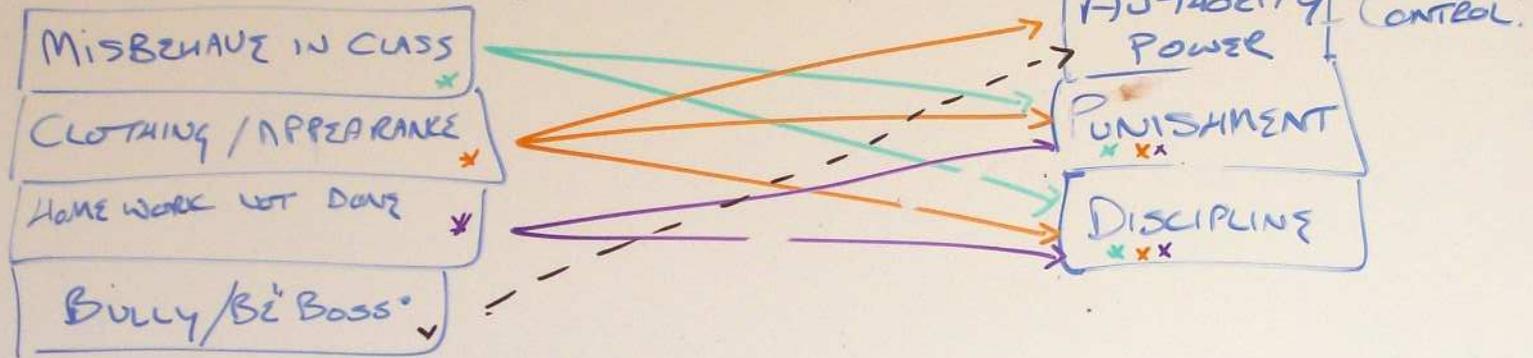
	do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens? (all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)	uncomfortable; don't want to talk about it?
P9	it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)	Response / emotion
av	do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?	Feeling inadequate?
P9	yes! They say we have a big head.	Verbal
av	So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...	
grp	Yes (nodding)	
av	is the school locked? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?	
P9	allowed to leave the school when it's break time	
av	When teachers hit you .. why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?	
P9	we are making noise the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.	Causes of Violence ↳ misbehaviour noisy - physical
av	does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?	
Boys	(pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...	physical - immediate/impulsive
av	What makes a teacher hit with the stick... what do you do wrong?	
P3	(point to her tie)	
av	So if you come to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?	② Clothing/appearance
grp	Yes! (Nodding)	
P3	... you go out the school ...	
P9	yes .. you must go home ... and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...	leave school go home embarrassed? Rejected? Punishment

av	what happens if your clothes are ruined? (Daniel shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side)	
P1	.. also if you didn't do homework	① misbehave
P3	If I don't have school shoes ...	② Appearance / Uniform
av	If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?	
P9	or they tell you , you must go back home ...	
av	and do any of you tell your parents? (Some people shake heads, others nod a little) what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)	Emotional Response Conflicted / Powerless no support @ home
P9	.. it's too difficult ...	
av	what else do people do that makes you get hit?	
P9	if you're laughing in the class...	misbehave
av	and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)	
grp	shaking heads ... (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) (someone in group says Yes)	-mixed replies!?
av	let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?	
P9	No... (P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)	
av	ok, what kind of drugs?	
P2	dagga ... (Other boys in grp: ya!)	
av	is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?	
grp	(nod) yes ...	

Astherly Discipline



WHY?



15-POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.96)

Transcription

- The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.

Coding

1. Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
2. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
3. All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
4. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
5. Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

1. Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
2. Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
3. Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
4. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.

Overall

1. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.

Written report

1. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
2. There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
3. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
4. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

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TOPIC: LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF
SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

Thank you for participating in my research study. After our interesting conversation about school violence, this is what I understood. Please help me to make sure that I have understood you clearly and correctly.

Theme	1. Violence as Behaviour	2. Violence is Bad	3. Authority & Power
Category:	1.1 Beating children is violence (physical acts)	2.1 It's hard, hurting (negative emotions)	3.1 School discipline
	1.2 They call you names (verbal acts)	2.2 We're scared (coping mechanisms)	3.2 The police protect
		2.3 We're just playing (positive emotions)	

THEME 1: VIOLENCE AS BEHAVIOUR

Definition: Acts and behaviours that cause direct injury or harm (physical or psychological) to another.

THEME 2: VIOLENCE IS BAD

Definition: Emotional expressions/feelings associated with acts of school violence and how learners respond, or cope, emotionally when they experience violence at school.

THEME 3: AUTHORITY AND POWER

Definition: Instances when violence is used at school by people who wield some form of power or authority over another person, or when violence is used for purposes or punishment, discipline or to protect.



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Learner

Re: Participation in focus group discussions for research study

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria busy with my masters degree in Educational Psychology. I would like to understand more about school violence and how it affects you the learner. So I have decided to conduct my research here at your school. I want to hear about your experience, what is happening in your school and why you think it is happening. This research is separate to the career and learning assessments we will be doing together while I am here as well.

My study will involve talking openly together as a group (over two days) and sharing experiences about school violence. Your participation is not compulsory. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to continue, it's ok. You can ask to leave the group and your decision will be respected.

Remember, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I just wanting to share ideas with you and hear what you think about school violence. Your ideas will help me with all the information I need to put together a report for the University called a Dissertation, so that other people can also learn about what I have learned.

It is important for you to know that the report will not show the name of your school or your name, or any details that can identify you specifically. That information will be kept private and confidential. Your parents / caregivers as well as your teachers have been given a letter explaining why I am here, so they will know you participated in this group, but they will not have access to what you said or showed me. The only people who will know what was discussed in the group is all of you sitting here. So remember, it is important that if you choose to participate in the group, you must respect the other participants and not share what is said in the group with your friends, family or anyone else who was not in the group.

My intention is not to make you feel sad, uncomfortable or scared in any way, but we will be talking openly about experiences of school violence, and sometimes talking about such things can make a person feel sad or bad. If at any time you do feel upset for any reason, please talk to me. I have also arranged with your Life Orientation teacher, to be available if you might like to talk to someone about the feelings that you have as a result of our discussions.

After you have read and understood all this information about the research and what you will be required to do, please complete the bottom section of the page and **sign if you would like participate** in this research study. If you do not want to participate, just leave the form blank.

Thank you very much for your interest in the study and the support that you are giving me.

Avie Cherrington

Motlalepule Ruth Mampane

Researcher

Supervisor

083 475 8852

→.....←

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of your School: _____

**I HAVE READ THE LETTER AND WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
STUDY AT MY SCHOOL**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Parent / Guardian

Re: Permission for your child to participate in a research project

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria. I am busy with my masters' studies in Educational Psychology. To complete my study I am required to conduct research into a topic of interest in my professional field. The aim of my study is to help me better understand how learners in a South African school define and experience school violence. The study involves various activities and group discussions with the learners (held over two days) which will take place during school time.

I do not foresee that your child will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, the activity will require him/her to talk openly with other learners about his/her ideas and experiences of violence at school. While I will encourage everyone in the group to be respectful and ask them to not share what is said in the group with others, it is not something that I can guarantee.

Participation is voluntary and if any learner feels, at any time, that he/she does not want to participate, he/she will be able to leave the study without penalty or punishment. Furthermore, I have spoken to the Life Orientation teacher who is willing to help those learners who feel uncomfortable or upset as a result of participating in this discussion.

The name of your child will remain confidential. This means that when I write the results of the study I will not mention the name of your child or the school, and any comments he/she made will remain anonymous. My supervisor will be the only person with access to the information, but even she will not know the names of the learners.

I would appreciate your consent and assent as the parent / guardian of the learner to allow him/ her to participate in this study by signing the form at the bottom section of this page.

I will explain the research process to your child beforehand and will ensure that he/she gives his/her assent as well.

Thank you,

Avie Cherrington, Researcher

083 475 8852

Supervisor - Ruth Mampane

Lecturer, University of Pretoria

Tel: 012-420 2339, Fax: 012-420 5511

→.....←

I.....

Parent/guardian of (*name of learner*)

Have read and understood what the study is about and hereby **give** consent and assent for **him/ her** to participate in the study (circle the relevant option) through focus group discussions.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

Research Planning Schedule:

First Visit

April 14, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & explain next two days
Explain goals of project & discuss informed consent / assent
- 10h30: Hand out t-shirts, begin craft activity
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Tour of school with participants
- 12h30: Snacks & reflection circle
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues



April 15, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30: Summary of previous day
- 9h45: Work books handed out and activities explained
- 10h30: Random individual discussions
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Continue with workbooks and individual discussions
- 12h30: Snacks and focus group discussion
- 13h00: Reflection circle & closure
- 14h00: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Second Visit

August 4, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
- Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & recap from previous session
- 10h30: Hand back booklet, allow time for decorating cover & completing worksheets from previous visit
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: My flower garden posters; Individual discussion & feedback with quadrant maps
- 12h45: Snacks & member checking
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues

August 5, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30 - 12h30 Career expo Grade 12's to Grade 9's
- 13h00: Reflection circle with group & closure
- 13h30: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Transcription: Focus Group Interview

15 April 2010

NOTE: *Bold comments in this font are transcribed from siSwati conversation*

Someone in background: (Don't tell her... Don't ask she will write your question)

(00:10) Av: **Ok, right. So can you all hear me? Good.**

Thank you everybody. (Let me ask) So now, what I wanted to talk to you about... I want to understand ... I've spoken to children at other schools and they all tell me that there is a lot of violence that goes on in schools and sometimes it is difficult for them to do their school, and to really do as well as they want to because it is difficult. So I want to find out from you guys what it is like here in this school. So when I say to you 'school violence'... what does that mean to you? (pause)

What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ... (pause)

(00:55) P9: Abuse of children

Av (repeat): Abuse of children.

(pause)

[P8 & P3 talking softly] *Speak out loud.*

Av: What's that?

[SiSwati - mumbling]

Av: What's that? P3 what did you say? Just say it out loud. There's no right or wrong. I'm here to learn from you. I don't know what is right. (pause). What does it mean to you? If I say school violence... teach me, what is it? (pause – everyone is looking away or at the floor).

You said before it is the 'abuse of children'. What is abuse? What does it mean? (pause) Say it in your language and ask someone to translate for me. Just tell me. If it's hard for you to say it in English, just say it in your language. (long pause)

(01:49) P9: They are beating people...

Av: Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).

(02:04) P1 (very quietly): with sjambok...

Av: ... with a sjambok?

P1: yeah (nods).

P9 to group: *[Talk people you will be in trouble ... I hope she broadcasts you in the news (daring the group)]* Giggling. P3, looks intently at me, seems like there are words on the tip of her tongue. She gestures with her hand in front of her mouth.

Av: ... yes, tell me P3. You're dying to say something.

P9: *[Whispers]*

(Pause)

P8 mumbles something under her breath.

Av: I can't hear you P8...

(she looks at me and P3, shakes her head & looks down)

[This one is delaying us we want to finish writing] [grp converse in siSwati]

(silence. The grp look around at others playing around us or at their feet)

(02:45) P3: Xenophobia!

Av: (repeat) xenophobia? So that's also violence? Ok, that's good ... so does that mean ... what does xenophobia mean? That they come from another country?

(group nod... some say 'yes' softly)

Av: Which other country?

Group call out: Zimbabwe

Av: ... yes.... (pause) Do you have that in your school? (pause). Are there learners here from Zimbabwe?

Group: ... yes, and from Swaziland....

Av: yes, and from where else?

Someone in grp: and Botswana ...

[Get out of here.... to someone walking past]

Av: .. but what happens? Do they abuse children, or do children abuse them? which way does it work?

[I will beat you] [This thing does not count]

...talking softly/can't hear ...

(03:39) Av: And does it happen in the school grounds, or outside... where does it happen? The abuse ..?

P9: In school and outside.

Av: Both, hey?

P9: Yes, both.

Av: Tell me what happens in the school. Have you ever seen people or instances? Tell me a story, has there been violence in the school?

(pause)

Av: You've been here a long time, have you ever seen violence inside the school? Tell me the stories... have you seen people, or heard people tell you stories? You don't have to tell me names, just what happens.

(pause)

(04h43) Av: Do things happen or do they not happen? Yes, no? (some look at me nodding, some look away. No-one answers). Have you all seen things, yes or no? (pause)

Av: What about you boys, do you see problems of violence in the school?(pause) ... No?

(silence)

Av: is it something we shouldn't talk about? Is that why? You all look away or smile, why is it difficult? (teacher shouting in background). Is it difficult because you are scared something will happen if you talk about it, or difficult because you don't want to remember it? Why is it difficult?

(pause silence)

Av: what about you P4? (pause – no reply) Is it difficult? Why?

Av: Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes?

So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?

P3: We tell them ... (pause)

Av: yeah, we tell them what?

P3: to stop it.

Av: yes we must stop it, but how do we stop it if we don't know that it happens? Because I am going to leave here and I'm going to say: No, it doesn't happen here... they all say to me, no it's fine. So I'm going to say to people in government and university: Don't worry about {name of school}. In Mpumalanga, it doesn't happen. Is that what you want me to go and say? (pause)

Because that's the information you're giving me. So if you wanna make a difference ...(pause) ... this is your chance. What can we do about it? (pause) If it happens, I need to know that it happens, so I can tell people.

(silence)

Av: Remember you don't have to tell me names, nobody else hears this, it's only me. They won't know it's this school. (pause.... long silence).

Where's P5... you wanted to be president, hey? (P9 laughs quietly, P5 smiles shyly). And you're sitting there very quietly. What would the president do? Do you think the president is happy about this? Do you think the president doesn't have children who go to schools? If you were president what would you do, wouldn't you want to change it?

(08:30) P3: Invite them to meeting

Av: Yeah, invite the meeting? Who would come to the meeting? (others whisper, answer softly). Who would you invite ... all the learners, or the teachers, or people outside? Who would you invite to your meeting?

Grp: Teachers ...

Av: Um uh. And ... (pause).

(P3 softly says something)

Av: The mothers and fathers... parents (repeating what is being said)? Ok, thanks P4. And what would we talk about?

(silence)

[It's not coming out (making fun of her because she was struggling with words)]

Av: (picking up words in conversation) Oh, about the xenophobia. Ok so what are we going to say to them? What about the xenophobia are we going to say to them? (pause) we say what.. you must stop it... what are we going to say? Tell me. (pause)

We have this meeting and everybody is here. What are we going to say to them? (pause)

[Talk, speak up]

(10:05) P3: I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (*struggling with words*)

Av: ... so the parents must tell the children ...

P3: yes ... stop! And the other learners

(P8 giggling)

Av: (repeats) ... stop. And if I'm a learner ... yes, so you must stop being violent with the other learners just because they come from another country doesn't mean you must hit them, hey?

Group: yes ... yes.

Av: But now, if I'm the child, and I say: But I'm not doing anything... what am I doing? What would you say? What am I doing that tells you that it's violence? What am I doing that is violent? (pause) ... What does violence mean?

(silence ... *talking softly in siSwati*)

(10:59) P9: abuse ...

Av: But what does abuse mean? (pause) like what do they actually do? Show me or tell me ...

P9: beating them ...

Av: (repeat) ... beating them, yeah.

Girls: gossiping ...

Av: (repeat) .. gossiping, ok...

Boys: yeah ... gossiping.

(*grp talking in siSwati*)

Boys: .. punishing ...

Av: (repeat) punishing ... yes, like what kind of punishment?

(*talking in siSwati !?*)

P3: clean the windows and clean the class ...

(11:39) **Av: Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean**

(*siSwati !!*)

Av: so is that violence?

They nod...

Av: yeah? Ok. And tell me, so you said .. let's take these .. so you said beating, so that's when you hit someone? What do they hit with? You said shambok, stick ... (P1 & P9 nod, yes) .. anything else they use?

(12:04) P1: Sjambok!

Av: yes, shambok... and a stick? (group: yes ...)

(P9 animates hitting / slapping with an open hand)

(12:12) Av: with hands?

P9: *(makes whack/pow sound as demonstrates)* Yes!

Av: show me ..

P1: *(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)*

Av: ... and a fist P1? Yes, the fist .. ok. I see so sometimes they use the hand like this (demo an open-handed slap) and sometimes ...

P9: *(kicks with feet/leg)...* and kick ...

Av: .. and sometimes they kick, hey?

P9: yes, kick ... *(P1 also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)*

Av: good, thank you.

(12:29) P2: .. it's hard, hurting ..

Av: It's hard P2? .. Hurting ... how hurting? With the body or with something ...

P2 points to his back *(whipping action)*

Av: here on the back?

P2: ya.

Av: hmm, that's good. I didn't know. So they hit you on the back. where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Where on your body? (pause) where do they do it? Where, where, where ... show me...

(Grp point to different parts of body ...)

Av: everything, your head and your face? Everything ...

Grp: yes!

(12:59) P3: and in the stomach.

Av: and the stomach also? ...

P9: and on the bum.

Av: do they? Do they turn you around and bend you, like this? (demo hitting someone with open hand on the bum).

Grp: yes ...

Avie: and the back, P2, you said also on the back?

P2: yes on the back like this ...

Av: really, on the back? ... and boys and girls also?

Grp ... yes ...

Av: ... Also the girls?

Av: ... and boys? (grp nods). Do you think it is different, the way they do it for boys and for girls? Or is it the same?

P9: it's the same.

Av: so they don't care that if you are a girl ... they do it less ..

P9: ... they don't care ...

Av: does it matter?

P9: .. no it doesn't.

Av: no? The same thing. It's not different for boys and girls? (they nod) ok.

(13:47) Av: and tell me, when you say things like bully. What is bully? What does it mean? (pause) .. when somebody is a bully?

Someone in group: bully ...

Av: ya, when they are bullying... you said here gossiping and bullying... so what is a bully

(grp is talking softly – not sure what?)

Av: .. is it also beating?

Group: yes! *(loudly and firmly)*

(talking in grp siSwati)

Av: so what is it though? What does it mean if someone is bullied? Who is the bully?

(14:16) P9: I can think of the word in siSwati ... bullying

Av: what is the word in siSwati for bullying?

Grp: Kushaya ... (to hit/beat)

Av: (writing it down) And what's the word for violence?

Amos: Um ...?

Av: oh spell that ...

Grp: ...k ... u ...a.. h ...*(get confused)*.. *Kuhlukumeta (to abuse)*

Av: you write it for me ... I'm not writing it properly.

P9 writes it down the others look over his shoulder.

(P7 says something in siSwati)

Av: ok ... so that's violence hey? And beating and things like that? And what about things like gossiping. Is that also violence?

P9: .. i think so ...

Av: cause gossiping is what? (pause) when people talk about you, hey...

Grp: hmmm *(in agreement)*

Av: so is that also violence?

P3: yes!

(15:15) Av: yeah. And what do they say? (pause) what do they say that's violent? That's horrible? (pause) what kind of things do they say? (pause – everyone is quiet, look at floor or away.)

Av: Like what are the mean things they would say that hurt? (pause)

(15:38) Av: what hurts more the things they say, or when they hit? (some heads shaking some nodding) ... (pause) what do you think P7? What is ... worse, the hitting or the talking? What hurts more?

P7: (thinking)

(15:59) Grp members (probably P3 and P9): The hitting (others add in) hitting... hitting..

Av: and for you? (looking at P7)

P7: ... hitting ...

Av: ok, you also think the hitting? So the hitting is more bad than the ... bad words. So the bad words is not as bad?

(16:14) P9: is bad! They call you names ... it hurts. They say like ... you're foolish ... (struggling for words, pained expressions on his face)

Av: yeah, so they're saying you're stupid? You're a fool?

Others: yeah ... stupid!

(You are a fool everything!)

Av: do they ever ... do people say things to you about your family or something?

P9: yes ... (???)

Av: it hurts, yeah? Do people

Grp: yes ...

Av: yes ... it also hurts ... yeah? Do people do that? (nodding heads ... pause)

Av: tell me some of the things you've heard people say... maybe they say it to other people, it doesn't matter what do you think is the most hurtful things to say? (pause)

(17:00) Grp: you look like a monkey ...

Av: like a monkey? Oh no.

P1 and P9 start making monkey movements (scratching body, facial expressions)

Av: (someone in grp whispers baboon) ... like a baboon?

Grp: yes ...

Av: yeah. That's hurtful.

Grp shouting out words ... like giraffe ... like bird...

Av: um-hmmm

P9: they say you are 'uyaphapha' – you are flying like a bird ... *(uyaphapha means you are all over the place almost usually in an annoying manner/sometimes it means you cannot be trusted e.g. with a secret cause you don't know when to stop)*

Av: oh .. wow, ok. (someone says something...) what? They say ...

(The girls giggle and no one translates for me ...)

Av: yeah ... is it bad? Yeah? ... But now who does this in the school? Who does the hitting and the bad words? (pause) don't tell me names, tell me is it other learners, is it ... who? Who does it?

One of boys (P7?) others learners ...

Av: Other learners? Yeah. Are they older, or the same age as you? ... younger ...

P2: ... yes ...

Av: Younger, P2? (he shakes his head) older or the same?

(17:56) P9: older or the same ... everything

Av: (looking around the group at the heads nodding ...) older ... yes, older ... ? is it always the older children? From the time you start at school, is it always the older children?

Av: is it sometimes children on the same grade as you?

Grp: (nod) ... yes

Av: yes, also?

Grp: yes ...

(... must agree to everything she...)

Av: hey girls, who is it? The other learners ? are they older or the same grade?

Girls: older ...

Av: and do you get the older girls that beat the girls, or is it the boys that beat the girls also?

P9: boys ...

Av: so the boys beat the boys, and the girls beat the girls? Is that how it works?

Grp: nods ...

Av: do you ever have the girls violent for the boys?

(18:49) P9: yeah, sometime the boys are beating girls.

P3: (shouts loudly) Yes!

Av: ok. So sometimes you have the boys beating the younger girls, and sometimes it's the girls beating the girls ?

Group: yes ...

Av: do you ever have the girls beating the boys?

P9: ye-es ...

Av: so it works ... like ... all the time, hey?

P9 & P1: (fighting sound effects and making hitting motions with their hands and feet)

(Mumbling something in SiSwati)

Av: what else? Is there anyone else at school ... do the teachers ever? Who else does beating and shouting? Violence? Is it just the learners, or is also the teachers?

(19:26) grp: yes, also the teachers ... yes ...

Av: also the teachers?

(19:28) P9: yes, they are beating us with this (point to his belt buckle)

Av: With the belt buckle?

Boys: (nodding) ummm, yeah!

Av: when do they do that?

P1: .. and a stick ...

Av: a stick? The teacher's do that?

(19:39) P9: and the duster ... the duster from the front ...

Av: oh the board duster?

Boys: yeah!

Av: where? ...

(P9 demonstrates by stretching one hand out and hitting it with the other hand)

Av: oh, like that ...

P1 holds out his hand palm facing up, with the fingers all clumped together and pointing upwards.)

Av: so they either do it on your knuckles when your hand is flat, and sometimes you have to put your fingers up like this and they just do it on your fingertips?

Grp: (loudly) yes! (the girls and boys around P9 and P1 sit up and lean into the conversation, also showing me on their hands how they get hit, pained expressions on their faces).

Av: oh, it's sore, hey?!

Grp: yes ... (nodding)

Av: is it the men teachers or the women teachers?

P3: the men and the women ...

(20:00) P9: the men and the women...

Av: all of them?

Grp: yes.

Av: oooh. So when you come to the school do you just learn which is the teachers that hit and which are the teachers that don't?

P9: yes ...

(There is one)

P9: (pointing to a male teacher across from us outside a classroom, smiling and whispering conspiratorially) ... that one ...

Av: that one?

P9: yes ...

Av: are all of the teachers .. or some of the teachers that don't?

Grp: (discusses some names of teachers amongst themselves....)

P8: (demonstrates pinching upper arm on self and on P3)

Av: oh, she pinches your skin?

Grp: yes!!

Av: where does she do it on your body? On the arms?

Grp: yes, here ... (demonstrate on themselves)

Av: Ow!

(P8 and P3 also pinch on their flanks)

(20:42) Av: .. and here on the side of the stomach, also? ... ouch! That's sore, hey?

Grp: yes ... (quietly)

Av: and then do people cry in the class, what happens?

P9: o, you don't cry. If you cry (P3; Yes!) ... they beat you again.

(P3 laughs)

Av: oh really? So if you cry or you make a sound, they beat you more?

Grp: yes!

Av: ... and if you're quiet, they stop?

Grp: yes (quietly now, looking down)

Av: I see. That's difficult then, you have to keep it all in, hey?

Boys: yes ... (nodding heads)

Av: and what happens to the other people in the class? What do you do if somebody does it to P1? You're in the same class.

P9: they are laughing.

Av: laughing ...

Grp: yes...

Av: why are they laughing?

(saying something softly ... they are laughing at you!)

Av: so do you also do that when other people are being hit? Do you also laugh?

(look at each other and smile)

P9: we are laughing (looking down at his shoes)

(Others laugh softly ...)

Av: why? Why you do that? (pause) .. are you scared? ... why do you laugh when other people hurt, cause you didn't like it when they laugh when you are sore? ...(pause) But you do it.. so why do we do it? Are you scared, P3? (she nods)

What happens if you don't laugh?

P3 (quietly) we're scared ...

Av: hey? Do you sometimes feel you have to laugh? Even if you don't want to? (pause) ... Hey, if somebody else is being sore? And what happens afterwards when the person leaves the classroom? (pause) Does anybody go to them, or do people just ...(shrug shoulders) ... leave them and say bad things to them... or what happens?

(They are all quiet)

Av: like if you get beaten in the class then afterwards, do you go to your friends, or do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens?

(all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)

Av: dunno?

P9: it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)

Av: now tell me, do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?

(22:45) P9: yes! They say we have a big head.

Av: yeah?

Others: yes ...

Av: So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...

Grp is nodding ...

Av: so the teachers they do the hitting, but they also do the bad words?

Grp: yes ... nodding ...

Av: and the other learners, they do the hitting and the bad words? Other learners?

Grp: (softly) yes ... (nodding)

Av: yeah, both? And is it ever any other people that come in here and do violence? Into the school, from the outside? (pause)

(... no response)

Av: is the school locked? Do people come in, do people go out? What happens here? Because it looks very open to me, hey? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?

(23:30) P9: allowed to leave the school when it's break time

Av: ok. So do people come in to the school that are not learners? Does that happen here?

(Everyone quiet ... very little reaction or response from grp)

Av: No? Some of you are shaking heads. So does it not happen? (some nodding now and softly saying yes ...)

Av: what kind of people come in? Like adult or other learners (children)? What do they come in for? (pause) ...

(24:12) Av: so tell me when the teachers do the hitting, why do they hit? What happens and then they hit you, why? What do you do?

(P1 shows how the teacher hits)

Av: no before they hit you so why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?

(24:30) P9: we are making noise

Av: oh, if you're making noise in the class?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok ... so tell me a story when you made noise in the class. What happened? Tell me.

(24:46) P9: the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.

Av: were you talking to a friend sitting next to you? Yeah .. .and so the teacher shouts at you and says to stop talking, and you carry on and then what happens, does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?

Boys: (pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...

Av: where you are sitting, just hits you? Just like that?

Av: P3, tell me a story. You say that teachers sometimes do that (pinch own arm) pinching. What happened, what did you do? (pause) why does she come around and pinch you like that?

(P3: shakes her head.)

Av: so tell me when someone got hit with a shambok, what happened? What did they do that was so bad? Hey?

Boys: it's painful ...

Av: yeah, it's painful? But what do you think ... did you do something wrong? I'm trying to understand why they hit learners. What do you do that makes them angry that they hit like that? Like what kind of punishment... so you say if you talking in class, you get hit like this, hey? What makes a teacher hit with the stick.... what do you do wrong?

(26:03) P3: (point to her tie) your tie ...

Av: So when you are not wearing a tie? Yeah? So if you some to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?

Grp: nods heads

P3: ... you go out the school ...

Av: they tell you you must go out the school? .. really?

Grp: yes .. you must go home ...

Av: So if you don't have a tie ?

P3: yes ... (laughing)

Av: what else? (looking at P2) Do you get hit because you don't have a tie?

P2: (nods and smiles)

Av: where is your tie? (he is not wearing one) ...

P9: and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...

(P2 takes tie out of his pocket to show me) **it's in your pocket, ok ...**

Av: what happens if your clothes are ruined? (P2 shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side).

P1: .. also if you didn't do homework

Av: oh ... if you didn't do homework?

(26:38) P3: If I don't have school shoes ...

Others: yes...

Av: really? So your uniform, they're very angry about uniform? If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?

P9: or they tell you, you must go back home ...

Av: and what do you tell your parents? Cause sometimes you can't get new things. Sometimes it just gets damaged, hey?

(They shrug quietly)

Av: and do any of you tell your parents?

(Some people shake heads, others nod a little)

Av: what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)

P9: .. it's too difficult ...

Av: it's too difficult?

P9 .. yes (pause)

Av: and what else, what else do people do that makes you get hit? So it's the clothes, if you don't do your homework, if you talk ... is there anything else?

(grp quiet)

Av: if you're laughing in the class...

(28:02) Av: Do you sometimes ... is there ever when other learners do the beating cause the teachers in the class are not in the class ? ... where does the hitting happen with the other learners ?

Where do they hit you or do those things ... the older kids? Is it in the class, in the field .. is it where? Where does it happen?

(talking in siSwati a bit)

(28:40) Av: and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)

(No response)

Av: hey? Like in the city schools sometimes they have those. Do you have them here? Drugs and weapons ...

(Grp shaking heads ...)

Av: yes ...? (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) what do you guys say? No?

(someone in group says Yes)

Av: let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?

P9: ..no.

Av: no? (look at P2) Do you know?

(P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)

Av: yes? And you girls? Do you know people in the school that do drugs? (no answers) .. alcohol?

(29:17) Grp: yes ...

Av: alcohol, yes?

Grp nods

Av: ok, what kind of drugs?

P2: dagga ...

Av: dagga...? smoking drugs?

Other boys in grp: ya!

Av: is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?

Grp: (nod) yes ...

Av: normal cigarettes ... ? Does that happen in the school?

Someone in group ... says yes, the learners ...

Av: the learners? Do you see it here?

Some are shaking their heads ...

Av: no? Ok. Do you ever the alcohol in the school? Learners drinking alcohol in the school?

Grp: .. yes ...

Av: yes? (P8 shakes her head and says no) P8 you say no? Ok.

Av: and what about teachers? Do you see teachers drinking alcohol in the school?

(29:56) P9: no ...

(talking siSwati in group drinking in school, you are lying)

P9: (making smoking gestures & laughs)...

Av: ah, smoking?

P9: yes, she's smoking yeah ...

Av: but sometimes do the teachers come to school and they're drunk?

Grp shaking heads ...

Av: no? You haven't seen that? Ok.

Av: Do you see learners coming to school who are drunk?

(some say yes ... some shake their heads)

Av: no? Ok ... what about weapons? There's shambok and there's a stick. Do you ever see any other weapons in the school?

Boys: knives ...

Av: you see knives in the school? Sometimes learners have a knife?

Boys nod ...

Av: what else? Guns? Do you ever see guns at the school?

Boys: no!

Av: no? Girls do you ever see knife or guns?

(no answer)

Av: P6 have you ever seen it? Did you ever see anybody at school with a knife?

P6: ... (quietly) .. yes ...

Av: ok, so a knife, yes but guns, no...? so we have a knife but no guns, hey?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: so why do you think learners do that? Why do you think learners hit other learners? What makes them do that?

(31:11) P9: they think they're the boss.

Av: because they think they're the boss?

Boys: Yes ...

Av: yeah ... What about the girls? Why do the girls do it? ... hey? (girls are talking amongst themselves quietly). Hey, P3, why do you think people hit other people?

(P3 smiles and shrugs her shoulders)

(pause)

(31:41) P3: I feel painful ...

Av: You feel painful when they do it?

P3: me, I want to ... stop

P9: I want to call the police ...

Av: you want to call the police, hey? (grp nods) what will they do?

P9: the police will discipline you ...

Av: you .. or the person hitting you?

P9: the person that is hitting you ...

Av: yeah...

P9: the police are going to punish them ..

Av: have you ever had that here at this school where someone called the police?

P9: yes!

Av: yes? (grp nods)

Av: what happened?

Someone whispers ... take them away ...

Av: they take them away? (pause) what happened? What this person do? ...

P9: they are hitting them ...

Av: who was it? Someone in the school? (grp nods) Was it a fight.. what happened before the police came?

P9: .. they fight ...

Av: yeah ...

P9: they were fighting, and the one that have been beaten call the police.

Av: and who was it? Was it people / learners in the school?

Grp: yes ...

Av: where were they fighting?

(Boys pointing towards the open field used for sports)

Av: here, in the field?

P9: yes they were there ...

Av: oh, was it boys or girls?

Grp: boys ...

Av: two boys?

Grp ... yes

Av: how old were they? ... (whispers) Older than you?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and how did they fight? What with body? With weapons ...

P1 shows his fists ...

Av: fists? Like this... ? (boys nod & agree) ok,

P9: the teacher called them

Av: yeah ... and where were you? Were you in the class?

P9: naaaahh (shaking head and pointing to corridor in front)

Av: outside here ... ?

P9: yes, we were watching ...

Av: Did you also see it P2?

P2: yes ...

Girls ... and me ...

Av: shew, and then what happened?

P9: one of the boys called the police ...

Av (repeat) one of the boys called the police, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and then the police came (nodding) and they took the other boy away?

P9: yes, and they beat him ...

Av: and then they beat the boy? Wow.

(Boys: demonstrating beating actions with hands.)

Av: oh I see. Where here or at the police station?

(Boys motion behind them toward staff room)

P9: staffroom ...

Av: oh they come here, take the boy to the staff room

P9: yes...

Av: and then they beat up this boy?

Grp nods ... yes ...

Av: ok. What did they beat him with?

(Boys start demonstrating motions of hitting, kicking, punching ...)

Av: they kick him and hit him?

Boys: yes... (making fight motions and sounds ... talking among selves, laughing ..)

Av: and what happen to the other boy? (pause) the one that called the police?

P9: no nothing ...

Av: nothing, he was ok?

Grp; yes

Av: and what did the teachers do while boys were fighting? Hey... what did you say P8?

P8: they suspend ...

Av: but while all this was happening, did the teachers come and stop it or did they just stay in side?

P9: to stop it ...

Av : they tried to come and stop it?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... shew. Were you scared watching it? Hey ...

P9: .. yes ... (shyly)

Av: did you know the boys? (no response) Do you know why they were fighting?

Grp: shaking heads

Av: you don't know why? Did you just sort of see it start and then you knew there was a big fight?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: and what happened to that boy who was beaten by the teachers afterwards, did you see him afterwards?

Nodding heads

Av: did he come back to class? ... (some shaking heads) so what happened?

(35:30) P9 (whispering) he was in class ...

Av: he came back, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and he had to carry on being in school until he went home?

P9: yes ...

Av: and did he stop beating other people afterwards or was he doing better or not?

P9: better ...

Av: was he?

Grp: nodding ...

Av: so you think it worked? That the police came and the teachers were hitting him? Is that a good thing or not a good thing?

Grp: yes (nodding)

Av; it is? What would you have done P8? If you were the headmaster and you saw two boys fighting like that?

(36:12) P8: I'd call the police

Av: you would call the police also? But you are the teacher, you're the headmaster ... you are the person in charge of the whole school... the principal... (pause). You call the police and then what would you do? ...hmmm ... (pause) do you think the teachers and other people should stop hitting?

P9: yes ...

Av: what else could they do if they get angry? What should they do if they don't hit?

P9: sit and talk ...solve the problem ...

Av: solve the problem in other ways?

(someone in group talking with someone outside the grp in siSwati – I think?)

Av: so now tell me does it ever happen that in the school that you have incidents of like boys touching girls or doing things that they're not comfortable with? (pause) Like the girls do you ever have that?

Grp quiet, looking away

Av: have you ever heard of girls at the school that get abused in the school in a sexual way? Touched, or raped ... does that happen at the school? Have you ever heard that or seen it? (pause) ... yes or no ...

P9: No.

Av: (looking around group...) No? Have you ever heard of ... No? Girls? Have you ever heard stories about girls getting raped at the school? ... Touched funny ... touched in ways they're not comfortable with?

Grp shaking heads quietly

Av: tell me is that violence, or is that not violence? What do you think?

Grp: .. it's violence ...

Av: is it ...? (pause) If that happens at a school, is that violence or is it not violence? ... teach me ... (grp quiet) or is that not so important? (pause) What about teachers using their power over other learners to do things that they don't want to do, has that ever happened?

(Grp quiet)

Av: no? (someone nods ...) tell me like what? ... (no response) What about outside of the school? You said sometimes you have people come and they steal your goats and things, hey? What kind of violence happens outside of the school?

(No response from grp – some talk quietly, others look away.)

Av: ..hmmm? ... No? ... Ok, so I want to finish off and thank you so much for all this information. I want to go one by one and just ask you a question and you can either answer it in English or in your own language, it doesn't matter someone will translate. Ok? So if I say to you explain or describe violence. If I came from another country, and I didn't know what it means, ok? So I want you to say "I think violence is ..." and tell me what you think, ok?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok start with you P2. So you say: I think violence is ... tell me what you think (pause).. finish the sentence.. you can finish it n English or in your own language, it doesn't matter..

(quiet ...) say: I think violence is ... (pause) anything, anything you want to say. What's the first thing that comes in to your mind when I say violence at school

P2: I don't understand...

Av: ok, I say what comes to your mind, what do you think about when I say school violence ...?

P2: nothing ...

Av: nothing? But we just spoke about all these things, hey? What's the worst thing for you about the violence or maybe say to me ... do you want it to stop? Do you want school violence to stop?

P2: yes!

Av: ok, why? I want school violence to stop because ...

P2: because beating the children ...

Av: because beating the children, and what does that do? Why do you want it to stop?

P2: violence.

Av: yeah. What does violence do?

P2: crime

Av: crime... so you think violence makes crime? (he nods) and you want it to stop then? Ok, thank you. And P7?

(in the meanwhile, P9 and P8 are talking and P8 hits P9 on the head...)

P3: she's beating him!

Av: I see, hey! P8 you just hitting him ...

P9: yes ...

Av: Is that not violence?

P8: smiles

P3: she hit him like this on the head ... (demonstrates in the air)

Av: I know what did he do?

(they all laugh)

Av: hey? So is that not violence?

Grp: yes .. is violence ... so do you also hit people?

Grp nod head (some smiling)

Av: yeah? Who here hits other people have you ever hit other people, P6?

(grp calling P6 and translating)

Av: P6, have you ever hit other people?

(P6 they are talking to you)

P9: (translating for P6) yes ...

Av: why do you hit other people?

P9: but sometimes you are playing, you see ... (hits P8 'gently' and they both laugh and wriggle).

Av: oh, I see. So is that also violence or not violence when you just play-hitting?

P9: no it's not violence...

Av: so how do you know the difference? What's the difference if I do this (pretend to smack someone next to me)and I hit her hard and it's sore but we're friends or if I do this ... how do you know what the difference is, for instance if someone is play-hitting or if it's violence hitting?

P9: they are sad, you are not happy

(42; 48) Av: oh ok, but sometimes your friends hit you and it also hurts...

Grp: nodding & softly saying yes ...

Av: is it a different hurt? (grp nodding) How would I know the difference if I came? How would I know if I see people hitting how would I know which one is just play-hitting and which one is bully-fighting? Cause I don't know who is friends, you see? So how would I tell the difference?

P9: when they are playing .. you see that they are happy ...

Av: oh ok, so do I have to look at after the person gets hit? What they look like?

P9: ummm (affirmative)

Av: oh I see, ok. So if you hit P8 and she is smiling or she just does ... like ignore you ... then I can look at her and I can see it's ok, that was just play hitting?

P9& grp: yes ...

Av; and if it's violence, what would I see? The person looks sad?

Grp: yes ...

Av: show me sad... what is a sad face? Cause you're not allowed to cry hey?

(P1 and others demonstrate a 'sad' face – their eyes are downcast, they are frowning ...)

Av: sad ... angry? .. ok, so pouting like that with your lips out .. show me P1... how would I know that you've been hit.. violence not play? if someone hits you bad how would I know? Show me what you would look like ... head down, eyes down.. and you're all quiet?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... so if your friends saw you they would know that you just got hit by someone?

P9: yes ... (others nod)

Av: yeah, they would know? And you know if you see your friend? Do you know the difference?

Grp nod

Av: yeah? Ok I get it.

Boys: yes ... smiling ...

Av: so anybody else ... tell me P7.. .you want violence to stop because ? (pause) ... P1? You want violence to stop because ?

P1: because I don't want to kill the other people ...

Av: ok, and if we stop it then what?

P9: the people will feel free. Av: you'll feel free and you'll laugh .. ?

P9: yeah

Av: nice ...

P9: have happiness ...

Av: oh ... nice, you'll have happiness. What do you think P3? Talk, you have such brilliant ideas, hey? You must speak up .. you have such nice ideas... you mustn't be scared to talk, hey? You want school violence to stop because .. ?

(P3 discusses with P8, searching for the right word ...)

Av: say it in your language if it's easier ...

(They say you must say "you want violence to stop because ...She says she doesn't know)

Av: (Utsi akati??) you want it to stop hey?

P3: yes ...

Av: it's not good? (pause) and P4? (talking among themselves in siSwati) You want it to stop because? Hey ? (pause ...)

P4 whispers something ...

Av: because you'll be happy? (she nods and shyly looks down)... yeah? ... ok. Any thing else you wanna say to me? Anything I didn't ask?

P9: nothing ...

Av: nothing ... ?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok. So when I come back in august what are some of the things you want to work on? Are there specific things you want to do? To work on or learn about? ... in your life ... ?

P9: anything ...

Av: anything? What is important to you?

Someone in Grp: I want to learn and stay in school ...

Av: yes, that's important, hey? What's stopping you from having a good future?

P9: if you become pregnant ...

Av: yes, that's a problem ... do you have girls in the school that get pregnant and then they can't come back?

Grp : yes ...

Av: ok, thanks everyone.

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Will I be chosen? (participant selection)

What a bumpy ride, but we finally get to the school. It is exactly as I had imagined. Simple, but surrounded by beauty. We walk behind our lecturer, apprehensive. Not really sure what is happening next. Awkward, I feel so out of place. We stand in the open 'quad' area between a u-shaped building waiting to be 'chosen' by the Grade 9 learners. They group together and we face off - a group of eager faces staring at each other on either side of the staff, who are introducing themselves and explaining what is about to happen. They stare at us, we smile and stare back. It seems almost comical, really. The moment finally arrives My heart leaps into my throat! My mind fills with 'what ifs...?'

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Reflection: The ice has melted

It had been an unpredictable day, starting off awkwardly but finishing on a positive note. The whispering, shy girls had bravely increased their interaction with me and those who were quiet were now persevering with broken English in an eager attempt to be heard and included. We moved the picnic blanket to a spot in the shade and sat down with the sponsored liquid-fruits and chips. It felt so comfortable and familiar – the awkwardness and distance of that morning long forgotten.

Girls were lazily leaning against each other, and the boys (again seemingly uninhibited by western gender stereotypes) were lying casually across one another. The group a tangle of legs and hair and wide smiles. The conversation flowed more easily about casual topics such as school and friends, boyfriends and future goals. I became eager about tomorrow's research focus group and tried to test the water a bit asking about crime in the community. They explained that there was quite a bit of theft (especially by foreigners, they added) of livestock and material goods. We spoke about what careers they were wanting to pursue for the future. A few were in the health professions and two in law enforcement and military. One even stated she would like to be the President of the country, but when I asked her why their responses seemed to focus more on their passion to help or protect others and to make things better.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

They have taken a lot longer on the written activities than I had estimated and it was already time for the break and then the focus group. Despite my concern that my group members had not shown me much openness that day, and my feelings that they would struggle with English, I decided to persist and stick to my original plan.

After the break, it took me quite some time to coax them into leaving their activity books and joining me for the discussion. There was very little space with shade and I was not sure where to place the blanket. I urged them to help me find a spot, but my urgency was clearly not theirs.

Eventually I simply put the blanket out on the shaded concrete against one of the classroom walls and invited them (with cold fruit juice in hand) to sit with me. As soon as I had poured the drinks, and began explaining about the digital recorders I realised I had not made a good choice and it would likely affect the quality of my discussion - but I continued regardless. The group was sitting in a straight line, leaning against the wall (not really in a circular formation which would have been more conducive to talking), and I was seated on a chair, higher than them, facing in - rather than being physically part of their group. They had also separated - boys facing me and to my right with the girls further down, with one boy sitting on his own to my left.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

The following are short notes / reflections of the focus group discussion:

* Girls are whispering, giggling and looking at me ... is it about the topic or something completely unrelated? Wish I knew what they're saying!

* Pg - group leader? Giving instructions to others... translating, instructing... warning?

* So distracted - looking at others, at own feet .. disinterested? Scared to talk? Don't understand?

* Talk of gossip and teasing, yet they talk and laugh at each other ... are they teasing each other as we speak? Do they realise the contradiction of what they say vs what they do?

* Like to demonstrate - language barrier? - more get involved when I ask to 'show me'. Even facial expression (angry) with physical action of hitting, kicking etc.

* Also demonstrate on each other & not softly! Is that not violence when one enacts it?

* Topic of parents / home = sore point? Look away, quiet .. withdraw.

* "it's difficult" to talk about? To explain to me? To live through?

* Teacher is shouting in class behind us ... is someone getting hit? Group looks around. Quiet. Some giggle into their hands

My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I like to play soccer and I like to play video games. I like to play soccer with my friends. I like to play video games on my phone. I like to play soccer and I like to play video games.

Things I don't like about myself

I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school.



Hobbies & Interests

Things I like to do:

I like to play soccer and I like to play video games. I like to play soccer and I like to play video games.

Things I can do well:

I can do well in soccer and I can do well in soccer. I can do well in soccer and I can do well in soccer.

Things I am not good at:

I am not good at drawing and I am not good at drawing. I am not good at drawing and I am not good at drawing.



THINGS I LIKE MOST ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL

TO GO TO SCHOOL

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

THINGS I HATE MOST ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL

TO GO TO SCHOOL

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I like to play soccer and I like to play video games. I like to play soccer and I like to play video games.

Things I don't like about myself

I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school.



My Reflection ...

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I like to play soccer and I like to play video games. I like to play soccer and I like to play video games.

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I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school. I don't like to go to school because I don't like to go to school.



THINGS I LIKE MOST ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL

TO GO TO SCHOOL

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

THINGS I HATE MOST ABOUT GOING TO SCHOOL

TO GO TO SCHOOL

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



Focus Group Interview – Analysis

Physical Violence
 Verbal Violence
 Emotional/Responses to violence
 Using violence to cope

Reasons for violence

7 June 2010

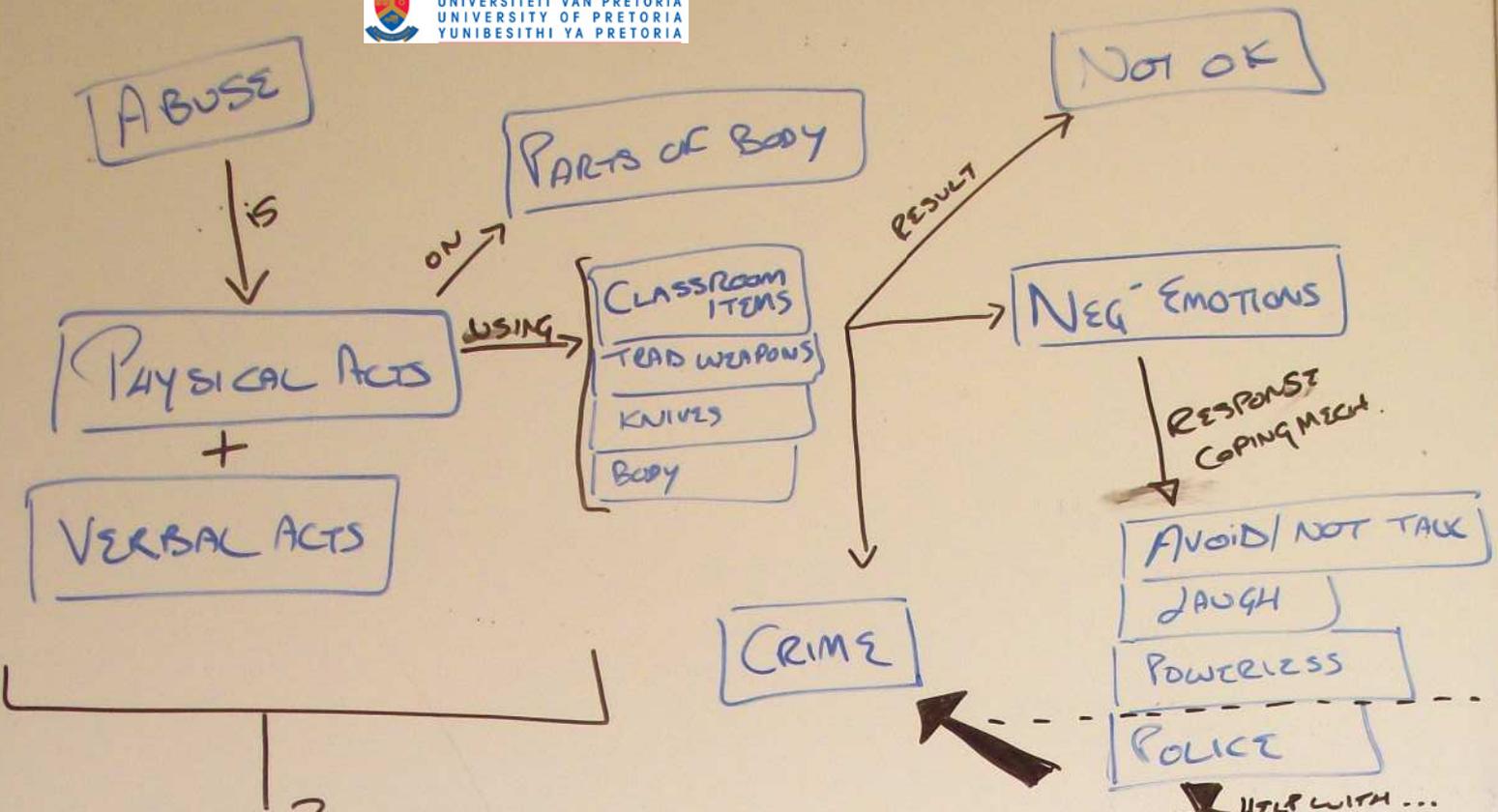
Avie	What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ...	
P9	Abuse of children They are beating people...	Phys violence / Aggression
Avie:	Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).	
P1	(very quietly): with shambok...	Traditional weapon (Masekover?)
P3	Xenophobia!	Foreigners / outsiders
Av:	From which country?	
Grp	Zimbabwe yes, and from Swaziland.... ... and Botswana ...	
Avie	where does it happen? The abuse ..?	
P9	In school and outside	
Avie	Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes? So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?	.
P3	We tell them ... (pause) to stop it. .. a meeting ...	Taking authority / action Negative response
Av	Who would you invite to your meeting?	
Grp	Teachers ..	
P4	The mothers and fathers... parents	
Avie	What are we going to say to them? (pause)	
P3	I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (struggling with words)	

	... yes ... stop! And the other learners	Don't like it / Negative response
Avie	... What does violence mean?	
P9	.. abuse ...	Physical / Power
Av	But what does abuse mean? (pause)	
P9	beating them ...	physical
Grp (girls)	gossiping ...	verbal / relationships
Boys	.. punishing ...	
P3	clean the windows and clean the class ...	discipline authority
Av	Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean So is that violence? (they nod in agreement)	
Av	You said beating – what do they use?	
P1 & P9	shambok, stick.... (P9) animates hitting / slapping with an open hand	traditional weapons physical
Av	With hands? ... Show me ..	
P1	(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)	Emotion linked to action
P9	(kicks with feet/leg)... and kick ...	
Av	.. and sometimes they kick, hey?	
P9	yes, kick ... (P1) also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)	Physical
P2	.. it's hard, hurting ..	
Av	Hurting ... how hurting?	
P2	Indicates his back (whipping action)	physical
Av	where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Grp point to different parts of body ...) Head ... face ...	
P3	...and in the stomach	
P9	...and on the bum	

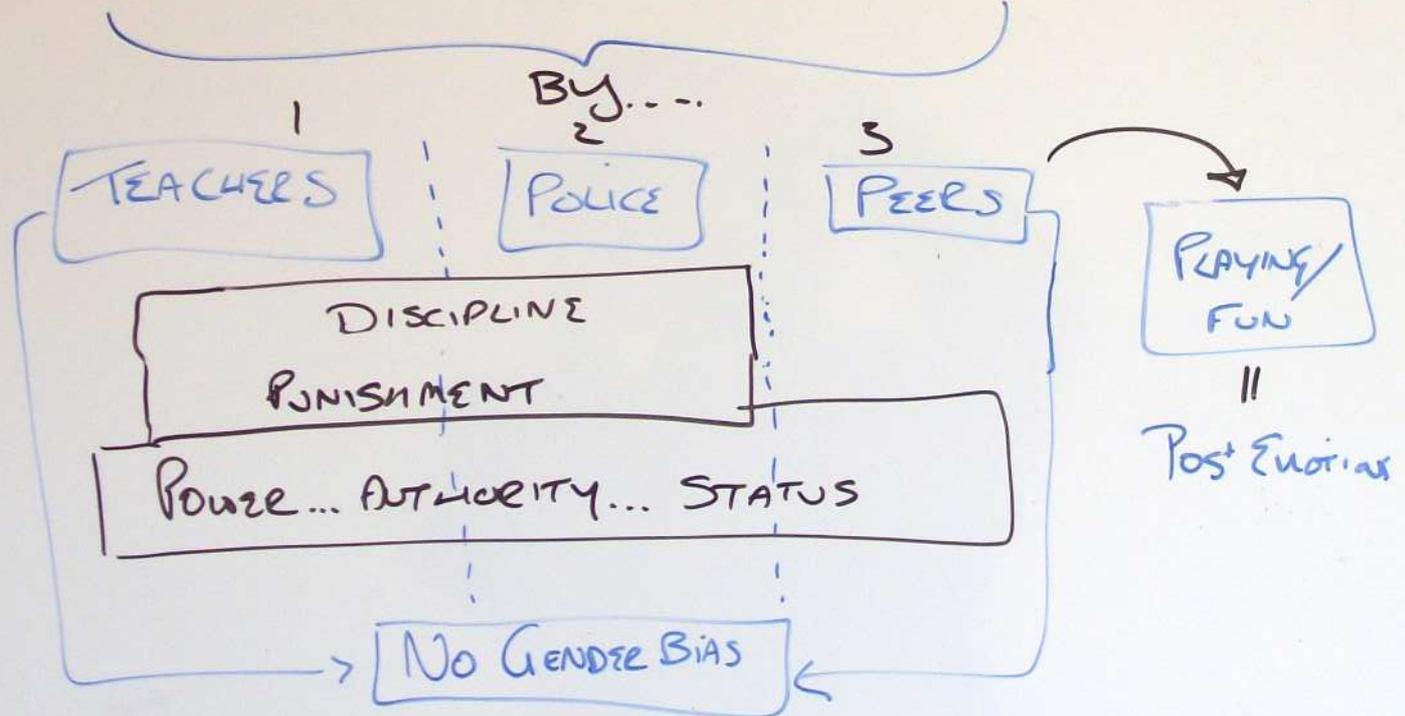
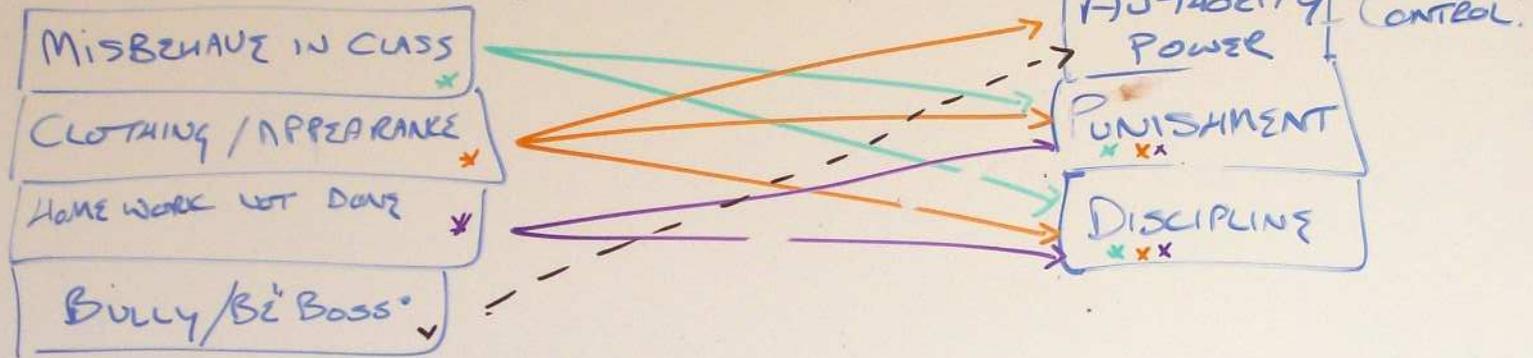
	do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens? (all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)	uncomfortable; don't want to talk about it?
P9	it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)	Response / emotion
av	do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?	Feeling inadequate?
P9	yes! They say we have a big head.	Verbal
av	So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...	
grp	Yes (nodding)	
av	is the school locked? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?	
P9	allowed to leave the school when it's break time	
av	When teachers hit you .. why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?	
P9	we are making noise the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.	Causes of Violence ↳ misbehaviour noisy - physical
av	does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?	
Boys	(pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...	physical - immediate/impulsive
av	What makes a teacher hit with the stick... what do you do wrong?	
P3	(point to her tie)	
av	So if you come to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?	② Clothing/appearance
grp	Yes! (Nodding)	
P3	... you go out the school ...	
P9	yes .. you must go home ... and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...	leave school go home embarrassed? Rejected? Punishment

av	what happens if your clothes are ruined? (Daniel shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side)	
P1	.. also if you didn't do homework	① misbehave
P3	If I don't have school shoes ...	② Appearance / Uniform
av	If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?	
P9	or they tell you , you must go back home ...	
av	and do any of you tell your parents? (Some people shake heads, others nod a little) what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)	Emotional Response Conflicted / Powerless no support @ home
P9	.. it's too difficult ...	
av	what else do people do that makes you get hit?	
P9	if you're laughing in the class...	misbehave
av	and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)	
grp	shaking heads ... (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) (someone in group says Yes)	-mixed replies!?
av	let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?	
P9	No... (P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)	
av	ok, what kind of drugs?	
P2	dagga ... (Other boys in grp: ya!)	
av	is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?	
grp	(nod) yes ...	

Astherly
Discipline



WHY?



15-POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.96)

Transcription

- The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.

Coding

1. Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
2. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
3. All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
4. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
5. Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

1. Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
2. Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
3. Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
4. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.

Overall

1. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.

Written report

1. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
2. There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
3. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
4. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

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TOPIC: LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF
SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

Thank you for participating in my research study. After our interesting conversation about school violence, this is what I understood. Please help me to make sure that I have understood you clearly and correctly.

Theme	1. Violence as Behaviour	2. Violence is Bad	3. Authority & Power
Category:	1.1 Beating children is violence (physical acts)	2.1 It's hard, hurting (negative emotions)	3.1 School discipline
	1.2 They call you names (verbal acts)	2.2 We're scared (coping mechanisms)	3.2 The police protect
		2.3 We're just playing (positive emotions)	

THEME 1: VIOLENCE AS BEHAVIOUR

Definition: Acts and behaviours that cause direct injury or harm (physical or psychological) to another.

THEME 2: VIOLENCE IS BAD

Definition: Emotional expressions/feelings associated with acts of school violence and how learners respond, or cope, emotionally when they experience violence at school.

THEME 3: AUTHORITY AND POWER

Definition: Instances when violence is used at school by people who wield some form of power or authority over another person, or when violence is used for purposes or punishment, discipline or to protect.



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Learner

Re: Participation in focus group discussions for research study

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria busy with my masters degree in Educational Psychology. I would like to understand more about school violence and how it affects you the learner. So I have decided to conduct my research here at your school. I want to hear about your experience, what is happening in your school and why you think it is happening. This research is separate to the career and learning assessments we will be doing together while I am here as well.

My study will involve talking openly together as a group (over two days) and sharing experiences about school violence. Your participation is not compulsory. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to continue, it's ok. You can ask to leave the group and your decision will be respected.

Remember, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I just wanting to share ideas with you and hear what you think about school violence. Your ideas will help me with all the information I need to put together a report for the University called a Dissertation, so that other people can also learn about what I have learned.

It is important for you to know that the report will not show the name of your school or your name, or any details that can identify you specifically. That information will be kept private and confidential. Your parents / caregivers as well as your teachers have been given a letter explaining why I am here, so they will know you participated in this group, but they will not have access to what you said or showed me. The only people who will know what was discussed in the group is all of you sitting here. So remember, it is important that if you choose to participate in the group, you must respect the other participants and not share what is said in the group with your friends, family or anyone else who was not in the group.

My intention is not to make you feel sad, uncomfortable or scared in any way, but we will be talking openly about experiences of school violence, and sometimes talking about such things can make a person feel sad or bad. If at any time you do feel upset for any reason, please talk to me. I have also arranged with your Life Orientation teacher, to be available if you might like to talk to someone about the feelings that you have as a result of our discussions.

After you have read and understood all this information about the research and what you will be required to do, please complete the bottom section of the page and **sign if you would like participate** in this research study. If you do not want to participate, just leave the form blank.
Thank you very much for your interest in the study and the support that you are giving me.

Avie Cherrington

Motlalepule Ruth Mampane

Researcher

Supervisor

083 475 8852

→.....←

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of your School: _____

**I HAVE READ THE LETTER AND WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
STUDY AT MY SCHOOL**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Parent / Guardian

Re: Permission for your child to participate in a research project

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria. I am busy with my masters' studies in Educational Psychology. To complete my study I am required to conduct research into a topic of interest in my professional field. The aim of my study is to help me better understand how learners in a South African school define and experience school violence. The study involves various activities and group discussions with the learners (held over two days) which will take place during school time.

I do not foresee that your child will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, the activity will require him/her to talk openly with other learners about his/her ideas and experiences of violence at school. While I will encourage everyone in the group to be respectful and ask them to not share what is said in the group with others, it is not something that I can guarantee.

Participation is voluntary and if any learner feels, at any time, that he/she does not want to participate, he/she will be able to leave the study without penalty or punishment. Furthermore, I have spoken to the Life Orientation teacher who is willing to help those learners who feel uncomfortable or upset as a result of participating in this discussion.

The name of your child will remain confidential. This means that when I write the results of the study I will not mention the name of your child or the school, and any comments he/she made will remain anonymous. My supervisor will be the only person with access to the information, but even she will not know the names of the learners.

I would appreciate your consent and assent as the parent / guardian of the learner to allow him/ her to participate in this study by signing the form at the bottom section of this page.

I will explain the research process to your child beforehand and will ensure that he/she gives his/her assent as well.

Thank you,

Avie Cherrington, Researcher

083 475 8852

Supervisor - Ruth Mampane

Lecturer, University of Pretoria

Tel: 012-420 2339, Fax: 012-420 5511

→.....←

I.....

Parent/guardian of (*name of learner*)

Have read and understood what the study is about and hereby **give** consent and assent for **him/ her** to participate in the study (circle the relevant option) through focus group discussions.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

Research Planning Schedule:

First Visit

April 14, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & explain next two days
Explain goals of project & discuss informed consent / assent
- 10h30: Hand out t-shirts, begin craft activity
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Tour of school with participants
- 12h30: Snacks & reflection circle
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues



April 15, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30: Summary of previous day
- 9h45: Work books handed out and activities explained
- 10h30: Random individual discussions
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Continue with workbooks and individual discussions
- 12h30: Snacks and focus group discussion
- 13h00: Reflection circle & closure
- 14h00: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Second Visit

August 4, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & recap from previous session
- 10h30: Hand back booklet, allow time for decorating cover & completing worksheets from previous visit
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: My flower garden posters; Individual discussion & feedback with quadrant maps
- 12h45: Snacks & member checking
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues

August 5, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30 - 12h30 Career expo Grade 12's to Grade 9's
- 13h00: Reflection circle with group & closure
- 13h30: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Transcription: Focus Group Interview

15 April 2010

NOTE: *Bold comments in this font are transcribed from siSwati conversation*

Someone in background: (Don't tell her... Don't ask she will write your question)

(00:10) Av: **Ok, right. So can you all hear me? Good.**

Thank you everybody. (Let me ask) So now, what I wanted to talk to you about... I want to understand ... I've spoken to children at other schools and they all tell me that there is a lot of violence that goes on in schools and sometimes it is difficult for them to do their school, and to really do as well as they want to because it is difficult. So I want to find out from you guys what it is like here in this school. So when I say to you 'school violence'... what does that mean to you? (pause)

What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ... (pause)

(00:55) P9: Abuse of children

Av (repeat): Abuse of children.

(pause)

[P8 & P3 talking softly] *Speak out loud.*

Av: What's that?

[SiSwati - mumbling]

Av: What's that? P3 what did you say? Just say it out loud. There's no right or wrong. I'm here to learn from you. I don't know what is right. (pause). What does it mean to you? If I say school violence... teach me, what is it? (pause – everyone is looking away or at the floor).

You said before it is the 'abuse of children'. What is abuse? What does it mean? (pause) Say it in your language and ask someone to translate for me. Just tell me. If it's hard for you to say it in English, just say it in your language. (long pause)

(01:49) P9: They are beating people...

Av: Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).

(02:04) P1 (very quietly): with sjambok...

Av: ... with a sjambok?

P1: yeah (nods).

P9 to group: *[Talk people you will be in trouble ... I hope she broadcasts you in the news (daring the group)]* Giggling. P3, looks intently at me, seems like there are words on the tip of her tongue. She gestures with her hand in front of her mouth.

Av: ... yes, tell me P3. You're dying to say something.

P9: *[Whispers]*

(Pause)

P8 mumbles something under her breath.

Av: I can't hear you P8...

(she looks at me and P3, shakes her head & looks down)

[This one is delaying us we want to finish writing] [grp converse in siSwati]

(silence. The grp look around at others playing around us or at their feet)

(02:45) P3: Xenophobia!

Av: (repeat) xenophobia? So that's also violence? Ok, that's good ... so does that mean ... what does xenophobia mean? That they come from another country?

(group nod... some say 'yes' softly)

Av: Which other country?

Group call out: Zimbabwe

Av: ... yes.... (pause) Do you have that in your school? (pause). Are there learners here from Zimbabwe?

Group: ... yes, and from Swaziland....

Av: yes, and from where else?

Someone in grp: and Botswana ...

[Get out of here.... to someone walking past]

Av: .. but what happens? Do they abuse children, or do children abuse them? which way does it work?

[I will beat you] [This thing does not count]

...talking softly/can't hear ...

(03:39) Av: And does it happen in the school grounds, or outside... where does it happen? The abuse ..?

P9: In school and outside.

Av: Both, hey?

P9: Yes, both.

Av: Tell me what happens in the school. Have you ever seen people or instances? Tell me a story, has there been violence in the school?

(pause)

Av: You've been here a long time, have you ever seen violence inside the school? Tell me the stories... have you seen people, or heard people tell you stories? You don't have to tell me names, just what happens.

(pause)

(04h43) Av: Do things happen or do they not happen? Yes, no? (some look at me nodding, some look away. No-one answers). Have you all seen things, yes or no? (pause)

Av: What about you boys, do you see problems of violence in the school?(pause) ... No?

(silence)

Av: *is it something we shouldn't talk about? Is that why? You all look away or smile, why is it difficult? (teacher shouting in background). Is it difficult because you are scared something will happen if you talk about it, or difficult because you don't want to remember it? Why is it difficult?*

(pause silence)

Av: *what about you P4? (pause – no reply) Is it difficult? Why?*

Av: *Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes?*

So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?

P3: We tell them ... *(pause)*

Av: *yeah, we tell them what?*

P3: to stop it.

Av: *yes we must stop it, but how do we stop it if we don't know that it happens? Because I am going to leave here and I'm going to say: No, it doesn't happen here... they all say to me, no it's fine. So I'm going to say to people in government and university: Don't worry about {name of school}. In Mpumalanga, it doesn't happen. Is that what you want me to go and say? (pause)*

Because that's the information you're giving me. So if you wanna make a difference ... (pause) ... this is your chance. What can we do about it? (pause) If it happens, I need to know that it happens, so I can tell people.

(silence)

Av: *Remember you don't have to tell me names, nobody else hears this, it's only me. They won't know it's this school. (pause.... long silence).*

Where's P5... you wanted to be president, hey? (P9 laughs quietly, P5 smiles shyly). And you're sitting there very quietly. What would the president do? Do you think the president is happy about this? Do you think the president doesn't have children who go to schools? If you were president what would you do, wouldn't you want to change it?

(08:30) P3: Invite them to meeting

Av: *Yeah, invite the meeting? Who would come to the meeting? (others whisper, answer softly). Who would you invite ... all the learners, or the teachers, or people outside? Who would you invite to your meeting?*

Grp: Teachers ...

Av: *Um uh. And ... (pause).*

(P3 softly says something)

Av: *The mothers and fathers... parents (repeating what is being said)? Ok, thanks P4. And what would we talk about?*

(silence)

[It's not coming out (making fun of her because she was struggling with words)]

Av: *(picking up words in conversation) Oh, about the xenophobia. Ok so what are we going to say to them? What about the xenophobia are we going to say to them? (pause) we say what.. you must stop it... what are we going to say? Tell me. (pause)*

We have this meeting and everybody is here. What are we going to say to them? (pause)

[Talk, speak up]

(10:05) P3: I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (*struggling with words*)

Av: ... so the parents must tell the children ...

P3: yes ... stop! And the other learners

(P8 giggling)

Av: (repeats) ... stop. And if I'm a learner ... yes, so you must stop being violent with the other learners just because they come from another country doesn't mean you must hit them, hey?

Group: yes ... yes.

Av: But now, if I'm the child, and I say: But I'm not doing anything... what am I doing? What would you say? What am I doing that tells you that it's violence? What am I doing that is violent? (pause) ... What does violence mean?

(silence ... *talking softly in siSwati*)

(10:59) P9: abuse ...

Av: But what does abuse mean? (pause) like what do they actually do? Show me or tell me ...

P9: beating them ...

Av: (repeat) ... beating them, yeah.

Girls: gossiping ...

Av: (repeat) .. gossiping, ok...

Boys: yeah ... gossiping.

(*grp talking in siSwati*)

Boys: .. punishing ...

Av: (repeat) punishing ... yes, like what kind of punishment?

(*talking in siSwati !?*)

P3: clean the windows and clean the class ...

(11:39) **Av: Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean**

(*siSwati !!*)

Av: so is that violence?

They nod...

Av: yeah? Ok. And tell me, so you said .. let's take these .. so you said beating, so that's when you hit someone? What do they hit with? You said shambok, stick ... (P1 & P9 nod, yes) .. anything else they use?

(12:04) P1: Sjambok!

Av: yes, shambok... and a stick? (group: yes ...)

(P9 animates hitting / slapping with an open hand)

(12:12) Av: with hands?

P9: *(makes whack/pow sound as demonstrates)* Yes!

Av: show me ..

P1: *(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)*

Av: ... and a fist P1? Yes, the fist .. ok. I see so sometimes they use the hand like this (demo an open-handed slap) and sometimes ...

P9: *(kicks with feet/leg)...* and kick ...

Av: .. and sometimes they kick, hey?

P9: yes, kick ... *(P1 also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)*

Av: good, thank you.

(12:29) P2: .. it's hard, hurting ..

Av: It's hard P2? .. Hurting ... how hurting? With the body or with something ...

P2 points to his back *(whipping action)*

Av: here on the back?

P2: ya.

Av: hmm, that's good. I didn't know. So they hit you on the back. where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Where on your body? (pause) where do they do it? Where, where, where ... show me...

(Grp point to different parts of body ...)

Av: everything, your head and your face? Everything ...

Grp: yes!

(12:59) P3: and in the stomach.

Av: and the stomach also? ...

P9: and on the bum.

Av: do they? Do they turn you around and bend you, like this? (demo hitting someone with open hand on the bum).

Grp: yes ...

Avie: and the back, P2, you said also on the back?

P2: yes on the back like this ...

Av: really, on the back? ... and boys and girls also?

Grp ... yes ...

Av: ... Also the girls?

Av: ... and boys? (grp nods). Do you think it is different, the way they do it for boys and for girls? Or is it the same?

P9: it's the same.

Av: so they don't care that if you are a girl ... they do it less ..

P9: ... they don't care ...

Av: does it matter?

P9: .. no it doesn't.

Av: no? The same thing. It's not different for boys and girls? (they nod) ok.

(13:47) Av: and tell me, when you say things like bully. What is bully? What does it mean? (pause) .. when somebody is a bully?

Someone in group: bully ...

Av: ya, when they are bullying... you said here gossiping and bullying... so what is a bully

(grp is talking softly – not sure what?)

Av: .. is it also beating?

Group: yes! *(loudly and firmly)*

(talking in grp siSwati)

Av: so what is it though? What does it mean if someone is bullied? Who is the bully?

(14:16) P9: I can think of the word in siSwati ... bullying

Av: what is the word in siSwati for bullying?

Grp: Kushaya ... (to hit/beat)

Av: (writing it down) And what's the word for violence?

Amos: Um ...?

Av: oh spell that ...

Grp: ...k ... u ...a.. h ...*(get confused)*.. *Kuhlukumeta (to abuse)*

Av: you write it for me ... I'm not writing it properly.

P9 writes it down the others look over his shoulder.

(P7 says something in siSwati)

Av: ok ... so that's violence hey? And beating and things like that? And what about things like gossiping. Is that also violence?

P9: .. i think so ...

Av: cause gossiping is what? (pause) when people talk about you, hey...

Grp: hmmm *(in agreement)*

Av: so is that also violence?

P3: yes!

(15:15) Av: yeah. And what do they say? (pause) what do they say that's violent? That's horrible? (pause) what kind of things do they say? (pause – everyone is quiet, look at floor or away.)

Av: Like what are the mean things they would say that hurt? (pause)

(15:38) Av: what hurts more the things they say, or when they hit? (some heads shaking some nodding) ... (pause) what do you think P7? What is ... worse, the hitting or the talking? What hurts more?

P7: (thinking)

(15:59) Grp members (probably P3 and P9): The hitting (others add in) hitting... hitting..

Av: and for you? (looking at P7)

P7: ... hitting ...

Av: ok, you also think the hitting? So the hitting is more bad than the ... bad words. So the bad words is not as bad?

(16:14) P9: is bad! They call you names ... it hurts. They say like ... you're foolish ... (struggling for words, pained expressions on his face)

Av: yeah, so they're saying you're stupid? You're a fool?

Others: yeah ... stupid!

(You are a fool everything!)

Av: do they ever ... do people say things to you about your family or something?

P9: yes ... (???)

Av: it hurts, yeah? Do people

Grp: yes ...

Av: yes ... it also hurts ... yeah? Do people do that? (nodding heads ... pause)

Av: tell me some of the things you've heard people say... maybe they say it to other people, it doesn't matter what do you think is the most hurtful things to say? (pause)

(17:00) Grp: you look like a monkey ...

Av: like a monkey? Oh no.

P1 and P9 start making monkey movements (scratching body, facial expressions)

Av: (someone in grp whispers baboon) ... like a baboon?

Grp: yes ...

Av: yeah. That's hurtful.

Grp shouting out words ... like giraffe ... like bird...

Av: um-hmmm

P9: they say you are 'uyaphapha' – you are flying like a bird ... *(uyaphapha means you are all over the place almost usually in an annoying manner/sometimes it means you cannot be trusted e.g. with a secret cause you don't know when to stop)*

Av: oh .. wow, ok. (someone says something...) what? They say ...

(The girls giggle and no one translates for me ...)

Av: yeah ... is it bad? Yeah? ... But now who does this in the school? Who does the hitting and the bad words? (pause) don't tell me names, tell me is it other learners, is it ... who? Who does it?

One of boys (P7?) others learners ...

Av: Other learners? Yeah. Are they older, or the same age as you? ... younger ...

P2: ... yes ...

Av: Younger, P2? (he shakes his head) older or the same?

(17:56) P9: older or the same ... everything

Av: (looking around the group at the heads nodding ...) older ... yes, older ... ? is it always the older children? From the time you start at school, is it always the older children?

Av: is it sometimes children on the same grade as you?

Grp: (nod) ... yes

Av: yes, also?

Grp: yes ...

(... must agree to everything she...)

Av: hey girls, who is it? The other learners ? are they older or the same grade?

Girls: older ...

Av: and do you get the older girls that beat the girls, or is it the boys that beat the girls also?

P9: boys ...

Av: so the boys beat the boys, and the girls beat the girls? Is that how it works?

Grp: nods ...

Av: do you ever have the girls violent for the boys?

(18:49) P9: yeah, sometime the boys are beating girls.

P3: (shouts loudly) Yes!

Av: ok. So sometimes you have the boys beating the younger girls, and sometimes it's the girls beating the girls ?

Group: yes ...

Av: do you ever have the girls beating the boys?

P9: ye-es ...

Av: so it works ... like ... all the time, hey?

P9 & P1: (fighting sound effects and making hitting motions with their hands and feet)

(Mumbling something in SiSwati)

Av: what else? Is there anyone else at school ... do the teachers ever? Who else does beating and shouting? Violence? Is it just the learners, or is also the teachers?

(19:26) grp: yes, also the teachers ... yes ...

Av: also the teachers?

(19:28) P9: yes, they are beating us with this (point to his belt buckle)

Av: With the belt buckle?

Boys: (nodding) ummm, yeah!

Av: when do they do that?

P1: .. and a stick ...

Av: a stick? The teacher's do that?

(19:39) P9: and the duster ... the duster from the front ...

Av: oh the board duster?

Boys: yeah!

Av: where? ...

(P9 demonstrates by stretching one hand out and hitting it with the other hand)

Av: oh, like that ...

P1 holds out his hand palm facing up, with the fingers all clumped together and pointing upwards.)

Av: so they either do it on your knuckles when your hand is flat, and sometimes you have to put your fingers up like this and they just do it on your fingertips?

Grp: (loudly) yes! (the girls and boys around P9 and P1 sit up and lean into the conversation, also showing me on their hands how they get hit, pained expressions on their faces).

Av: oh, it's sore, hey?!

Grp: yes ... (nodding)

Av: is it the men teachers or the women teachers?

P3: the men and the women ...

(20:00) P9: the men and the women...

Av: all of them?

Grp: yes.

Av: oooh. So when you come to the school do you just learn which is the teachers that hit and which are the teachers that don't?

P9: yes ...

(There is one)

P9: (pointing to a male teacher across from us outside a classroom, smiling and whispering conspiratorially) ... that one ...

Av: that one?

P9: yes ...

Av: are all of the teachers .. or some of the teachers that don't?

Grp: (discusses some names of teachers amongst themselves....)

P8: (demonstrates pinching upper arm on self and on P3)

Av: oh, she pinches your skin?

Grp: yes!!

Av: where does she do it on your body? On the arms?

Grp: yes, here ... (demonstrate on themselves)

Av: Ow!

(P8 and P3 also pinch on their flanks)

(20:42) Av: .. and here on the side of the stomach, also? ... ouch! That's sore, hey?

Grp: yes ... (quietly)

Av: and then do people cry in the class, what happens?

P9: o, you don't cry. If you cry (P3; Yes!) ... they beat you again.

(P3 laughs)

Av: oh really? So if you cry or you make a sound, they beat you more?

Grp: yes!

Av: ... and if you're quiet, they stop?

Grp: yes (quietly now, looking down)

Av: I see. That's difficult then, you have to keep it all in, hey?

Boys: yes ... (nodding heads)

Av: and what happens to the other people in the class? What do you do if somebody does it to P1? You're in the same class.

P9: they are laughing.

Av: laughing ...

Grp: yes...

Av: why are they laughing?

(saying something softly ... they are laughing at you!)

Av: so do you also do that when other people are being hit? Do you also laugh?

(look at each other and smile)

P9: we are laughing (looking down at his shoes)

(Others laugh softly ...)

Av: why? Why you do that? (pause) .. are you scared? ... why do you laugh when other people hurt, cause you didn't like it when they laugh when you are sore? ...(pause) But you do it.. so why do we do it? Are you scared, P3? (she nods)

What happens if you don't laugh?

P3 (quietly) we're scared ...

Av: hey? Do you sometimes feel you have to laugh? Even if you don't want to? (pause) ... Hey, if somebody else is being sore? And what happens afterwards when the person leaves the classroom? (pause) Does anybody go to them, or do people just ...(shrug shoulders) ... leave them and say bad things to them... or what happens?

(They are all quiet)

Av: like if you get beaten in the class then afterwards, do you go to your friends, or do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens?

(all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)

Av: dunno?

P9: it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)

Av: now tell me, do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?

(22:45) P9: yes! They say we have a big head.

Av: yeah?

Others: yes ...

Av: So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...

Grp is nodding ...

Av: so the teachers they do the hitting, but they also do the bad words?

Grp: yes ... nodding ...

Av: and the other learners, they do the hitting and the bad words? Other learners?

Grp: (softly) yes ... (nodding)

Av: yeah, both? And is it ever any other people that come in here and do violence? Into the school, from the outside? (pause)

(... no response)

Av: is the school locked? Do people come in, do people go out? What happens here? Because it looks very open to me, hey? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?

(23:30) P9: allowed to leave the school when it's break time

Av: ok. So do people come in to the school that are not learners? Does that happen here?

(Everyone quiet ... very little reaction or response from grp)

Av: No? Some of you are shaking heads. So does it not happen? (some nodding now and softly saying yes ...)

Av: what kind of people come in? Like adult or other learners (children)? What do they come in for? (pause) ...

(24:12) Av: so tell me when the teachers do the hitting, why do they hit? What happens and then they hit you, why? What do you do?

(P1 shows how the teacher hits)

Av: no before they hit you so why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?

(24:30) P9: we are making noise

Av: oh, if you're making noise in the class?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok ... so tell me a story when you made noise in the class. What happened? Tell me.

(24:46) P9: the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.

Av: were you talking to a friend sitting next to you? Yeah .. .and so the teacher shouts at you and says to stop talking, and you carry on and then what happens, does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?

Boys: (pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...

Av: where you are sitting, just hits you? Just like that?

Av: P3, tell me a story. You say that teachers sometimes do that (pinch own arm) pinching. What happened, what did you do? (pause) why does she come around and pinch you like that?

(P3: shakes her head.)

Av: so tell me when someone got hit with a shambok, what happened? What did they do that was so bad? Hey?

Boys: it's painful ...

Av: yeah, it's painful? But what do you think ... did you do something wrong? I'm trying to understand why they hit learners. What do you do that makes them angry that they hit like that? Like what kind of punishment... so you say if you talking in class, you get hit like this, hey? What makes a teacher hit with the stick.... what do you do wrong?

(26:03) P3: (point to her tie) your tie ...

Av: So when you are not wearing a tie? Yeah? So if you some to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?

Grp: nods heads

P3: ... you go out the school ...

Av: they tell you you must go out the school? .. really?

Grp: yes .. you must go home ...

Av: So if you don't have a tie ?

P3: yes ... (laughing)

Av: what else? (looking at P2) Do you get hit because you don't have a tie?

P2: (nods and smiles)

Av: where is your tie? (he is not wearing one) ...

P9: and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...

(P2 takes tie out of his pocket to show me) **it's in your pocket, ok ...**

Av: what happens if your clothes are ruined? (P2 shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side).

P1: .. also if you didn't do homework

Av: oh ... if you didn't do homework?

(26:38) P3: If I don't have school shoes ...

Others: yes...

Av: really? So your uniform, they're very angry about uniform? If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?

P9: or they tell you, you must go back home ...

Av: and what do you tell your parents? Cause sometimes you can't get new things. Sometimes it just gets damaged, hey?

(They shrug quietly)

Av: and do any of you tell your parents?

(Some people shake heads, others nod a little)

Av: what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)

P9: .. it's too difficult ...

Av: it's too difficult?

P9 .. yes (pause)

Av: and what else, what else do people do that makes you get hit? So it's the clothes, if you don't do your homework, if you talk ... is there anything else?

(grp quiet)

Av: if you're laughing in the class...

(28:02) Av: Do you sometimes ... is there ever when other learners do the beating cause the teachers in the class are not in the class ? ... where does the hitting happen with the other learners ?

Where do they hit you or do those things ... the older kids? Is it in the class, in the field .. is it where? Where does it happen?

(talking in siSwati a bit)

(28:40) Av: and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)

(No response)

Av: hey? Like in the city schools sometimes they have those. Do you have them here? Drugs and weapons ...

(Grp shaking heads ...)

Av: yes ...? (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) what do you guys say? No?

(someone in group says Yes)

Av: let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?

P9: ..no.

Av: no? (look at P2) Do you know?

(P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)

Av: yes? And you girls? Do you know people in the school that do drugs? (no answers) .. alcohol?

(29:17) Grp: yes ...

Av: alcohol, yes?

Grp nods

Av: ok, what kind of drugs?

P2: dagga ...

Av: dagga...? smoking drugs?

Other boys in grp: ya!

Av: is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?

Grp: (nod) yes ...

Av: normal cigarettes ... ? Does that happen in the school?

Someone in group ... says yes, the learners ...

Av: the learners? Do you see it here?

Some are shaking their heads ...

Av: no? Ok. Do you ever the alcohol in the school? Learners drinking alcohol in the school?

Grp: .. yes ...

Av: yes? (P8 shakes her head and says no) P8 you say no? Ok.

Av: and what about teachers? Do you see teachers drinking alcohol in the school?

(29:56) P9: no ...

(talking siSwati in group drinking in school, you are lying)

P9: (making smoking gestures & laughs)...

Av: ah, smoking?

P9: yes, she's smoking yeah ...

Av: but sometimes do the teachers come to school and they're drunk?

Grp shaking heads ...

Av: no? You haven't seen that? Ok.

Av: Do you see learners coming to school who are drunk?

(some say yes ... some shake their heads)

Av: no? Ok ... what about weapons? There's shambok and there's a stick. Do you ever see any other weapons in the school?

Boys: knives ...

Av: you see knives in the school? Sometimes learners have a knife?

Boys nod ...

Av: what else? Guns? Do you ever see guns at the school?

Boys: no!

Av: no? Girls do you ever see knife or guns?

(no answer)

Av: P6 have you ever seen it? Did you ever see anybody at school with a knife?

P6: ... (quietly) .. yes ...

Av: ok, so a knife, yes but guns, no...? so we have a knife but no guns, hey?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: so why do you think learners do that? Why do you think learners hit other learners? What makes them do that?

(31:11) P9: they think they're the boss.

Av: because they think they're the boss?

Boys: Yes ...

Av: yeah ... What about the girls? Why do the girls do it? ... hey? (girls are talking amongst themselves quietly). Hey, P3, why do you think people hit other people?

(P3 smiles and shrugs her shoulders)

(pause)

(31:41) P3: I feel painful ...

Av: You feel painful when they do it?

P3: me, I want to ... stop

P9: I want to call the police ...

Av: you want to call the police, hey? (grp nods) what will they do?

P9: the police will discipline you ...

Av: you .. or the person hitting you?

P9: the person that is hitting you ...

Av: yeah...

P9: the police are going to punish them ..

Av: have you ever had that here at this school where someone called the police?

P9: yes!

Av: yes? (grp nods)

Av: what happened?

Someone whispers ... take them away ...

Av: they take them away? (pause) what happened? What this person do? ...

P9: they are hitting them ...

Av: who was it? Someone in the school? (grp nods) Was it a fight.. what happened before the police came?

P9: .. they fight ...

Av: yeah ...

P9: they were fighting, and the one that have been beaten call the police.

Av: and who was it? Was it people / learners in the school?

Grp: yes ...

Av: where were they fighting?

(Boys pointing towards the open field used for sports)

Av: here, in the field?

P9: yes they were there ...

Av: oh, was it boys or girls?

Grp: boys ...

Av: two boys?

Grp ... yes

Av: how old were they? ... (whispers) Older than you?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and how did they fight? What with body? With weapons ...

P1 shows his fists ...

Av: fists? Like this... ? (boys nod & agree) ok,

P9: the teacher called them

Av: yeah ... and where were you? Were you in the class?

P9: naaaahh (shaking head and pointing to corridor in front)

Av: outside here ... ?

P9: yes, we were watching ...

Av: Did you also see it P2?

P2: yes ...

Girls ... and me ...

Av: shew, and then what happened?

P9: one of the boys called the police ...

Av (repeat) one of the boys called the police, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and then the police came (nodding) and they took the other boy away?

P9: yes, and they beat him ...

Av: and then they beat the boy? Wow.

(Boys: demonstrating beating actions with hands.)

Av: oh I see. Where here or at the police station?

(Boys motion behind them toward staff room)

P9: staffroom ...

Av: oh they come here, take the boy to the staff room

P9: yes...

Av: and then they beat up this boy?

Grp nods ... yes ...

Av: ok. What did they beat him with?

(Boys start demonstrating motions of hitting, kicking, punching ...)

Av: they kick him and hit him?

Boys: yes... (making fight motions and sounds ... talking among selves, laughing ..)

Av: and what happen to the other boy? (pause) the one that called the police?

P9: no nothing ...

Av: nothing, he was ok?

Grp; yes

Av: and what did the teachers do while boys were fighting? Hey... what did you say P8?

P8: they suspend ...

Av: but while all this was happening, did the teachers come and stop it or did they just stay in side?

P9: to stop it ...

Av : they tried to come and stop it?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... shew. Were you scared watching it? Hey ...

P9: .. yes ... (shyly)

Av: did you know the boys? (no response) Do you know why they were fighting?

Grp: shaking heads

Av: you don't know why? Did you just sort of see it start and then you knew there was a big fight?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: and what happened to that boy who was beaten by the teachers afterwards, did you see him afterwards?

Nodding heads

Av: did he come back to class? ... (some shaking heads) so what happened?

(35:30) P9 (whispering) he was in class ...

Av: he came back, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and he had to carry on being in school until he went home?

P9: yes ...

Av: and did he stop beating other people afterwards or was he doing better or not?

P9: better ...

Av: was he?

Grp: nodding ...

Av: so you think it worked? That the police came and the teachers were hitting him? Is that a good thing or not a good thing?

Grp: yes (nodding)

Av; it is? What would you have done P8? If you were the headmaster and you saw two boys fighting like that?

(36:12) P8: I'd call the police

Av: you would call the police also? But you are the teacher, you're the headmaster ... you are the person in charge of the whole school... the principal... (pause). You call the police and then what would you do? ...hmmm ... (pause) do you think the teachers and other people should stop hitting?

P9: yes ...

Av: what else could they do if they get angry? What should they do if they don't hit?

P9: sit and talk ...solve the problem ...

Av: solve the problem in other ways?

(someone in group talking with someone outside the grp in siSwati – I think?)

Av: so now tell me does it ever happen that in the school that you have incidents of like boys touching girls or doing things that they're not comfortable with? (pause) Like the girls do you ever have that?

Grp quiet, looking away

Av: have you ever heard of girls at the school that get abused in the school in a sexual way? Touched, or raped ... does that happen at the school? Have you ever heard that or seen it? (pause) ... yes or no ...

P9: No.

Av: (looking around group...) No? Have you ever heard of ... No? Girls? Have you ever heard stories about girls getting raped at the school? ... Touched funny ... touched in ways they're not comfortable with?

Grp shaking heads quietly

Av: tell me is that violence, or is that not violence? What do you think?

Grp: .. it's violence ...

Av: is it ...? (pause) If that happens at a school, is that violence or is it not violence? ... teach me ... (grp quiet) or is that not so important? (pause) What about teachers using their power over other learners to do things that they don't want to do, has that ever happened?

(Grp quiet)

Av: no? (someone nods ...) tell me like what? ... (no response) What about outside of the school? You said sometimes you have people come and they steal your goats and things, hey? What kind of violence happens outside of the school?

(No response from grp – some talk quietly, others look away.)

Av: ..hmmm? ... No? ... Ok, so I want to finish off and thank you so much for all this information. I want to go one by one and just ask you a question and you can either answer it in English or in your own language, it doesn't matter someone will translate. Ok? So if I say to you explain or describe violence. If I came from another country, and I didn't know what it means, ok? So I want you to say "I think violence is ..." and tell me what you think, ok?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok start with you P2. So you say: I think violence is ... tell me what you think (pause).. finish the sentence.. you can finish it n English or in your own language, it doesn't matter..

(quiet ...) say: I think violence is ... (pause) anything, anything you want to say. What's the first thing that comes in to your mind when I say violence at school

P2: I don't understand...

Av: ok, I say what comes to your mind, what do you think about when I say school violence ...?

P2: nothing ...

Av: nothing? But we just spoke about all these things, hey? What's the worst thing for you about the violence or maybe say to me ... do you want it to stop? Do you want school violence to stop?

P2: yes!

Av: ok, why? I want school violence to stop because ...

P2: because beating the children ...

Av: because beating the children, and what does that do? Why do you want it to stop?

P2: violence.

Av: yeah. What does violence do?

P2: crime

Av: crime... so you think violence makes crime? (he nods) and you want it to stop then? Ok, thank you. And P7?

(in the meanwhile, P9 and P8 are talking and P8 hits P9 on the head...)

P3: she's beating him!

Av: I see, hey! P8 you just hitting him ...

P9: yes ...

Av: Is that not violence?

P8: smiles

P3: she hit him like this on the head ... (demonstrates in the air)

Av: I know what did he do?

(they all laugh)

Av: hey? So is that not violence?

Grp: yes .. is violence ... so do you also hit people?

Grp nod head (some smiling)

Av: yeah? Who here hits other people have you ever hit other people, P6?

(grp calling P6 and translating)

Av: P6, have you ever hit other people?

(P6 they are talking to you)

P9: (translating for P6) yes ...

Av: why do you hit other people?

P9: but sometimes you are playing, you see ... (hits P8 'gently' and they both laugh and wriggle).

Av: oh, I see. So is that also violence or not violence when you just play-hitting?

P9: no it's not violence...

Av: so how do you know the difference? What's the difference if I do this (pretend to smack someone next to me)and I hit her hard and it's sore but we're friends or if I do this ... how do you know what the difference is, for instance if someone is play-hitting or if it's violence hitting?

P9: they are sad, you are not happy

(42; 48) Av: oh ok, but sometimes your friends hit you and it also hurts...

Grp: nodding & softly saying yes ...

Av: is it a different hurt? (grp nodding) How would I know the difference if I came? How would I know if I see people hitting how would I know which one is just play-hitting and which one is bully-fighting? Cause I don't know who is friends, you see? So how would I tell the difference?

P9: when they are playing .. you see that they are happy ...

Av: oh ok, so do I have to look at after the person gets hit? What they look like?

P9: ummm (affirmative)

Av: oh I see, ok. So if you hit P8 and she is smiling or she just does ... like ignore you ... then I can look at her and I can see it's ok, that was just play hitting?

P9& grp: yes ...

Av; and if it's violence, what would I see? The person looks sad?

Grp: yes ...

Av: show me sad... what is a sad face? Cause you're not allowed to cry hey?

(P1 and others demonstrate a 'sad' face – their eyes are downcast, they are frowning ...)

Av: sad ... angry? .. ok, so pouting like that with your lips out .. show me P1... how would I know that you've been hit.. violence not play? if someone hits you bad how would I know? Show me what you would look like ... head down, eyes down.. and you're all quiet?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... so if your friends saw you they would know that you just got hit by someone?

P9: yes ... (others nod)

Av: yeah, they would know? And you know if you see your friend? Do you know the difference?

Grp nod

Av: yeah? Ok I get it.

Boys: yes ... smiling ...

Av: so anybody else ... tell me P7.. .you want violence to stop because ? (pause) ... P1? You want violence to stop because ?

P1: because I don't want to kill the other people ...

Av: ok, and if we stop it then what?

P9: the people will feel free. Av: you'll feel free and you'll laugh .. ?

P9: yeah

Av: nice ...

P9: have happiness ...

Av: oh ... nice, you'll have happiness. What do you think P3? Talk, you have such brilliant ideas, hey? You must speak up .. you have such nice ideas... you mustn't be scared to talk, hey? You want school violence to stop because .. ?

(P3 discusses with P8, searching for the right word ...)

Av: say it in your language if it's easier ...

(They say you must say "you want violence to stop because ...She says she doesn't know)

Av: (Utsi akati??) you want it to stop hey?

P3: yes ...

Av: it's not good? (pause) and P4? (talking among themselves in siSwati) You want it to stop because? Hey ? (pause ...)

P4 whispers something ...

Av: because you'll be happy? (she nods and shyly looks down)... yeah? ... ok. Any thing else you wanna say to me? Anything I didn't ask?

P9: nothing ...

Av: nothing ... ?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok. So when I come back in august what are some of the things you want to work on? Are there specific things you want to do? To work on or learn about? ... in your life ... ?

P9: anything ...

Av: anything? What is important to you?

Someone in Grp: I want to learn and stay in school ...

Av: yes, that's important, hey? What's stopping you from having a good future?

P9: if you become pregnant ...

Av: yes, that's a problem ... do you have girls in the school that get pregnant and then they can't come back?

Grp : yes ...

Av: ok, thanks everyone.

**Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)**

Journal

Will I be chosen? (participant selection)

What a bumpy ride, but we finally get to the school. It is exactly as I had imagined. Simple, but surrounded by beauty. We walk behind our lecturer, apprehensive. Not really sure what is happening next. Awkward, I feel so out of place. We stand in the open 'quad' area between a u-shaped building waiting to be 'chosen' by the Grade 9 learners. They group together and we face off - a group of eager faces staring at each other on either side of the staff, who are introducing themselves and explaining what is about to happen. They stare at us, we smile and stare back. It seems almost comical, really. The moment finally arrives My heart leaps into my throat! My mind fills with 'what ifs...?'

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Reflection: The ice has melted

It had been an unpredictable day, starting off awkwardly but finishing on a positive note. The whispering, shy girls had bravely increased their interaction with me and those who were quiet were now persevering with broken English in an eager attempt to be heard and included. We moved the picnic blanket to a spot in the shade and sat down with the sponsored liquid-fruits and chips. It felt so comfortable and familiar – the awkwardness and distance of that morning long forgotten.

Girls were lazily leaning against each other, and the boys (again seemingly uninhibited by western gender stereotypes) were lying casually across one another. The group a tangle of legs and hair and wide smiles. The conversation flowed more easily about casual topics such as school and friends, boyfriends and future goals. I became eager about tomorrow's research focus group and tried to test the water a bit asking about crime in the community. They explained that there was quite a bit of theft (especially by foreigners, they added) of livestock and material goods. We spoke about what careers they were wanting to pursue for the future. A few were in the health professions and two in law enforcement and military. One even stated she would like to be the President of the country, but when I asked her why their responses seemed to focus more on their passion to help or protect others and to make things better.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

They have taken a lot longer on the written activities than I had estimated and it was already time for the break and then the focus group. Despite my concern that my group members had not shown me much openness that day, and my feelings that they would struggle with English, I decided to persist and stick to my original plan.

After the break, it took me quite some time to coax them into leaving their activity books and joining me for the discussion. There was very little space with shade and I was not sure where to place the blanket. I urged them to help me find a spot, but my urgency was clearly not theirs.

Eventually I simply put the blanket out on the shaded concrete against one of the classroom walls and invited them (with cold fruit juice in hand) to sit with me. As soon as I had poured the drinks, and began explaining about the digital recorders I realised I had not made a good choice and it would likely affect the quality of my discussion - but I continued regardless. The group was sitting in a straight line, leaning against the wall (not really in a circular formation which would have been more conducive to talking), and I was seated on a chair, higher than them, facing in - rather than being physically part of their group. They had also separated - boys facing me and to my right with the girls further down, with one boy sitting on his own to my left.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

The following are short notes / reflections of the focus group discussion:

* Girls are whispering, giggling and looking at me ... is it about the topic or something completely unrelated? Wish I knew what they're saying!

* Pg - group leader? Giving instructions to others... translating, instructing... warning?

* So distracted - looking at others, at own feet .. disinterested? Scared to talk? Don't understand?

* Talk of gossip and teasing, yet they talk and laugh at each other ... are they teasing each other as we speak? Do they realise the contradiction of what they say vs what they do?

* Like to demonstrate - language barrier? - more get involved when I ask to 'show me'. Even facial expression (angry) with physical action of hitting, kicking etc.

* Also demonstrate on each other & not softly! Is that not violence when one enacts it?

* Topic of parents / home = sore point? Look away, quiet .. withdraw.

* "it's difficult" to talk about? To explain to me? To live through?

* Teacher is shouting in class behind us ... is someone getting hit? Group looks around. Quiet. Some giggle into their hands

My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



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Hobbies & Interests

Things I like to do:

Things I can do well:

Things I am not good at:



Handwritten text describing hobbies and interests.

Things I LIKE most about going to school

Things I HATE most about going to school

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



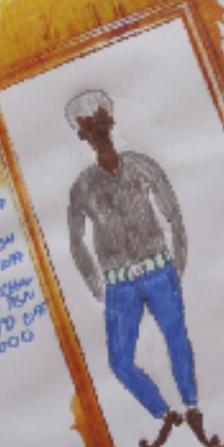
Handwritten notes on a board with various subject-related text.

My Reflection ...

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I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



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Handwritten notes on a board with various subject-related text.

Focus Group Interview – Analysis

Physical Violence
 Verbal Violence
 Emotional/Responses to violence
 Using violence to cope

Reasons for violence

7 June 2010

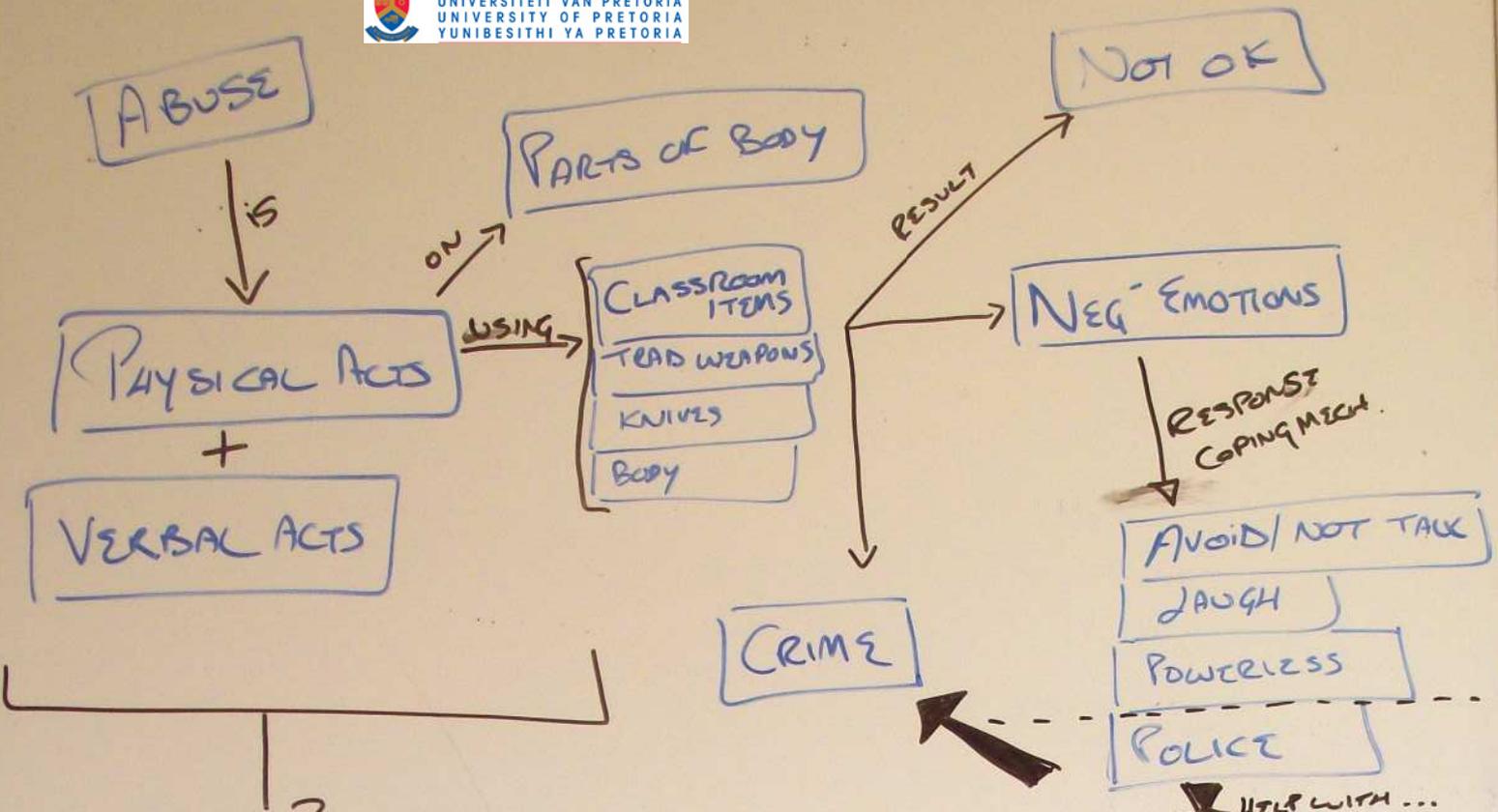
Avie	What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ...	
P9	Abuse of children They are beating people...	Phys violence / Aggression
Avie:	Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).	
P1	(very quietly): with shambok...	Traditional weapon (Masekover?)
P3	Xenophobia!	Foreigners / outsiders
Av:	From which country?	
Grp	Zimbabwe yes, and from Swaziland.... ... and Botswana ...	
Avie	where does it happen? The abuse ..?	
P9	In school and outside	
Avie	Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes? So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?	.
P3	We tell them ... (pause) to stop it. .. a meeting ...	Taking authority / action Negative response
Av	Who would you invite to your meeting?	
Grp	Teachers ..	
P4	The mothers and fathers... parents	
Avie	What are we going to say to them? (pause)	
P3	I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (struggling with words)	

	... yes ... stop! And the other learners	Don't like it / Negative response
Avie	... What does violence mean?	
P9	.. abuse ...	Physical / Power
Av	But what does abuse mean? (pause)	
P9	beating them ...	physical
Grp (girls)	gossiping ...	verbal / relationships
Boys	.. punishing ...	
P3	clean the windows and clean the class ...	discipline authority
Av	Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean So is that violence? (they nod in agreement)	
Av	You said beating – what do they use?	
P1 & P9	shambok, stick.... (P9) animates hitting / slapping with an open hand	traditional weapons physical
Av	With hands? ... Show me ..	
P1	(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)	Emotion linked to action
P9	(kicks with feet/leg)... and kick ...	
Av	.. and sometimes they kick, hey?	
P9	yes, kick ... (P1) also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)	Physical
P2	.. it's hard, hurting ..	
Av	Hurting ... how hurting?	
P2	Indicates his back (whipping action)	physical
Av	where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Grp point to different parts of body ...) Head ... face ...	
P3	...and in the stomach	
P9	...and on the bum	

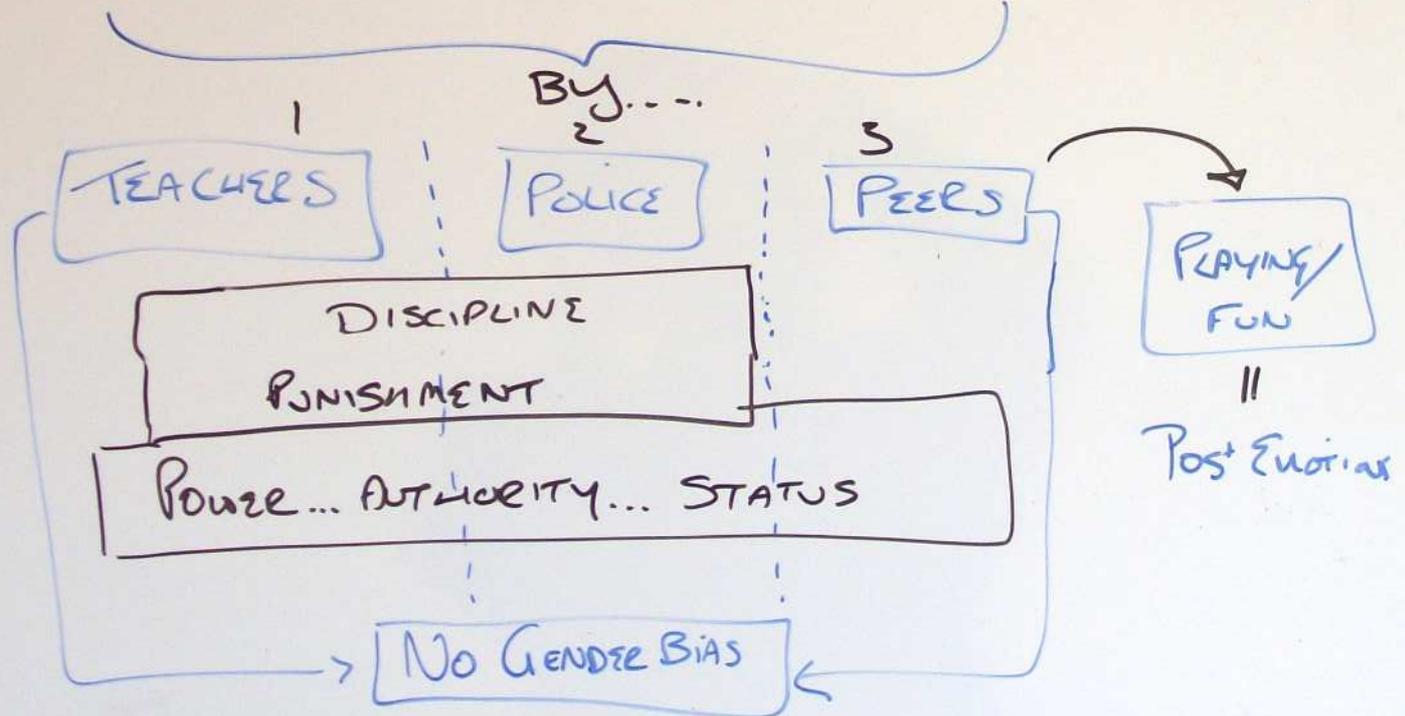
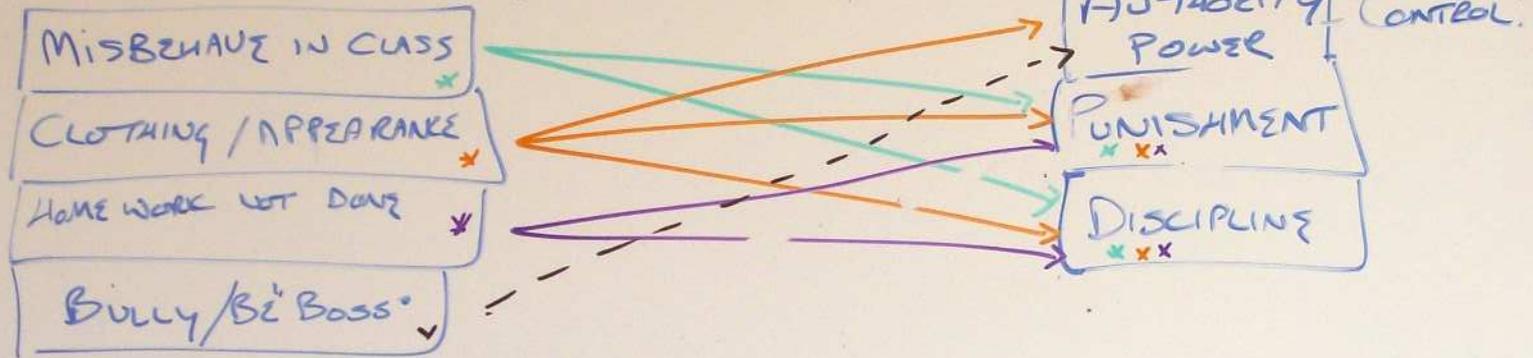
	do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens? (all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)	uncomfortable; don't want to talk about it?
P9	it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)	Response / emotion
av	do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?	Feeling inadequate?
P9	yes! They say we have a big head.	Verbal
av	So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...	
grp	Yes (nodding)	
av	is the school locked? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?	
P9	allowed to leave the school when it's break time	
av	When teachers hit you .. why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?	
P9	we are making noise the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.	Causes of Violence ↳ misbehaviour noisy - physical
av	does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?	
Boys	(pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...	physical - immediate/impulsive
av	What makes a teacher hit with the stick... what do you do wrong?	
P3	(point to her tie)	
av	So if you come to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?	② Clothing/appearance
grp	Yes! (Nodding)	
P3	... you go out the school ...	
P9	yes .. you must go home ... and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...	leave school go home embarrassed? Rejected? Punishment

av	what happens if your clothes are ruined? (Daniel shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side)	
P1	.. also if you didn't do homework	① misbehave
P3	If I don't have school shoes ...	② Appearance / Uniform
av	If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?	
P9	or they tell you , you must go back home ...	
av	and do any of you tell your parents? (Some people shake heads, others nod a little) what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)	Emotional Response Conflicted / Powerless no support @ home
P9	.. it's too difficult ...	
av	what else do people do that makes you get hit?	
P9	if you're laughing in the class...	misbehave
av	and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)	
grp	shaking heads ... (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) (someone in group says Yes)	-mixed replies!?
av	let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?	
P9	No... (P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)	
av	ok, what kind of drugs?	
P2	dagga ... (Other boys in grp: ya!)	
av	is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?	
grp	(nod) yes ...	

Ashley
Discipline



WHY?



15-POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.96)

Transcription

- The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.

Coding

1. Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
2. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
3. All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
4. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
5. Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

1. Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
2. Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
3. Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
4. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.

Overall

1. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.

Written report

1. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
2. There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
3. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
4. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

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TOPIC: LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF
SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

Thank you for participating in my research study. After our interesting conversation about school violence, this is what I understood. Please help me to make sure that I have understood you clearly and correctly.

Theme	1. Violence as Behaviour	2. Violence is Bad	3. Authority & Power
Category:	1.1 Beating children is violence (physical acts)	2.1 It's hard, hurting (negative emotions)	3.1 School discipline
	1.2 They call you names (verbal acts)	2.2 We're scared (coping mechanisms)	3.2 The police protect
		2.3 We're just playing (positive emotions)	

THEME 1: VIOLENCE AS BEHAVIOUR

Definition: Acts and behaviours that cause direct injury or harm (physical or psychological) to another.

THEME 2: VIOLENCE IS BAD

Definition: Emotional expressions/feelings associated with acts of school violence and how learners respond, or cope, emotionally when they experience violence at school.

THEME 3: AUTHORITY AND POWER

Definition: Instances when violence is used at school by people who wield some form of power or authority over another person, or when violence is used for purposes or punishment, discipline or to protect.



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Learner

Re: Participation in focus group discussions for research study

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria busy with my masters degree in Educational Psychology. I would like to understand more about school violence and how it affects you the learner. So I have decided to conduct my research here at your school. I want to hear about your experience, what is happening in your school and why you think it is happening. This research is separate to the career and learning assessments we will be doing together while I am here as well.

My study will involve talking openly together as a group (over two days) and sharing experiences about school violence. Your participation is not compulsory. If you choose to participate and then later decide you don't want to continue, it's ok. You can ask to leave the group and your decision will be respected.

Remember, this is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. I just wanting to share ideas with you and hear what you think about school violence. Your ideas will help me with all the information I need to put together a report for the University called a Dissertation, so that other people can also learn about what I have learned.

It is important for you to know that the report will not show the name of your school or your name, or any details that can identify you specifically. That information will be kept private and confidential. Your parents / caregivers as well as your teachers have been given a letter explaining why I am here, so they will know you participated in this group, but they will not have access to what you said or showed me. The only people who will know what was discussed in the group is all of you sitting here. So remember, it is important that if you choose to participate in the group, you must respect the other participants and not share what is said in the group with your friends, family or anyone else who was not in the group.

My intention is not to make you feel sad, uncomfortable or scared in any way, but we will be talking openly about experiences of school violence, and sometimes talking about such things can make a person feel sad or bad. If at any time you do feel upset for any reason, please talk to me. I have also arranged with your Life Orientation teacher, to be available if you might like to talk to someone about the feelings that you have as a result of our discussions.

After you have read and understood all this information about the research and what you will be required to do, please complete the bottom section of the page and **sign if you would like participate** in this research study. If you do not want to participate, just leave the form blank.
Thank you very much for your interest in the study and the support that you are giving me.

Avie Cherrington

Motlalepule Ruth Mampane

Researcher

Supervisor

083 475 8852

→.....←

Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Name of your School: _____

**I HAVE READ THE LETTER AND WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE
STUDY AT MY SCHOOL**

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

**FACULTY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa
<http://www.up.ac.za>

Dear Parent / Guardian

Re: Permission for your child to participate in a research project

My name is Avie Cherrington and I am a student at the University of Pretoria. I am busy with my masters' studies in Educational Psychology. To complete my study I am required to conduct research into a topic of interest in my professional field. The aim of my study is to help me better understand how learners in a South African school define and experience school violence. The study involves various activities and group discussions with the learners (held over two days) which will take place during school time.

I do not foresee that your child will experience any harm or risk as a result of participating in the study. However, the activity will require him/her to talk openly with other learners about his/her ideas and experiences of violence at school. While I will encourage everyone in the group to be respectful and ask them to not share what is said in the group with others, it is not something that I can guarantee.

Participation is voluntary and if any learner feels, at any time, that he/she does not want to participate, he/she will be able to leave the study without penalty or punishment. Furthermore, I have spoken to the Life Orientation teacher who is willing to help those learners who feel uncomfortable or upset as a result of participating in this discussion.

The name of your child will remain confidential. This means that when I write the results of the study I will not mention the name of your child or the school, and any comments he/she made will remain anonymous. My supervisor will be the only person with access to the information, but even she will not know the names of the learners.

I would appreciate your consent and assent as the parent / guardian of the learner to allow him/ her to participate in this study by signing the form at the bottom section of this page.

I will explain the research process to your child beforehand and will ensure that he/she gives his/her assent as well.

Thank you,

Avie Cherrington, Researcher

083 475 8852

Supervisor - Ruth Mampane

Lecturer, University of Pretoria

Tel: 012-420 2339, Fax: 012-420 5511

→.....←

I.....

Parent/guardian of (*name of learner*)

Have read and understood what the study is about and hereby **give** consent and assent for **him/ her** to participate in the study (circle the relevant option) through focus group discussions.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

→.....←

Research Planning Schedule:

First Visit

April 14, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & explain next two days
Explain goals of project & discuss informed consent / assent
- 10h30: Hand out t-shirts, begin craft activity
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Tour of school with participants
- 12h30: Snacks & reflection circle
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues



April 15, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30: Summary of previous day
- 9h45: Work books handed out and activities explained
- 10h30: Random individual discussions
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: Continue with workbooks and individual discussions
- 12h30: Snacks and focus group discussion
- 13h00: Reflection circle & closure
- 14h00: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Second Visit

August 4, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school
Meet with teachers & students
- 10h00: Introduce self & recap from previous session
- 10h30: Hand back booklet, allow time for decorating
cover & completing worksheets from previous visit
- 11h00: Meal break
- 11h30: My flower garden posters; Individual discussion & feedback with quadrant maps
- 12h45: Snacks & member checking
- 13h00: Pack vehicles & depart for accommodation
- 16h30: Reflect on day's activities
- 18h00: Briefing session with supervisor & colleagues

August 5, 2010:

- 9h00: Arrive at school & set up
- 9h30 - 12h30 Career expo Grade 12's to Grade 9's
- 13h00: Reflection circle with group & closure
- 13h30: Pack vehicles & depart for Pretoria



Transcription: Focus Group Interview

15 April 2010

NOTE: *Bold comments in this font are transcribed from siSwati conversation*

Someone in background: (Don't tell her... Don't ask she will write your question)

(00:10) Av: **Ok, right. So can you all hear me? Good.**

Thank you everybody. (Let me ask) So now, what I wanted to talk to you about... I want to understand ... I've spoken to children at other schools and they all tell me that there is a lot of violence that goes on in schools and sometimes it is difficult for them to do their school, and to really do as well as they want to because it is difficult. So I want to find out from you guys what it is like here in this school. So when I say to you 'school violence'... what does that mean to you? (pause)

What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ... (pause)

(00:55) P9: Abuse of children

Av (repeat): Abuse of children.

(pause)

[P8 & P3 talking softly] *Speak out loud.*

Av: What's that?

[SiSwati - mumbling]

Av: What's that? P3 what did you say? Just say it out loud. There's no right or wrong. I'm here to learn from you. I don't know what is right. (pause). What does it mean to you? If I say school violence... teach me, what is it? (pause – everyone is looking away or at the floor).

You said before it is the 'abuse of children'. What is abuse? What does it mean? (pause) Say it in your language and ask someone to translate for me. Just tell me. If it's hard for you to say it in English, just say it in your language. (long pause)

(01:49) P9: They are beating people...

Av: Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).

(02:04) P1 (very quietly): with sjambok...

Av: ... with a sjambok?

P1: yeah (nods).

P9 to group: *[Talk people you will be in trouble ... I hope she broadcasts you in the news (daring the group)]* Giggling. P3, looks intently at me, seems like there are words on the tip of her tongue. She gestures with her hand in front of her mouth.

Av: ... yes, tell me P3. You're dying to say something.

P9: *[Whispers]*

(Pause)

P8 mumbles something under her breath.

Av: I can't hear you P8...

(she looks at me and P3, shakes her head & looks down)

[This one is delaying us we want to finish writing] [grp converse in siSwati]

(silence. The grp look around at others playing around us or at their feet)

(02:45) P3: Xenophobia!

Av: (repeat) xenophobia? So that's also violence? Ok, that's good ... so does that mean ... what does xenophobia mean? That they come from another country?

(group nod... some say 'yes' softly)

Av: Which other country?

Group call out: Zimbabwe

Av: ... yes.... (pause) Do you have that in your school? (pause). Are there learners here from Zimbabwe?

Group: ... yes, and from Swaziland....

Av: yes, and from where else?

Someone in grp: and Botswana ...

[Get out of here.... to someone walking past]

Av: .. but what happens? Do they abuse children, or do children abuse them? which way does it work?

[I will beat you] [This thing does not count]

...talking softly/can't hear ...

(03:39) Av: And does it happen in the school grounds, or outside... where does it happen? The abuse ..?

P9: In school and outside.

Av: Both, hey?

P9: Yes, both.

Av: Tell me what happens in the school. Have you ever seen people or instances? Tell me a story, has there been violence in the school?

(pause)

Av: You've been here a long time, have you ever seen violence inside the school? Tell me the stories... have you seen people, or heard people tell you stories? You don't have to tell me names, just what happens.

(pause)

(04h43) Av: Do things happen or do they not happen? Yes, no? (some look at me nodding, some look away. No-one answers). Have you all seen things, yes or no? (pause)

Av: What about you boys, do you see problems of violence in the school?(pause) ... No?

(silence)

Av: is it something we shouldn't talk about? Is that why? You all look away or smile, why is it difficult? (teacher shouting in background). Is it difficult because you are scared something will happen if you talk about it, or difficult because you don't want to remember it? Why is it difficult?

(pause silence)

Av: what about you P4? (pause – no reply) Is it difficult? Why?

Av: Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes?

So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?

P3: We tell them ... (pause)

Av: yeah, we tell them what?

P3: to stop it.

Av: yes we must stop it, but how do we stop it if we don't know that it happens? Because I am going to leave here and I'm going to say: No, it doesn't happen here... they all say to me, no it's fine. So I'm going to say to people in government and university: Don't worry about {name of school}. In Mpumalanga, it doesn't happen. Is that what you want me to go and say? (pause)

Because that's the information you're giving me. So if you wanna make a difference ...(pause) ... this is your chance. What can we do about it? (pause) If it happens, I need to know that it happens, so I can tell people.

(silence)

Av: Remember you don't have to tell me names, nobody else hears this, it's only me. They won't know it's this school. (pause.... long silence).

Where's P5... you wanted to be president, hey? (P9 laughs quietly, P5 smiles shyly). And you're sitting there very quietly. What would the president do? Do you think the president is happy about this? Do you think the president doesn't have children who go to schools? If you were president what would you do, wouldn't you want to change it?

(08:30) P3: Invite them to meeting

Av: Yeah, invite the meeting? Who would come to the meeting? (others whisper, answer softly). Who would you invite ... all the learners, or the teachers, or people outside? Who would you invite to your meeting?

Grp: Teachers ...

Av: Um uh. And ... (pause).

(P3 softly says something)

Av: The mothers and fathers... parents (repeating what is being said)? Ok, thanks P4. And what would we talk about?

(silence)

[It's not coming out (making fun of her because she was struggling with words)]

Av: (picking up words in conversation) Oh, about the xenophobia. Ok so what are we going to say to them? What about the xenophobia are we going to say to them? (pause) we say what.. you must stop it... what are we going to say? Tell me. (pause)

We have this meeting and everybody is here. What are we going to say to them? (pause)

[Talk, speak up]

(10:05) P3: I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (*struggling with words*)

Av: ... so the parents must tell the children ...

P3: yes ... stop! And the other learners

(P8 giggling)

Av: (repeats) ... stop. And if I'm a learner ... yes, so you must stop being violent with the other learners just because they come from another country doesn't mean you must hit them, hey?

Group: yes ... yes.

Av: But now, if I'm the child, and I say: But I'm not doing anything... what am I doing? What would you say? What am I doing that tells you that it's violence? What am I doing that is violent? (pause) ... What does violence mean?

(silence ... *talking softly in siSwati*)

(10:59) P9: abuse ...

Av: But what does abuse mean? (pause) like what do they actually do? Show me or tell me ...

P9: beating them ...

Av: (repeat) ... beating them, yeah.

Girls: gossiping ...

Av: (repeat) .. gossiping, ok...

Boys: yeah ... gossiping.

(*grp talking in siSwati*)

Boys: .. punishing ...

Av: (repeat) punishing ... yes, like what kind of punishment?

(*talking in siSwati !?*)

P3: clean the windows and clean the class ...

(11:39) **Av: Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean**

(*siSwati !!*)

Av: so is that violence?

They nod...

Av: yeah? Ok. And tell me, so you said .. let's take these .. so you said beating, so that's when you hit someone? What do they hit with? You said shambok, stick ... (P1 & P9 nod, yes) .. anything else they use?

(12:04) P1: Sjambok!

Av: yes, shambok... and a stick? (group: yes ...)

(P9 animates hitting / slapping with an open hand)

(12:12) Av: with hands?

P9: *(makes whack/pow sound as demonstrates)* Yes!

Av: show me ..

P1: *(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)*

Av: ... and a fist P1? Yes, the fist .. ok. I see so sometimes they use the hand like this (demo an open-handed slap) and sometimes ...

P9: *(kicks with feet/leg)...* and kick ...

Av: .. and sometimes they kick, hey?

P9: yes, kick ... *(P1 also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)*

Av: good, thank you.

(12:29) P2: .. it's hard, hurting ..

Av: It's hard P2? .. Hurting ... how hurting? With the body or with something ...

P2 points to his back *(whipping action)*

Av: here on the back?

P2: ya.

Av: hmm, that's good. I didn't know. So they hit you on the back. where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Where on your body? (pause) where do they do it? Where, where, where ... show me...

(Grp point to different parts of body ...)

Av: everything, your head and your face? Everything ...

Grp: yes!

(12:59) P3: and in the stomach.

Av: and the stomach also? ...

P9: and on the bum.

Av: do they? Do they turn you around and bend you, like this? (demo hitting someone with open hand on the bum).

Grp: yes ...

Avie: and the back, P2, you said also on the back?

P2: yes on the back like this ...

Av: really, on the back? ... and boys and girls also?

Grp ... yes ...

Av: ... Also the girls?

Av: ... and boys? (grp nods). Do you think it is different, the way they do it for boys and for girls? Or is it the same?

P9: it's the same.

Av: so they don't care that if you are a girl ... they do it less ..

P9: ... they don't care ...

Av: does it matter?

P9: .. no it doesn't.

Av: no? The same thing. It's not different for boys and girls? (they nod) ok.

(13:47) Av: and tell me, when you say things like bully. What is bully? What does it mean? (pause) .. when somebody is a bully?

Someone in group: bully ...

Av: ya, when they are bullying... you said here gossiping and bullying... so what is a bully

(grp is talking softly – not sure what?)

Av: .. is it also beating?

Group: yes! *(loudly and firmly)*

(talking in grp siSwati)

Av: so what is it though? What does it mean if someone is bullied? Who is the bully?

(14:16) P9: I can think of the word in siSwati ... bullying

Av: what is the word in siSwati for bullying?

Grp: Kushaya ... (to hit/beat)

Av: (writing it down) And what's the word for violence?

Amos: Um ...?

Av: oh spell that ...

Grp: ...k ... u ...a.. h ...*(get confused)*.. *Kuhlukumeta (to abuse)*

Av: you write it for me ... I'm not writing it properly.

P9 writes it down the others look over his shoulder.

(P7 says something in siSwati)

Av: ok ... so that's violence hey? And beating and things like that? And what about things like gossiping. Is that also violence?

P9: .. i think so ...

Av: cause gossiping is what? (pause) when people talk about you, hey...

Grp: hmmm *(in agreement)*

Av: so is that also violence?

P3: yes!

(15:15) Av: yeah. And what do they say? (pause) what do they say that's violent? That's horrible? (pause) what kind of things do they say? (pause – everyone is quiet, look at floor or away.)

Av: Like what are the mean things they would say that hurt? (pause)

(15:38) Av: what hurts more the things they say, or when they hit? (some heads shaking some nodding) ... (pause) what do you think P7? What is ... worse, the hitting or the talking? What hurts more?

P7: (thinking)

(15:59) Grp members (probably P3 and P9): The hitting (others add in) hitting... hitting..

Av: and for you? (looking at P7)

P7: ... hitting ...

Av: ok, you also think the hitting? So the hitting is more bad than the ... bad words. So the bad words is not as bad?

(16:14) P9: is bad! They call you names ... it hurts. They say like ... you're foolish ... (struggling for words, pained expressions on his face)

Av: yeah, so they're saying you're stupid? You're a fool?

Others: yeah ... stupid!

(You are a fool everything!)

Av: do they ever ... do people say things to you about your family or something?

P9: yes ... (???)

Av: it hurts, yeah? Do people

Grp: yes ...

Av: yes ... it also hurts ... yeah? Do people do that? (nodding heads ... pause)

Av: tell me some of the things you've heard people say... maybe they say it to other people, it doesn't matter what do you think is the most hurtful things to say? (pause)

(17:00) Grp: you look like a monkey ...

Av: like a monkey? Oh no.

P1 and P9 start making monkey movements (scratching body, facial expressions)

Av: (someone in grp whispers baboon) ... like a baboon?

Grp: yes ...

Av: yeah. That's hurtful.

Grp shouting out words ... like giraffe ... like bird...

Av: um-hmmm

P9: they say you are 'uyaphapha' – you are flying like a bird ... *(uyaphapha means you are all over the place almost usually in an annoying manner/sometimes it means you cannot be trusted e.g. with a secret cause you don't know when to stop)*

Av: oh .. wow, ok. (someone says something...) what? They say ...

(The girls giggle and no one translates for me ...)

Av: yeah ... is it bad? Yeah? ... But now who does this in the school? Who does the hitting and the bad words? (pause) don't tell me names, tell me is it other learners, is it ... who? Who does it?

One of boys (P7?) others learners ...

Av: Other learners? Yeah. Are they older, or the same age as you? ... younger ...

P2: ... yes ...

Av: Younger, P2? (he shakes his head) older or the same?

(17:56) P9: older or the same ... everything

Av: (looking around the group at the heads nodding ...) older ... yes, older ... ? is it always the older children? From the time you start at school, is it always the older children?

Av: is it sometimes children on the same grade as you?

Grp: (nod) ... yes

Av: yes, also?

Grp: yes ...

(... must agree to everything she...)

Av: hey girls, who is it? The other learners ? are they older or the same grade?

Girls: older ...

Av: and do you get the older girls that beat the girls, or is it the boys that beat the girls also?

P9: boys ...

Av: so the boys beat the boys, and the girls beat the girls? Is that how it works?

Grp: nods ...

Av: do you ever have the girls violent for the boys?

(18:49) P9: yeah, sometime the boys are beating girls.

P3: (shouts loudly) Yes!

Av: ok. So sometimes you have the boys beating the younger girls, and sometimes it's the girls beating the girls ?

Group: yes ...

Av: do you ever have the girls beating the boys?

P9: ye-es ...

Av: so it works ... like ... all the time, hey?

P9 & P1: (fighting sound effects and making hitting motions with their hands and feet)

(Mumbling something in SiSwati)

Av: what else? Is there anyone else at school ... do the teachers ever? Who else does beating and shouting? Violence? Is it just the learners, or is also the teachers?

(19:26) grp: yes, also the teachers ... yes ...

Av: also the teachers?

(19:28) P9: yes, they are beating us with this (point to his belt buckle)

Av: With the belt buckle?

Boys: (nodding) ummm, yeah!

Av: when do they do that?

P1: .. and a stick ...

Av: a stick? The teacher's do that?

(19:39) P9: and the duster ... the duster from the front ...

Av: oh the board duster?

Boys: yeah!

Av: where? ...

(P9 demonstrates by stretching one hand out and hitting it with the other hand)

Av: oh, like that ...

P1 holds out his hand palm facing up, with the fingers all clumped together and pointing upwards.)

Av: so they either do it on your knuckles when your hand is flat, and sometimes you have to put your fingers up like this and they just do it on your fingertips?

Grp: (loudly) yes! (the girls and boys around P9 and P1 sit up and lean into the conversation, also showing me on their hands how they get hit, pained expressions on their faces).

Av: oh, it's sore, hey?!

Grp: yes ... (nodding)

Av: is it the men teachers or the women teachers?

P3: the men and the women ...

(20:00) P9: the men and the women...

Av: all of them?

Grp: yes.

Av: oooh. So when you come to the school do you just learn which is the teachers that hit and which are the teachers that don't?

P9: yes ...

(There is one)

P9: (pointing to a male teacher across from us outside a classroom, smiling and whispering conspiratorially) ... that one ...

Av: that one?

P9: yes ...

Av: are all of the teachers .. or some of the teachers that don't?

Grp: (discusses some names of teachers amongst themselves....)

P8: (demonstrates pinching upper arm on self and on P3)

Av: oh, she pinches your skin?

Grp: yes!!

Av: where does she do it on your body? On the arms?

Grp: yes, here ... (demonstrate on themselves)

Av: Ow!

(P8 and P3 also pinch on their flanks)

(20:42) Av: .. and here on the side of the stomach, also? ... ouch! That's sore, hey?

Grp: yes ... (quietly)

Av: and then do people cry in the class, what happens?

P9: o, you don't cry. If you cry (P3; Yes!) ... they beat you again.

(P3 laughs)

Av: oh really? So if you cry or you make a sound, they beat you more?

Grp: yes!

Av: ... and if you're quiet, they stop?

Grp: yes (quietly now, looking down)

Av: I see. That's difficult then, you have to keep it all in, hey?

Boys: yes ... (nodding heads)

Av: and what happens to the other people in the class? What do you do if somebody does it to P1? You're in the same class.

P9: they are laughing.

Av: laughing ...

Grp: yes...

Av: why are they laughing?

(saying something softly ... they are laughing at you!)

Av: so do you also do that when other people are being hit? Do you also laugh?

(look at each other and smile)

P9: we are laughing (looking down at his shoes)

(Others laugh softly ...)

Av: why? Why you do that? (pause) .. are you scared? ... why do you laugh when other people hurt, cause you didn't like it when they laugh when you are sore? ...(pause) But you do it.. so why do we do it? Are you scared, P3? (she nods)

What happens if you don't laugh?

P3 (quietly) we're scared ...

Av: hey? Do you sometimes feel you have to laugh? Even if you don't want to? (pause) ... Hey, if somebody else is being sore? And what happens afterwards when the person leaves the classroom? (pause) Does anybody go to them, or do people just ...(shrug shoulders) ... leave them and say bad things to them... or what happens?

(They are all quiet)

Av: like if you get beaten in the class then afterwards, do you go to your friends, or do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens?

(all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)

Av: dunno?

P9: it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)

Av: now tell me, do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?

(22:45) P9: yes! They say we have a big head.

Av: yeah?

Others: yes ...

Av: So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...

Grp is nodding ...

Av: so the teachers they do the hitting, but they also do the bad words?

Grp: yes ... nodding ...

Av: and the other learners, they do the hitting and the bad words? Other learners?

Grp: (softly) yes ... (nodding)

Av: yeah, both? And is it ever any other people that come in here and do violence? Into the school, from the outside? (pause)

(... no response)

Av: is the school locked? Do people come in, do people go out? What happens here? Because it looks very open to me, hey? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?

(23:30) P9: allowed to leave the school when it's break time

Av: ok. So do people come in to the school that are not learners? Does that happen here?

(Everyone quiet ... very little reaction or response from grp)

Av: No? Some of you are shaking heads. So does it not happen? (some nodding now and softly saying yes ...)

Av: what kind of people come in? Like adult or other learners (children)? What do they come in for? (pause) ...

(24:12) Av: so tell me when the teachers do the hitting, why do they hit? What happens and then they hit you, why? What do you do?

(P1 shows how the teacher hits)

Av: no before they hit you so why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?

(24:30) P9: we are making noise

Av: oh, if you're making noise in the class?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok ... so tell me a story when you made noise in the class. What happened? Tell me.

(24:46) P9: the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.

Av: were you talking to a friend sitting next to you? Yeah .. .and so the teacher shouts at you and says to stop talking, and you carry on and then what happens, does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?

Boys: (pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...

Av: where you are sitting, just hits you? Just like that?

Av: P3, tell me a story. You say that teachers sometimes do that (pinch own arm) pinching. What happened, what did you do? (pause) why does she come around and pinch you like that?

(P3: shakes her head.)

Av: so tell me when someone got hit with a shambok, what happened? What did they do that was so bad? Hey?

Boys: it's painful ...

Av: yeah, it's painful? But what do you think ... did you do something wrong? I'm trying to understand why they hit learners. What do you do that makes them angry that they hit like that? Like what kind of punishment... so you say if you talking in class, you get hit like this, hey? What makes a teacher hit with the stick.... what do you do wrong?

(26:03) P3: (point to her tie) your tie ...

Av: So when you are not wearing a tie? Yeah? So if you some to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?

Grp: nods heads

P3: ... you go out the school ...

Av: they tell you you must go out the school? .. really?

Grp: yes .. you must go home ...

Av: So if you don't have a tie ?

P3: yes ... (laughing)

Av: what else? (looking at P2) Do you get hit because you don't have a tie?

P2: (nods and smiles)

Av: where is your tie? (he is not wearing one) ...

P9: and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...

(P2 takes tie out of his pocket to show me) *it's in your pocket, ok ...*

Av: what happens if your clothes are ruined? (P2 shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side).

P1: .. also if you didn't do homework

Av: oh ... if you didn't do homework?

(26:38) P3: If I don't have school shoes ...

Others: yes...

Av: really? So your uniform, they're very angry about uniform? If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?

P9: or they tell you, you must go back home ...

Av: and what do you tell your parents? Cause sometimes you can't get new things. Sometimes it just gets damaged, hey?

(They shrug quietly)

Av: and do any of you tell your parents?

(Some people shake heads, others nod a little)

Av: what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)

P9: .. it's too difficult ...

Av: it's too difficult?

P9 .. yes (pause)

Av: and what else, what else do people do that makes you get hit? So it's the clothes, if you don't do your homework, if you talk ... is there anything else?

(grp quiet)

Av: if you're laughing in the class...

(28:02) Av: Do you sometimes ... is there ever when other learners do the beating cause the teachers in the class are not in the class ? ... where does the hitting happen with the other learners ?

Where do they hit you or do those things ... the older kids? Is it in the class, in the field .. is it where? Where does it happen?

(talking in siSwati a bit)

(28:40) Av: and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)

(No response)

Av: hey? Like in the city schools sometimes they have those. Do you have them here? Drugs and weapons ...

(Grp shaking heads ...)

Av: yes ...? (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) what do you guys say? No?

(someone in group says Yes)

Av: let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?

P9: ..no.

Av: no? (look at P2) Do you know?

(P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)

Av: yes? And you girls? Do you know people in the school that do drugs? (no answers) .. alcohol?

(29:17) Grp: yes ...

Av: alcohol, yes?

Grp nods

Av: ok, what kind of drugs?

P2: dagga ...

Av: dagga...? smoking drugs?

Other boys in grp: ya!

Av: is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?

Grp: (nod) yes ...

Av: normal cigarettes ... ? Does that happen in the school?

Someone in group ... says yes, the learners ...

Av: the learners? Do you see it here?

Some are shaking their heads ...

Av: no? Ok. Do you ever the alcohol in the school? Learners drinking alcohol in the school?

Grp: .. yes ...

Av: yes? (P8 shakes her head and says no) P8 you say no? Ok.

Av: and what about teachers? Do you see teachers drinking alcohol in the school?

(29:56) P9: no ...

(talking siSwati in group drinking in school, you are lying)

P9: (making smoking gestures & laughs)...

Av: ah, smoking?

P9: yes, she's smoking yeah ...

Av: but sometimes do the teachers come to school and they're drunk?

Grp shaking heads ...

Av: no? You haven't seen that? Ok.

Av: Do you see learners coming to school who are drunk?

(some say yes ... some shake their heads)

Av: no? Ok ... what about weapons? There's shambok and there's a stick. Do you ever see any other weapons in the school?

Boys: knives ...

Av: you see knives in the school? Sometimes learners have a knife?

Boys nod ...

Av: what else? Guns? Do you ever see guns at the school?

Boys: no!

Av: no? Girls do you ever see knife or guns?

(no answer)

Av: P6 have you ever seen it? Did you ever see anybody at school with a knife?

P6: ... (quietly) .. yes ...

Av: ok, so a knife, yes but guns, no...? so we have a knife but no guns, hey?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: so why do you think learners do that? Why do you think learners hit other learners? What makes them do that?

(31:11) P9: they think they're the boss.

Av: because they think they're the boss?

Boys: Yes ...

Av: yeah ... What about the girls? Why do the girls do it? ... hey? (girls are talking amongst themselves quietly). Hey, P3, why do you think people hit other people?

(P3 smiles and shrugs her shoulders)

(pause)

(31:41) P3: I feel painful ...

Av: You feel painful when they do it?

P3: me, I want to ... stop

P9: I want to call the police ...

Av: you want to call the police, hey? (grp nods) what will they do?

P9: the police will discipline you ...

Av: you .. or the person hitting you?

P9: the person that is hitting you ...

Av: yeah...

P9: the police are going to punish them ..

Av: have you ever had that here at this school where someone called the police?

P9: yes!

Av: yes? (grp nods)

Av: what happened?

Someone whispers ... take them away ...

Av: they take them away? (pause) what happened? What this person do? ...

P9: they are hitting them ...

Av: who was it? Someone in the school? (grp nods) Was it a fight.. what happened before the police came?

P9: .. they fight ...

Av: yeah ...

P9: they were fighting, and the one that have been beaten call the police.

Av: and who was it? Was it people / learners in the school?

Grp: yes ...

Av: where were they fighting?

(Boys pointing towards the open field used for sports)

Av: here, in the field?

P9: yes they were there ...

Av: oh, was it boys or girls?

Grp: boys ...

Av: two boys?

Grp ... yes

Av: how old were they? ... (whispers) Older than you?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and how did they fight? What with body? With weapons ...

P1 shows his fists ...

Av: fists? Like this... ? (boys nod & agree) ok,

P9: the teacher called them

Av: yeah ... and where were you? Were you in the class?

P9: naaaahh (shaking head and pointing to corridor in front)

Av: outside here ... ?

P9: yes, we were watching ...

Av: Did you also see it P2?

P2: yes ...

Girls ... and me ...

Av: shew, and then what happened?

P9: one of the boys called the police ...

Av (repeat) one of the boys called the police, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and then the police came (nodding) and they took the other boy away?

P9: yes, and they beat him ...

Av: and then they beat the boy? Wow.

(Boys: demonstrating beating actions with hands.)

Av: oh I see. Where here or at the police station?

(Boys motion behind them toward staff room)

P9: staffroom ...

Av: oh they come here, take the boy to the staff room

P9: yes...

Av: and then they beat up this boy?

Grp nods ... yes ...

Av: ok. What did they beat him with?

(Boys start demonstrating motions of hitting, kicking, punching ...)

Av: they kick him and hit him?

Boys: yes... (making fight motions and sounds ... talking among selves, laughing ..)

Av: and what happen to the other boy? (pause) the one that called the police?

P9: no nothing ...

Av: nothing, he was ok?

Grp; yes

Av: and what did the teachers do while boys were fighting? Hey... what did you say P8?

P8: they suspend ...

Av: but while all this was happening, did the teachers come and stop it or did they just stay in side?

P9: to stop it ...

Av : they tried to come and stop it?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... shew. Were you scared watching it? Hey ...

P9: .. yes ... (shyly)

Av: did you know the boys? (no response) Do you know why they were fighting?

Grp: shaking heads

Av: you don't know why? Did you just sort of see it start and then you knew there was a big fight?

Grp: ... yes ...

Av: and what happened to that boy who was beaten by the teachers afterwards, did you see him afterwards?

Nodding heads

Av: did he come back to class? ... (some shaking heads) so what happened?

(35:30) P9 (whispering) he was in class ...

Av: he came back, hey?

Grp: yes ...

Av: and he had to carry on being in school until he went home?

P9: yes ...

Av: and did he stop beating other people afterwards or was he doing better or not?

P9: better ...

Av: was he?

Grp: nodding ...

Av: so you think it worked? That the police came and the teachers were hitting him? Is that a good thing or not a good thing?

Grp: yes (nodding)

Av; it is? What would you have done P8? If you were the headmaster and you saw two boys fighting like that?

(36:12) P8: I'd call the police

Av: you would call the police also? But you are the teacher, you're the headmaster ... you are the person in charge of the whole school... the principal... (pause). You call the police and then what would you do? ...hmmm ... (pause) do you think the teachers and other people should stop hitting?

P9: yes ...

Av: what else could they do if they get angry? What should they do if they don't hit?

P9: sit and talk ...solve the problem ...

Av: solve the problem in other ways?

(someone in group talking with someone outside the grp in siSwati – I think?)

Av: so now tell me does it ever happen that in the school that you have incidents of like boys touching girls or doing things that they're not comfortable with? (pause) Like the girls do you ever have that?

Grp quiet, looking away

Av: have you ever heard of girls at the school that get abused in the school in a sexual way? Touched, or raped ... does that happen at the school? Have you ever heard that or seen it? (pause) ... yes or no ...

P9: No.

Av: (looking around group...) No? Have you ever heard of ... No? Girls? Have you ever heard stories about girls getting raped at the school? ... Touched funny ... touched in ways they're not comfortable with?

Grp shaking heads quietly

Av: tell me is that violence, or is that not violence? What do you think?

Grp: .. it's violence ...

Av: is it ...? (pause) If that happens at a school, is that violence or is it not violence? ... teach me ... (grp quiet) or is that not so important? (pause) What about teachers using their power over other learners to do things that they don't want to do, has that ever happened?

(Grp quiet)

Av: no? (someone nods ...) tell me like what? ... (no response) What about outside of the school? You said sometimes you have people come and they steal your goats and things, hey? What kind of violence happens outside of the school?

(No response from grp – some talk quietly, others look away.)

Av: ..hmmm? ... No? ... Ok, so I want to finish off and thank you so much for all this information. I want to go one by one and just ask you a question and you can either answer it in English or in your own language, it doesn't matter someone will translate. Ok? So if I say to you explain or describe violence. If I came from another country, and I didn't know what it means, ok? So I want you to say "I think violence is ..." and tell me what you think, ok?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok start with you P2. So you say: I think violence is ... tell me what you think (pause).. finish the sentence.. you can finish it n English or in your own language, it doesn't matter..

(quiet ...) say: I think violence is ... (pause) anything, anything you want to say. What's the first thing that comes in to your mind when I say violence at school

P2: I don't understand...

Av: ok, I say what comes to your mind, what do you think about when I say school violence ...?

P2: nothing ...

Av: nothing? But we just spoke about all these things, hey? What's the worst thing for you about the violence or maybe say to me ... do you want it to stop? Do you want school violence to stop?

P2: yes!

Av: ok, why? I want school violence to stop because ...

P2: because beating the children ...

Av: because beating the children, and what does that do? Why do you want it to stop?

P2: violence.

Av: yeah. What does violence do?

P2: crime

Av: crime... so you think violence makes crime? (he nods) and you want it to stop then? Ok, thank you. And P7?

(in the meanwhile, P9 and P8 are talking and P8 hits P9 on the head...)

P3: she's beating him!

Av: I see, hey! P8 you just hitting him ...

P9: yes ...

Av: Is that not violence?

P8: smiles

P3: she hit him like this on the head ... (demonstrates in the air)

Av: I know what did he do?

(they all laugh)

Av: hey? So is that not violence?

Grp: yes .. is violence ... so do you also hit people?

Grp nod head (some smiling)

Av: yeah? Who here hits other people have you ever hit other people, P6?

(grp calling P6 and translating)

Av: P6, have you ever hit other people?

(P6 they are talking to you)

P9: (translating for P6) yes ...

Av: why do you hit other people?

P9: but sometimes you are playing, you see ... (hits P8 'gently' and they both laugh and wriggle).

Av: oh, I see. So is that also violence or not violence when you just play-hitting?

P9: no it's not violence...

Av: so how do you know the difference? What's the difference if I do this (pretend to smack someone next to me)and I hit her hard and it's sore but we're friends or if I do this ... how do you know what the difference is, for instance if someone is play-hitting or if it's violence hitting?

P9: they are sad, you are not happy

(42; 48) Av: oh ok, but sometimes your friends hit you and it also hurts...

Grp: nodding & softly saying yes ...

Av: is it a different hurt? (grp nodding) How would I know the difference if I came? How would I know if I see people hitting how would I know which one is just play-hitting and which one is bully-fighting? Cause I don't know who is friends, you see? So how would I tell the difference?

P9: when they are playing .. you see that they are happy ...

Av: oh ok, so do I have to look at after the person gets hit? What they look like?

P9: ummm (affirmative)

Av: oh I see, ok. So if you hit P8 and she is smiling or she just does ... like ignore you ... then I can look at her and I can see it's ok, that was just play hitting?

P9& grp: yes ...

Av; and if it's violence, what would I see? The person looks sad?

Grp: yes ...

Av: show me sad... what is a sad face? Cause you're not allowed to cry hey?

(P1 and others demonstrate a 'sad' face – their eyes are downcast, they are frowning ...)

Av: sad ... angry? .. ok, so pouting like that with your lips out .. show me P1... how would I know that you've been hit.. violence not play? if someone hits you bad how would I know? Show me what you would look like ... head down, eyes down.. and you're all quiet?

Grp: yes ...

Av: oh ... so if your friends saw you they would know that you just got hit by someone?

P9: yes ... (others nod)

Av: yeah, they would know? And you know if you see your friend? Do you know the difference?

Grp nod

Av: yeah? Ok I get it.

Boys: yes ... smiling ...

Av: so anybody else ... tell me P7.. .you want violence to stop because ? (pause) ... P1? You want violence to stop because ?

P1: because I don't want to kill the other people ...

Av: ok, and if we stop it then what?

P9: the people will feel free. Av: you'll feel free and you'll laugh .. ?

P9: yeah

Av: nice ...

P9: have happiness ...

Av: oh ... nice, you'll have happiness. What do you think P3? Talk, you have such brilliant ideas, hey? You must speak up .. you have such nice ideas... you mustn't be scared to talk, hey? You want school violence to stop because .. ?

(P3 discusses with P8, searching for the right word ...)

Av: say it in your language if it's easier ...

(They say you must say "you want violence to stop because ...She says she doesn't know)

Av: (Utsi akati??) you want it to stop hey?

P3: yes ...

Av: it's not good? (pause) and P4? (talking among themselves in siSwati) You want it to stop because? Hey ? (pause ...)

P4 whispers something ...

Av: because you'll be happy? (she nods and shyly looks down)... yeah? ... ok. Any thing else you wanna say to me? Anything I didn't ask?

P9: nothing ...

Av: nothing ... ?

Grp: yes ...

Av: ok. So when I come back in august what are some of the things you want to work on? Are there specific things you want to do? To work on or learn about? ... in your life ... ?

P9: anything ...

Av: anything? What is important to you?

Someone in Grp: I want to learn and stay in school ...

Av: yes, that's important, hey? What's stopping you from having a good future?

P9: if you become pregnant ...

Av: yes, that's a problem ... do you have girls in the school that get pregnant and then they can't come back?

Grp : yes ...

Av: ok, thanks everyone.

**Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)**

Journal

Will I be chosen? (participant selection)

What a bumpy ride, but we finally get to the school. It is exactly as I had imagined. Simple, but surrounded by beauty. We walk behind our lecturer, apprehensive. Not really sure what is happening next. Awkward, I feel so out of place. We stand in the open 'quad' area between a u-shaped building waiting to be 'chosen' by the Grade 9 learners. They group together and we face off - a group of eager faces staring at each other on either side of the staff, who are introducing themselves and explaining what is about to happen. They stare at us, we smile and stare back. It seems almost comical, really. The moment finally arrives My heart leaps into my throat! My mind fills with 'what ifs...?'

Personal Notes 01
(14/04/2010)

Journal

Reflection: The ice has melted

It had been an unpredictable day, starting off awkwardly but finishing on a positive note. The whispering, shy girls had bravely increased their interaction with me and those who were quiet were now persevering with broken English in an eager attempt to be heard and included. We moved the picnic blanket to a spot in the shade and sat down with the sponsored liquid-fruits and chips. It felt so comfortable and familiar – the awkwardness and distance of that morning long forgotten.

Girls were lazily leaning against each other, and the boys (again seemingly uninhibited by western gender stereotypes) were lying casually across one another. The group a tangle of legs and hair and wide smiles. The conversation flowed more easily about casual topics such as school and friends, boyfriends and future goals. I became eager about tomorrow's research focus group and tried to test the water a bit asking about crime in the community. They explained that there was quite a bit of theft (especially by foreigners, they added) of livestock and material goods. We spoke about what careers they were wanting to pursue for the future. A few were in the health professions and two in law enforcement and military. One even stated she would like to be the President of the country, but when I asked her why their responses seemed to focus more on their passion to help or protect others and to make things better.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

They have taken a lot longer on the written activities than I had estimated and it was already time for the break and then the focus group. Despite my concern that my group members had not shown me much openness that day, and my feelings that they would struggle with English, I decided to persist and stick to my original plan.

After the break, it took me quite some time to coax them into leaving their activity books and joining me for the discussion. There was very little space with shade and I was not sure where to place the blanket. I urged them to help me find a spot, but my urgency was clearly not theirs.

Eventually I simply put the blanket out on the shaded concrete against one of the classroom walls and invited them (with cold fruit juice in hand) to sit with me. As soon as I had poured the drinks, and began explaining about the digital recorders I realised I had not made a good choice and it would likely affect the quality of my discussion - but I continued regardless. The group was sitting in a straight line, leaning against the wall (not really in a circular formation which would have been more conducive to talking), and I was seated on a chair, higher than them, facing in - rather than being physically part of their group. They had also separated - boys facing me and to my right with the girls further down, with one boy sitting on his own to my left.

Personal Notes 02
(15/04/2010)

Journal

It's time!! Let's talk.

The following are short notes / reflections of the focus group discussion:

* Girls are whispering, giggling and looking at me ... is it about the topic or something completely unrelated? Wish I knew what they're saying!

* Pg - group leader? Giving instructions to others... translating, instructing... warning?

* So distracted - looking at others, at own feet .. disinterested? Scared to talk? Don't understand?

* Talk of gossip and teasing, yet they talk and laugh at each other ... are they teasing each other as we speak? Do they realise the contradiction of what they say vs what they do?

* Like to demonstrate - language barrier? - more get involved when I ask to 'show me'. Even facial expression (angry) with physical action of hitting, kicking etc.

* Also demonstrate on each other & not softly! Is that not violence when one enacts it?

* Topic of parents / home = sore point? Look away, quiet .. withdraw.

* "it's difficult" to talk about? To explain to me? To live through?

* Teacher is shouting in class behind us ... is someone getting hit? Group looks around. Quiet. Some giggle into their hands

My Reflection ...

Things I like about myself

I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



Handwritten text on the left and right sides of the page, including 'I like to play football', 'I don't like to go to school', and 'I like to play video games'.

Hobbies & Interests

Things I like to do:

Things I can do well:

Things I am not good at:



Handwritten text describing various activities and skills, such as 'I like to play tennis', 'I can do well in soccer', and 'I am not good at drawing'.

Things I LIKE most about going to school

Things I HATE most about going to school

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



Handwritten notes and drawings on a board, including 'I like to go to school', 'I hate to go to school', 'My favourite subject is Maths', and 'My favourite teacher is Mrs. Mokoena'.

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I live in ...

Things I don't like about myself



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Things I HATE most about going to school

FAVOURITE SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS I'M NOT GOOD AT

My Favourite Teacher



Handwritten notes and drawings on a board, including 'I like to go to school', 'I hate to go to school', 'My favourite subject is Maths', and 'My favourite teacher is Mrs. Mokoena'.

Focus Group Interview – Analysis

Physical Violence
 Verbal Violence
 Emotional/Responses to violence
 Using violence to cope

Reasons for violence

7 June 2010

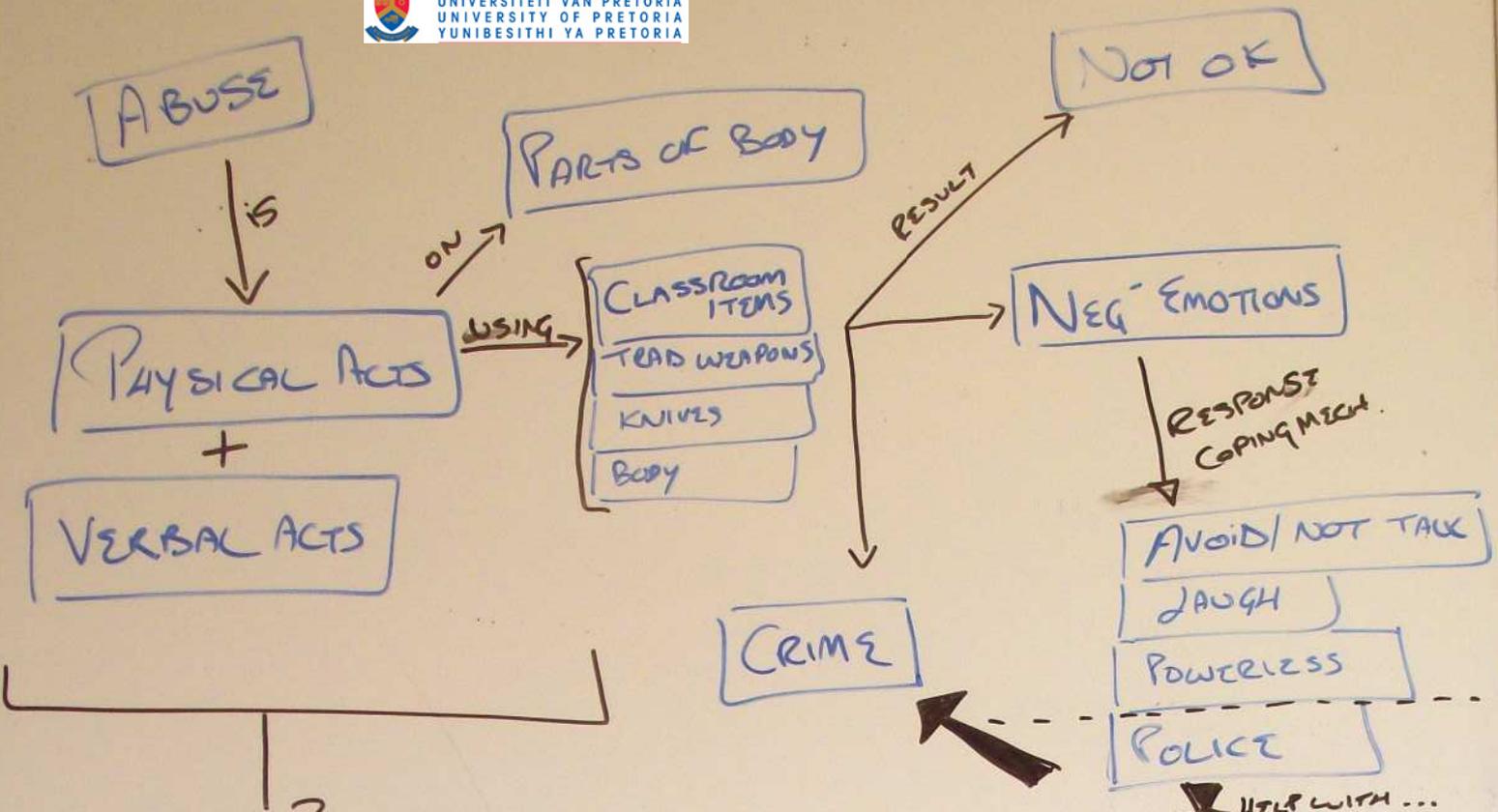
Avie	What is it, what is school violence? (pause)... Tell me about things that happen ...	
P9	Abuse of children They are beating people...	Phys violence / Aggression
Avie:	Beating them with what? (pause, some whispers).	
P1	(very quietly): with shambok...	Traditional weapon (Masepover?)
P3	Xenophobia!	Foreigners / outsiders
Av:	From which country?	
Grp	Zimbabwe yes, and from Swaziland.... ... and Botswana ...	
Avie	where does it happen? The abuse ..?	
P9	In school and outside	
Avie	Tell me this honestly, sometimes do you not want to come to school because you're scared? Has that ever happened? (They nod their heads & look down). Do you know of other people like that? (they nod heads in agreement) ... Yes? So if somebody could do something about it, would you want them to? If things could change? If we didn't have all this violence, would you want to come to school? (they nod their heads, some answer yes softly).... Yes.... So how do we change it?	.
P3	We tell them ... (pause) to stop it. .. a meeting ...	Taking authority / action Negative response
Av	Who would you invite to your meeting?	
Grp	Teachers ..	
P4	The mothers and fathers... parents	
Avie	What are we going to say to them? (pause)	
P3	I want to tell to the parents... to tell all the children (struggling with words)	

	... yes ... stop! And the other learners	Don't like it / Negative response
Avie	... What does violence mean?	
P9	.. abuse ...	Physical / Power
Av	But what does abuse mean? (pause)	
P9	beating them ...	physical
Grp (girls)	gossiping ...	verbal / relationships
Boys	.. punishing ...	
P3	clean the windows and clean the class ...	discipline authority
Av	Oh, they make you do work, hey? Like sweep, clean So is that violence? (they nod in agreement)	
Av	You said beating – what do they use?	
P1 & P9	shambok, stick.... (P9) animates hitting / slapping with an open hand	traditional weapons physical
Av	With hands? ... Show me ..	
P1	(demonstrates a closed fist angry look on his face)	Emotion linked to action
P9	(kicks with feet/leg)... and kick ...	
Av	.. and sometimes they kick, hey?	
P9	yes, kick ... (P1) also starts demonstrating by kicking into the air)	Physical
P2	.. it's hard, hurting ..	
Av	Hurting ... how hurting?	
P2	Indicates his back (whipping action)	physical
Av	where else do they hit you? When they kick and they hit, where? Grp point to different parts of body ...) Head ... face ...	
P3	...and in the stomach	
P9	...and on the bum	

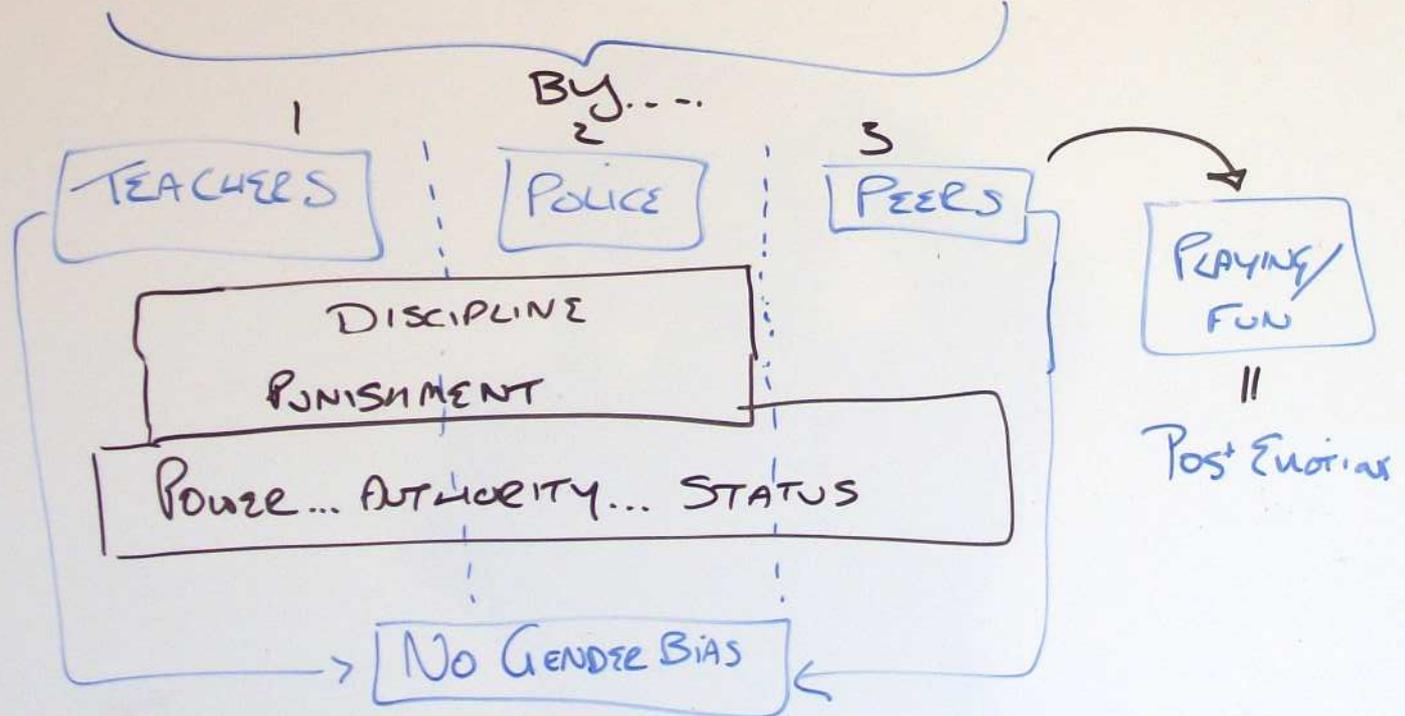
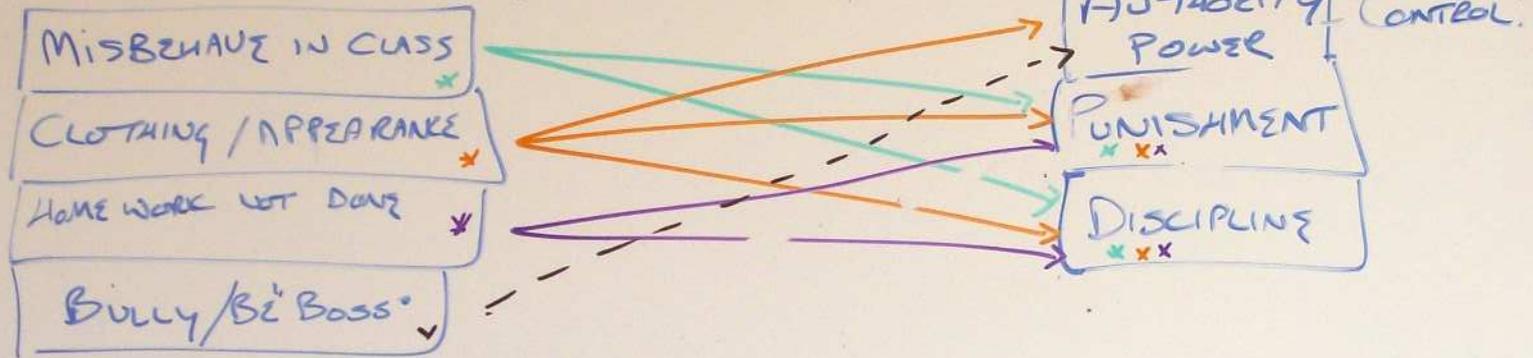
	do your friends not want to talk to you?... (pause) ... do you tell our parents? What happens? (all quiet, some looking far away, some looking down at their feet)	uncomfortable; don't want to talk about it?
P9	it's difficult (shaking head, others are whispering ...)	Response / emotion
av	do the teachers ever talk bad things about you?	Feeling inadequate?
P9	yes! They say we have a big head.	Verbal
av	So when you say the violence is hitting, but it's also the bad words? Yeah ...	
grp	Yes (nodding)	
av	is the school locked? Are you allowed to leave the school and then come in? What happens?	
P9	allowed to leave the school when it's break time	
av	When teachers hit you .. why are they hitting you? (pause) what makes them angry?	
P9	we are making noise the teacher say we must stop & we didn't. We sit there and we are talking and talking ... and then is beating him.	Causes of Violence ↳ misbehaviour noisy - physical
av	does she pull you to the front, or does she hit you where you sitting?	
Boys	(pointing to self) hits you where you sitting...	physical - immediate/impulsive
av	What makes a teacher hit with the stick... what do you do wrong?	
P3	(point to her tie)	
av	So if you come to school and you're not wearing a tie they'll hit you with a stick?	② Clothing/appearance
grp	Yes! (Nodding)	
P3	... you go out the school ...	
P9	yes .. you must go home ... and they hit you if you are not wearing a jacket ...	leave school go home embarrassed? Rejected? Punishment

av	what happens if your clothes are ruined? (Daniel shrugs – his school shirt is very badly worn and torn down the side)	
P1	.. also if you didn't do homework	① misbehave
P3	If I don't have school shoes ...	② Appearance / Uniform
av	If your uniform is not perfect, then they hit you and they shout at you?	
P9	or they tell you , you must go back home ...	
av	and do any of you tell your parents? (Some people shake heads, others nod a little) what do they say? When they hear that at school the teachers hit you? (pause)	Emotional Response Conflicted / Powerless no support @ home
P9	.. it's too difficult ...	
av	what else do people do that makes you get hit?	
P9	if you're laughing in the class...	misbehave
av	and what about other things ... is there ever like drugs, weapons ... things like that in the school? (pause)	
grp	shaking heads ... (P2 is nodding his head, but P7 says no) (someone in group says Yes)	-mixed replies!?
av	let's talk about drugs ... do you know people in the school that do drugs?	
P9	No... (P2 nods his head and smiles shyly)	
av	ok, what kind of drugs?	
P2	dagga ... (Other boys in grp: ya!)	
av	is there smoking going on? Normal cigarette smoking?	
grp	(nod) yes ...	

Astherly Discipline



WHY?



15-POINT CHECKLIST OF CRITERIA FOR GOOD THEMATIC ANALYSIS

(Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006 p.96)

Transcription

- The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.

Coding

1. Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
2. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
3. All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.
4. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
5. Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.

Analysis

1. Data have been analysed - interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
2. Analysis and data match each other - the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
3. Analysis tells a convincing and well-organized story about the data and topic.
4. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.

Overall

1. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.

Written report

1. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
2. There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done - ie, described method and reported analysis are consistent.
3. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
4. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.

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TOPIC: LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES OF
SCHOOL VIOLENCE IN A RURAL SCHOOL

Thank you for participating in my research study. After our interesting conversation about school violence, this is what I understood. Please help me to make sure that I have understood you clearly and correctly.

Theme	1. Violence as Behaviour	2. Violence is Bad	3. Authority & Power
Category:	1.1 Beating children is violence (physical acts)	2.1 It's hard, hurting (negative emotions)	3.1 School discipline
	1.2 They call you names (verbal acts)	2.2 We're scared (coping mechanisms)	3.2 The police protect
		2.3 We're just playing (positive emotions)	

THEME 1: VIOLENCE AS BEHAVIOUR

Definition: Acts and behaviours that cause direct injury or harm (physical or psychological) to another.

THEME 2: VIOLENCE IS BAD

Definition: Emotional expressions/feelings associated with acts of school violence and how learners respond, or cope, emotionally when they experience violence at school.

THEME 3: AUTHORITY AND POWER

Definition: Instances when violence is used at school by people who wield some form of power or authority over another person, or when violence is used for purposes or punishment, discipline or to protect.

