

**The impact of bullying in  
school on the adolescent's  
sense of self**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self**

By

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The goal of this study was to investigate the impact of physical, verbal and social bullying in high school on the adolescent's sense of self, thereby improving the knowledge base and insight of counsellors who work with victims of bullying.

The objectives of this study were:

- To build a knowledge base on the problem of bullying using existing literature. The knowledge base was used to form a holistic picture of the problem.
- To empirically investigate the impact that bullying in the school has on the adolescent's sense of self.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for teachers of school A as well as counsellors who, in the counselling setting, work with bullied children.

This quantitative study endeavoured to answer the following research question: "What is the impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self?"

The researcher aimed to use the statistical analysis of the empirical study to improve the helping profession's understanding of the phenomenon. This may lead to more successful intervention strategies on behalf of these adolescents.

The study was feasible, as it was within the financial and practical means of the

researcher. She had access to the school as she was employed there and obtained permission from the school, Department of Education, parents of participants, the participants themselves and The Ethical Committee of the University of Pretoria.

The following themes emerged from the data analysis (when the male and female adolescents' results were separated) namely:

- Physical bullying does not affect any parts of the sense of self of the female adolescent but does affect the physical and creative self of the male.
- Social bullying impacts every part of the female adolescent self but only affects the emotional, behavioural and creative sense of self of the male.
- Verbal bullying has an impact on every part of the female adolescents sense of self and affects all parts of the male sense of self except the physical and intellectual sense of self.

From the research findings, recommendations were made on a micro, macro and exo-level. On a micro-level, this included improved intervention and prevention programmes in schools.

On macro-level the researcher is of the opinion that the Department of Education of various districts need to ensure that policies are put in place as well as to support individual schools in their endeavours to stop bullying.

On a meso-level, legislation changes and enforcement of the Bill of Human rights in schools are recommended.

KEY WORDS

ADOLESCENTS

IMPACT

PHYSICAL BULLYING

VERBAL BULLYING

SOCIAL BULLYING

EMOTIONAL SENSE OF SELF

SOCIAL SENSE OF SELF

CREATIVE SENSE OF SELF

PHYSICAL SENSE OF SELF

BEHAVIOURAL SENSE OF SELF

INTELLECTUAL SENSE OF SELF

VICTIM

BULLY

BYSTANDER

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:6) describe the teenage years as challenging for many adolescents and their parents. The school environment often contributes to the challenges through learners who negate some of their peers' basic human rights. This is commonly known as bullying.

Piskin (2003:555) mentions that, "Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem that can have negative consequences for the general school climate and for the right of students to learn in a safe environment without fear." South Africa has displayed the same type of problem within the boundaries of its schools in which the researcher has had first hand experience. Whilst interviewing Mrs Anne Cilliers (2007), the Head of Department for Life Orientation of the school where the researcher is employed (School A); the problem of bullying was confirmed. Horne and Staniszweski (2003:431) note that almost every adult in the United States can remember a childhood experience of school aggression and almost every child can remember being a victim, a bully or a bystander to the bullying. Furniss (2000:9) mentions that bullying in schools causes widespread negative experiences such as misery, distress, fear, anxiety, anger and helplessness. The researcher has recognized many of the latter mentioned emotions, which have been revealed by those victims who have sought therapeutic help.

The researcher interviewed Mrs Cilliers (2007) who has fulfilled her duties as Head of Department, Life Orientation at School A for more than ten years. Mrs Cilliers (2007) was asked various questions about the bullying in the school and the following information was obtained:

- The school does have a formal written policy regarding bullying. The punishment for the bully is immediate de-merits as well as parental involvement.

- More emotional or psychological bullying seems to be taking place during recent years than during any other time in the school's history.
- From speaking to colleagues at various schools, it would appear that School A is not an isolated school in terms of its bullying problem.
- Bullying is more common amongst the junior grades.
- Children do not always report incidences of bullying (either if they are victims or if they have observed victimization) and this is probably as a result of the fear which the bully has instilled in them.

Whilst reading through previous research on bullying it has become apparent that much of what is understood today about this topic is a result of pioneer Dan Olweus' work in the early 1970's. Olweus as quoted by Dake, Price and Telljohann (2003:173) defines the concept as, "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students." The researcher has found this to be true in practice as the victims often report intense fear of the bully because of exposure to repetitive negative actions. One learner reported that he was forced to kneel in front of the bully and speak to his 'genitals'; this particular bully forced his victims to obey his orders time and time again.

According to Hammond (2006:14), "Educationists are reporting that violence amongst school children is increasing. Teachers are complaining about the violent character and destructive habits of so many of the children they are assigned to work with." During 2006 School A was highlighted during a Carte Blanche show which focused on violence in the school. Although the school's name was not mentioned, students in the school using their cellphones had recorded a 'fight' between two learners (who could be recognized by the uniform they were wearing), and had sent it to this particular show. The researcher and other staff members were not aware that any of this had taken place on the school premises.

The following were some of the headlines mentioned in a magazine article written by Hammond (2006:14) highlighting the problem of bullying and violence amongst adolescents in South Africa:

- High school student, Shane McCarroll, died tragically in hospital after a fight at a friend's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday party in Amanzintoti. He suffered a major stroke and was declared brain dead.
- In Kwa-Zulu Natal, two teenage girls, aged 13 and 16, were arrested after assaulting a grade 10 pupil with a school belt. They slapped and kicked her and allegedly tried to kill her.
- In Rustenburg, a 17 year old boy ended up in the intensive care unit with a fractured skull after being beaten up in the school toilets.

When reviewing books on school violence, bullying was often mentioned (De Lara, 2006:333; Coloroso, 2003:53; McCann, 2002:115; Mills, 2001:2; Olweus 1993:114) consequently the researcher focused on the various aspects of bullying including physically violent behaviour (which is just one aspect of bullying). Bullying is one of the worst forms of violence amongst children and takes place on the school playground or whenever children are together (The anti-bullying campaign ..., [sa]). For the study, the focus was on the bullying which takes place on the school premises.

Furniss (2000:9) mentions that bullying leaves physical distress and *mental* trauma in its wake. According to DeLara (2006:341) no child should be subjected to a school environment which is hostile, or be exposed to treatment which is disrespectful. Carney and Hazler as quoted by Hazler, Miller, Carney and Green (2001:134) mention some of the consequences of the abusive situation of bullying such as anxiety, anger, depression or other thoughts and feelings which are destructive to others or the self. Victims often report feeling vengeful, angry and helpless. They also experience self pity. Lastly Carney and Hazler as quoted by Hazler *et al.* (2001:134) state that the humiliation and disgrace experienced as a result of bullying can have disastrous results for a child's sense of narcissism and sense of identity. Rigby (1996:51), an expert in the field, suggests that the reason the victim feels many of these feelings is that the failure for the adolescent to stand his/her ground, in any conflict situation strikes deeply. The author continues to state that young children have not had sufficient time to develop their interests and skills that may have a positive effect on their competence and therefore they are still dependent on their inter-personal relationships to develop their self-esteem. The researcher has found this to be true

when many victims of bullying share how they struggle to form an accurate picture of themselves due to the continued negative messages which are received in various forms. This eventually leads the victims to lose a sense of who they are.

The researcher was interested not only in the physical distress but also particularly in the mental and emotional trauma experienced by victims of bullying. As was mentioned earlier, adolescents have a very fragile view of themselves, therefore the researcher focused on the extent of influence which the bullying has on the victims' sense of self. The term 'sense of self' stems from the gestalt theoretical perspective. Blom (2004:113) explains, "Children's self is distinguished from the environment by means of the contact boundary which is the point where they make a distinction between that which is part of themselves and that which is considered to be outside them." The researcher explored how the bullied adolescent has interpreted these messages internally and what the impact on this sense of self was.

## **1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION**

Olweus (1993:9) states that bullying involves negative actions, when somebody attempts to inflict, or inflicts intentional pain, discomfort or hurt on somebody else. Piskin (2003:556) further explains that the bullying can be physical, verbal, indirect or emotional. Horne and Staniszewski (2003:431) state that there is very little doubt amongst researchers that bullying has serious emotional consequences, such as depression and low self-esteem for victims. Rigby (2003:584) agrees with the latter mentioned authors, but further speaks about the following mental and/or physical health outcomes:

- Low psychological well-being – including states of mind that are generally considered unpleasant, such as general unhappiness.
- Poor social adjustment – including feelings of aversion towards the social environment, for example a dislike of attending school.
- Psychological distress – this is more serious than the above mentioned two outcomes and includes high levels of anxiety and depression as well as suicidal thoughts.
- Physical unwellness – psychosomatic symptoms are included here.

There has also been evidence that bullying in the United States has been a precipitating factor for suicide (Dake *et al.*, 2003:173). Although Rigby (1996:57) recognizes that there are many interrelated factors that contribute to a young person's suicide, peer victimization in some cases seems very probable.

The researcher focused on the concepts related to the sense of self, in terms of how the individuals internalized the negative events to allow them to either form a part of themselves or to form a picture of the incident as something outside of who they are. Although self-esteem is a broad concept, the researcher focused on more specific sub-categories of the sense of self.

Researchers Lopez and Du Bois (2005:32) investigated how peer victimization (PV) and peer rejection (PR) affect emotional, behavioural and academic adjustment of the early adolescent and concluded that there are links between PV and PR and the various aspects of adjustment. The researchers state that the need is for a greater understanding of how PV and PR are experienced and internalized by youth (Lopez & Du Bois, 2005:32). There was a need for the research as the researcher deemed it necessary to look at PV and PR as **part** of bullying and how these phenomena impact the various aspects of the sense of self, which is different to the research already completed which looked specifically at two aspects of bullying and the effect it had on various forms of adjustment in adolescence.

An important aspect which should be kept in mind when researching bullying is mentioned by Olweus (1993:9) when the author explains that it is a behaviour which is repeated over time and that it can either be carried out by an individual or group of individuals and that there has to be an imbalance in power (an asymmetric power relationship). A once off verbal insult from one student directed to another cannot therefore be considered bullying as it has not been a repetitive behaviour and if two students of similar strength (both physically and psychologically) are involved in a quarrel, it is also not considered bullying as there is equal power involved. Smith and Brain (2000:1) agree with Olweus by mentioning that the bully targets the victim a number of times and that the victim cannot defend himself easily. Piskin (2003:556) also states that bullying is not just specific behaviours but often a lack of behaviour (for example excluding a child from the group is not an action but lack thereof which has an effect on the child). Coloroso

(2003:20) writes about ‘contempt’ to explain bullying behaviour. The author explains the concept as a child who has a powerful feeling of dislike towards somebody who is considered to be inferior, worthless, or undeserving of respect.

Another important aspect, which the researcher took into consideration, is that there are generally three characters involved in the bully problem: there is the bully, the bullied and the bystander (Coloroso, 2003:3). During the study, the researcher focused specifically on the bullied child and not on the other two characters.

Piskin (2003:558) states that bullying is less widespread amongst older students. Losel and Bliesener as quoted by Piskin (2003:558) state that the form of bullying changes from the younger years to the older years. During the younger years physical bullying is predominant whereas with the older children the bullying form changes to verbal and psychological. The researcher was therefore interested in concentrating on the older children, those who have been in high school for at least three to four years.

The adolescent’s sense of self is often fragile and this is because adolescents want to belong and that belonging is of paramount importance to them (Karcher, 2004:12). It is therefore clear that this is why bullying would have such a negative effect on them, as this feeling of belonging and being important is taken away by another student in the school because of his/her behaviour. Karcher (2004:13) mentions the fact that the youth, if they feel valued and accepted by a particular group, will shape how involved and concerned they will be with other groups and organizations. It has been the researcher’s experience at School A that many learners are often not willing to get involved in sport or extra-murals offered at the school. Therefore, if bullying is taking place, they are not going to feel motivated or committed to getting involved as they are not accepted by their group of peers.

Psychological bullying has become commonplace amongst older students where direct and indirect verbal and nonverbal methods increase (Sullivan, Cleary & Sullivan 2005:8). The psychological effect that the researcher would like to focus on is the sense of self. Humphreys (2002:125) describes various categories to children’s sense of self which are:



- Physical sense of self (how the child sees himself)
- Emotional sense of self (whether the child is lovable, interesting)
- Intellectual sense of self (whether the child is able to comprehend certain aspects of the world)
- Behavioural sense of self (whether the child is skilled, able and independent)
- Social sense of self (whether the child has a sense of uniqueness or inferiority)
- Creative sense of self (whether the child conforms or resists conformity; whether the child is a people-pleaser or does things in his or her own way)

Miss Clemitson (2007), an intern educational psychologist, was asked a number of questions regarding bullying and her experience of the problem. The interviewee is of the opinion that awareness about bullying in South Africa is growing, but that many schools don't have a policy in place. In practice Miss Clemitson (2007) has counselled children who have been victims of verbal bullying, emotional and physical bullying which have lead to feelings of worthlessness, isolation and loneliness. The interviewee mentioned two consequences of bullying which have been experienced first hand and they are: self-mutilation and suicide. Miss Clemitson (2007) stated that the research was viable and necessary.

Mrs Robertson (2007), an experienced teacher who worked at School A but has now opened up her own tutorial college, was also interviewed regarding bullying and was of the opinion that South African schools are not aware of the extent of verbal, emotional and physical abuse taking place. The interviewee believes that if schools in South Africa were aware of the extent of the problem, provision for recourse would be made available. However it seems as if there is no such provision made and therefore it is assumed that schools are either blatantly unaware of the problem or they are ignoring it. In Mrs Robertson's (2007) tutorial college (which uses a home schooling system), there are several children who have joined the institution, as a direct result of bullying, which has taken place in the mainstream system. The interviewee stated that a bullied child loses functioning on all levels, as the self-image is the epicenter of understanding oneself in the world, and that bullying negates everything the cognitive mind is trying to develop. Mrs Robertson (2007) continued to state that during a child's life, the separation of different spheres (of his/her life) is not easy and that different genders are bullied in different ways. In Mrs

Robertson's (2007) school, an observation has been made of the bullied child who tends to be more introverted, have poor social skills and is achieving way below their potential.

According to the huge extent of reported bullying in schools in South Africa (Hammond, 2006:14) it was necessary to explore the problem situation. Thus, the research problem is: the impact of bullying on the sense of self of adolescents is not clearly described in the latest research. Although there is research on the topic of self esteem, various aspects have not been defined particularly in terms of how bullying has affected these parts of the self.

### **1.3 PURPOSE, AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

#### **1.3.1 Purpose of the research**

When deciding on the goals of the study, it is necessary to define what the purpose of the research project is. Fouché and De Vos (2005:104) are of the opinion that the term 'goal', 'purpose' and 'aim' are synonymous. The author sees the goal, purpose and aim as being the 'dream' of the research and the objectives as the, 'steps one has to take, one by one, realistically at grass-roots level, within a certain time span, in order to attain the dream.'

According to Bless and Higson-Smith as quoted by Fouché and De Vos (2006:107) correlational research is conducted to find a relationship between variables. It does not necessarily focus on the cause-effect of the relationship but focuses more on the strength of the relationship. The researcher was aware that bullying does have an effect psychologically, emotionally and on self esteem, but explored the holistic impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self.

#### **1.3.2 Goal of the research**

The goal of the research was to investigate the impact of bullying in the high school setting on the sense of self of adolescents.

### 1.3.3 Objectives of the study

The objectives of the study can be described as:

- To build a knowledge base on:
  - The phenomena of bullying in high school.
  - Classifying various types of bullying.
  - The relationship between bullying and the adolescent's sense of self.
  - The holistic impact of bullying on the adolescent.
  - The characteristics of the bullied adolescent.
  - Consequences of bullying.
  - Signs of bullying.
  - Involvement of teachers, counsellors and parents.
  - Importance of intervention and prevention programmes.
- To empirically investigate the impact that bullying in the school has on the adolescent's sense of self.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for teachers of school A as well as counsellors who, in the counselling setting, work with bullied children.

### 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION AND STATEMENT OF STUDY

Gravetter and Forano (2003:23) mention that before a research idea can be evaluated it needs to be transformed into a hypothesis. This hypothesis is a statement about the relationship between variables (two or more). Due to the nature of various research studies, it is sometimes necessary for the researcher to formulate a research question instead of a hypothesis. Strydom and Delpoit (2005:321) state that vague thoughts are used to formulate a question regarding the subject of the study. In this study, it would be best to use a research question. The question is:

***What would the impact of bullying in high school be on the adolescent's sense of self?***

The research study can be seen as explorative in nature as described by Bless and Higson-Smith in Fouché and De Vos (2005:106). They state that this type of research is conducted to gain

insight into a phenomenon, community or individual. The researcher wants to explore the phenomenon of bullying and its impact on the adolescent's sense of self.

## **1.5 RESEARCH APPROACH**

Kumar (2005:12) mentions two approaches which can be used in methods of inquiry: the first is the unstructured approach which is known as qualitative research and the other is the structured approach which is known as quantitative research. Kumar (2005:12) describes quantitative research as, "The approach where everything forming part of the process such as objectives, design, sample and questions to be asked of the respondents is pre-determined and is classified as such if the researcher wants to quantify the variation in a problem or issue, if information is gathered using quantitative variables and if the analysis is geared to ascertain the magnitude of the variation". The researcher used the quantitative approach due to the following reasons:

- School A was used in the research study and this school has approximately 1300 children, of whom only a minority has reported bullying. Valuable data would be lost if only the minority was used in a qualitative study.
- Rigby (1996:30) mentions that there is often a sense of distrust between members of the school community; therefore it is the researcher's opinion that focus groups or interviews would not yield valid data. Due to the sensitive nature of bullying and the sense of distrust, an anonymous quantitative approach would allow for respondents to be protected against further victimization. The researcher used an anonymous questionnaire for data collection. Fouché and De Vos (2002:142) hold that a questionnaire as a data collection method is quantitative in nature and falls into the category of the quantitative-descriptive survey.
- The researcher is using variables of which the strength of the relationship is of importance and therefore the quantitative approach would be best suited to the study.

During this research, every grade 11 and 12, (approximately 420 learners) had the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire. The reason that the researcher chose these two particular grades is that they have been in high school for between four and five years. Therefore if they were exposed to

any bullying, it would have taken place by this stage of their schooling. Mrs Cilliers (2007) also confirmed this idea when she stated that most bullying takes place in the junior grades of high school (grade eight and nine).

## **1.6 TYPE OF RESEARCH**

The focus of social research, as discussed by Neuman (2000:23), is to advance general knowledge or use it to solve problems. When the researcher's focus understands the fundamental nature of social reality, then basic research is being conducted. On the other hand when the researcher wants to apply and tailor knowledge to address a practical issue, applied research is involved.

For the study, the researcher used applied research. By tackling the problem of bullying in a school, it is hoped that the data collected will help practitioners who deal with bullying (both the victim and the bully) as well as guide adjustments of existing policies and programmes. Another reason that the researcher deems it necessary to use applied research is that knowledge does exist about bullying as well as the fact that bullying has an impact on self-esteem (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001:269; West & Salmon, 2000:73; Owens, Mortimer & Finch, 1996:1379).

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCEDURES**

Mouton, as quoted by Fouché and De Vos (2005:132) defines the research design as the plan or blueprint of how the research intends to be conducted, for example how will the data be collected.

The design that the researcher used was the quantitative-descriptive design (Fouché & De Vos, 2005:137). This design is described by the authors as more quantitative in nature and requires questionnaires as a data collection method and, as was established earlier, an anonymous questionnaire was the most suitable method of data collection for this research due to the sensitive nature of the study. The type of quantitative-descriptive (survey) design which the researcher used was the randomized cross-sectional survey design. This type of design is

described by Fouché and De Vos (2005:137) as one of two designs most commonly used with surveys.

### **1.7.1 Data Collection Method**

#### ***Unit of Analysis:***

Mouton (1996a) as quoted by Fouché and De Vos (2005:104), mentions different types of units of analyses. These units are identified as individuals, collectives, institutions, social actions and events, cultural objects and events. For the purpose of this study, the researcher used collectives (groups) as the unit of analysis. Babbie (2005:96) further explains that a unit of analysis is described as what or who can be studied. The reason the researcher used groups as the unit of analysis is that the grade 11 and 12 pupils were seen to have the same characteristics, having been in high school for between four and five years and possibly having been exposed to bullying. The researcher was interested in how bullying in high school has impacted the sense of self of individuals within that group.

#### ***Data Collection Method:***

The most suitable data collection method for the research was the questionnaire. Strydom (2005:166) states that the main objective of a **questionnaire** is to obtain many facts and opinions from people who are informed about an issue. Kumar (2005:126) defines the questionnaire as, “A written list of questions, the answers to which are recorded by the respondents. In a questionnaire respondents read the questions, interpret what is expected and then write down the answer.” The researcher gained facts and opinions from the grade 11 and 12 learners of School A. Please refer to Appendix A for an example of the questionnaire

The type of questionnaire chosen and applied was the **group-administered questionnaire**. Delport (2005:169) describes this type of questionnaire as one which is completed by those present in the group. The grade 11 pupils all attend Life Orientation class at the same time and the grade 12 learners also have a slot together. Four weeks before the questionnaires were filled in, each learner received a consent form, which they took home for their parents to sign and return to school giving them permission to participate in the study (refer to Appendix B). During the four weeks the children were continuously reminded to get their consent letters signed and

return them either to the researcher or their Life Orientation teachers. The learners who returned these signed consent forms (in the form of a tear off slip) were then asked to meet in the hall where the questionnaires were handed out and completed. The researcher asked the respondents to spread themselves out around the hall to ensure that there was no talking or sharing of ideas. The researcher was also available to answer any queries which the respondents had about different questions.

### ***Types of Questions:***

The best types of questions to be included for the study were a combination of closed questions and multiple-choice questions. The reason for this is that after reviewing the literature the subject of bullying had been studied substantially and a decision was made to use closed questions. Delpont (2005:174) states that one can use closed questions when response options are well-known and that the degree, frequency and comprehensiveness of a phenomenon can be studied successfully by using closed questions. Therefore the degree of bullying and its comprehensiveness and strength of impact on different parts of the sense of self could be studied.

The researcher was of the opinion that it would be important to use multiple-choice questions as these types of questions are used when the information can be divided into hard and fast categories (Delpont, 2005:175). The researcher divided for example physical bullying into a category and then verbal bullying into another (even though the questions were spread out so that the respondent did not know what type of bullying was measured). This was to avoid respondent bias answers. Not much is known of the effect that bullying has on the various aspects of the sense of self, the research therefore contributed to a better understanding.

### **1.7.2 Data Analysis**

Kruger, De Vos, Fouché and Venter (2005:217) state that with computerized data in the age in which we live, quantitative data analysis has become relatively easy. The data, as mentioned by the authors, can be used from primary data (collected by the researcher) or existing data (collected by somebody else). For the purpose of the study, the researcher will be using primary data. “The purpose of analysis is to reduce data to an intelligible and interpretable form so that

the relations of research problems can be studied, tested and conclusions drawn” (Kruger *et al.*, 2005:218).

Once the data was collected from the questionnaires that were returned by the grade 11 and 12 learners who formed part of the sample, the data was coded and entered into a computer using the SAS statistical package. The data was analysed quantitatively according to the steps as set out by Kruger *et al.* (2005:221). The researcher made use of the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria to help with this part of the research process.

### **1.8 PILOT TEST**

It is often a mistake of many researchers to rush into the main investigation and therefore neglect an important part of the research process, which is conducting a pilot study (Strydom, 2005:205). “The pilot study can be viewed as the ‘dress rehearsal’ for the main investigation – a small-scale implementation of the planned investigation in an attempt to bring possible deficiencies to the fore timeously” (Fouché & Delport, 2005:82). Strydom (2005:206) mentions that even though the researcher may plan the investigation carefully, the practical situation will never be known until entered into. The researcher agrees with Strydom (2005:205) when the author states that the main inquiry should never be started until the researchers are confident that the procedures, which have been chosen, are:

- Suitable – The researcher was of the opinion that the questionnaire needed to be suitable to the language development of the adolescent and this included the forms of bullying that takes place within the high school system as well as leaving room for using ‘slang’ phrases in the questionnaire, thereby making sure the questionnaire a suitable one.
- Valid – The validity of the measurement procedure is the degree to which it measures the variables it claims to measure (Gravetter & Forzano, 2005:87). In the case of this study, the researcher wanted to measure the variable of bullying (the independent variable) on the dependent variable, which is the sense of self. The questionnaire measured these two constructs and was therefore valid.
- Reliable – The reliability of a measurement procedure (for example a questionnaire) asks if it is stable and consistent. The questionnaire will be reliable if the same individual



under the same conditions answers it and produces the same or similar results (Gravetter & Forzano, 2005:91). Therefore if the study that was conducted during the month of July 2007 is given to the same individuals under the same circumstances a few months later, it should yield similar results if it is going to be reliable.

- Free from problems and errors – It is necessary to conduct the pilot study as problems within the questionnaire can be rectified before the main study is completed.
- All precautions are taken to avoid any problems – if there is a problem with the questionnaire (the measurement procedure), this can be corrected before the main study is completed at which time it will be too late to do anything.

The pilot study therefore helped the researcher with all the above-mentioned aspects and thus helped the researcher to go ahead with the main investigation, minimizing mistakes which occurred.

### **1.8.1 Pilot test of the questionnaire as a measuring instrument**

The pilot test of a questionnaire can highlight problems on aspects such as question formulation, interpretation, and confusing questions. Modifications can then be made if necessary (Strydom, 2005:210).

It was suggested by the Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria that the researcher use respondents not in grade 11 or 12 but rather use individuals who are in a similar age range to that of the sample group. Therefore the researcher asked five grade 10 pupils to participate in the pilot study (three girls were asked and two boys). After the questionnaire was filled in the pilot study group had to answer the following questions:

- Were any of the statements unclear. If yes, which ones?
- How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?
- Was the questionnaire too long, too short?
- Knowing what the research is about, could you suggest any other question, which could be included in the questionnaire?
- Do you think slang terms that all grade 11 and 12 pupils could understand, should rather be used?

The pilot study helped the researcher include some statements and remove others and also helped to make the questionnaire clearer such as repeating the number key on each page to ensure the smooth progression of filling in of the questionnaires. The questionnaires used in the pilot test did not form part of the main investigation.

### **1.8.2 Feasibility of the study**

The researcher works within the high school where the research was conducted. Respondents were available as they all attend school at the same time. In terms of time and money, the researcher had specific times when the grade 11 and 12 pupils were all in Life Orientation periods together. The research procedure did not take too much of their time as the researcher handed out consent forms four weeks before the study was completed, explaining the purpose of the study. The researcher then handed out the questionnaires which were completed immediately. In terms of monetary expenditure, the only outlay from the researcher's side was the printing of questionnaires.

Written consent had been granted from School A, as well as the Department of Education, both seeing the necessity of such research. The researcher recognizes the importance of obtaining informed consent from the parents of the participants. Due to the sensitive nature of the study and the importance of keeping privacy a priority during the study, consent forms from parents was requested four weeks before the empirical investigation was completed. This was to ensure that the researcher would not be able to distinguish which consent form belonged to which questionnaire. When looking at the above information in its entirety it is clear that the study is feasible and will be of benefit to the school and other schools who may experience similar problems with bullying.

## **1.9 RESEARCH UNIVERSE, POPULATION, SAMPLE AND SAMPLING METHOD**

### **1.9.1 Research Universe and Population**

Bless and Higson Smith (1995:85) define population as, "The entire set of objects and events or group of people which is the object of research and about which the researcher wants to

determine some characteristics is called the population (or universe).” Therefore these authors have the view that the terms population and universe are synonymous. Gravetter and Forzano (2003:115) also define the word population as the entire set of individuals of interest to the researcher.

On the contrary Arkava and Lane as cited by Strydom (2005:193) draw a distinction between the terms universe and population:

- Universe – all potential subjects who possess attributes which the researcher is interested in.
- Population – This sets boundaries on the study units.

The universe for the research is all children in South Africa who are currently attending high school. The population is all adolescents who are currently attending school A.

### **1.9.2 Sample and Sampling Method**

A sample as defined by Gravetter and Forzano (2003:115) is a set of individuals who are chosen from a particular population as they represent the population in the research study. The population of the study was large and contained far too many individuals to measure and study, as there are approximately 1 300 children in the chosen school (A). The sample of children chosen was from all the grade 11 and 12 pupils, between the ages of 16 and 20 years old. Each pupil was given the opportunity to participate in the study; they all received a written consent form which was to be signed by their parents. There are approximately 420 pupils in these two grades. Only those that returned signed slips were allowed to participate in the study. Due to the adolescents in high school often forgetting to return slips, the researcher had 111 pupils participate in the study.

The exact number of individuals who have been bullied were unknown to the researcher and therefore a non-probability quantitative sampling method was used. The type of non-probability method used was convenience sampling. This type of sampling is described by Yegidis and Weinbach (1996:135) as a sampling plan which involves selecting cases for the study that just

happen to be accessible to the researcher. The people selected for the sample were selected due to convenience. There was nothing random about participants being selected.

## **1.10 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Babbie (2005:61) states, “In most dictionaries and in common usage, ethics is typically associated with morality, and both deal with matters of right and wrong.” Looking specifically at research ethics one can define it as the responsibility of researchers to be honest and respectful to all individuals who are participating in the study (Gravetter & Forzano, 2003:59). When dealing with social research there are many ethical issues which need to be considered as this type of research usually involves individuals as participants, and these participants need to be protected from harm, whether it is emotional or physical. The following were the ethical issues which were related to the study:

### **1.10.1 Avoidance of harm**

Babbie (2005:63) mentions that social research should never injure people being studied. This injury, spoken about by Strydom (2005:58) in the social sciences will mainly be of an emotional nature, even though one cannot rule out physical harm completely.

To ensure that the participants in the study were not harmed the respondents were informed about the purposes and procedures of the investigation. Should the questionnaire have caused any emotional pain through recalled memories, the researcher debriefed all participants and offered group and individual counselling sessions. The respondents were also informed that alternative counselling could be arranged and provided by an outside educational psychologist should any participant request this.

### **1.10.2 Informed consent**

The principle of informed consent is for the researcher to provide all available information about the study, including risks, which may be involved, so that each individual can make a rational and informed decision as to whether they would like to participate (Gravetter & Forzano,

2003:67). The respondents were minors (as many of them were between the ages of 15 and 17); therefore obtaining written consent from their parents was essential. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, informed consent from the respondents' parents were requested four weeks before the questionnaires were completed and only the adolescents who returned their tear off slips participated. On the consent form the parent as well as the child was asked to sign. The research took place during school hours and therefore the school was the legal guardian for the duration thereof. The legal guardian gave permission for the study to be conducted during school time on the school premises.

The consent form explained that participation was voluntary and that the information received would be strictly private and confidential. The consent letter contained essential information such as the title of the study, purpose of the study, procedures, possible risks and discomforts, benefits, participants' rights, financial compensation and essential contact numbers as suggested by Maxwell and Satake (1997:216) and Stein and Cutler (1997:211). The part of the consent form containing all the necessary information were kept by the parents and only the signed tear off slip was sent back to school for the researchers use.

To further facilitate security for the participants the matter of anonymity, confidentiality and privacy needed addressing.

### **1.10.3 Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy**

“A research project guarantees anonymity when the researcher – not just the people who read about the research – cannot identify a given response with a given respondent” (Babbie, 2005:64). To ensure anonymity the participants will not be asked to write their names on the questionnaire. Referring to the school as School A will also protect the school where the research is being conducted.

Babbie (2005:65) explains the term confidentiality as the researcher being able to identify a person's responses but promising not to do so publicly. Should a child have written his/her name on the questionnaire by mistake, everything would have been done to keep all information confidential. None of the participants wrote their name on their questionnaires. According to

the policy of the University of Pretoria, data will be kept in a safe place for 15 years and then will be destroyed.

To ensure the privacy of School A the researcher attached consent letters from the school and the Department of Education to the proposal for review by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Humanities of the University of Pretoria but has not attached these letters to the research report. Only the consent form received from the Ethical Committee has been attached to the final research report (refer to Appendix C).

#### **1.10.4 Deception of participants**

When the researcher purposefully withholds information from participants or offers incorrect information to the volunteers, it is called deception and cannot be accepted in social research (Strydom, 2005:60). To prevent this from happening in this research, the researcher explained to the grade 11 and then to the grade 12 pupils what the purpose of the study was, what would be taking place and why it was important to conduct this research. In school A, the researcher had established a trusting relationship with many learners in both of these grades and therefore an atmosphere of trust had already been established. No person who was unable to give informed consent was involved in the study and no person was coerced into participating.

#### **1.10.5 Actions and Competence of researchers**

Strydom (2005:63) states that the researcher conducting the research needs to be competent and adequately skilled to undertake the proposed study. The researcher is of the opinion that she possessed all the skills and competency necessary to conduct the study and she also completed the lectured research module successfully. Throughout the research process, the researcher planned every step carefully, so that it could run its course in an ethically acceptable manner. The research was guided by an experienced study leader who increased the competence of the researcher.

### **1.10.6 Debriefing of respondents**

During the completion of the questionnaires, some respondents may have recalled painful memories. To avoid the children feeling depressed or stressed, the researcher provided debriefing as well as offered post test counselling if any respondent needed it. Judd, Smith and Kidder as quoted by Strydom (2005:66) mention the importance of debriefing where subjects are given the opportunity after the study to work through their experience and its aftermath, thereby minimizing harm. The researcher explained that if it was required a group counselling discussion could be held in the researcher's classroom.

### **1.11 PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED WITH THIS RESEARCH**

These are the problems which were experienced by the researcher:

- It was necessary for the researcher to obtain permission from the parents of the respondents as well as from the respondents themselves and this hindered the process. The researcher believes that if the children had to only give their permission and not that of their parents more respondents would have participated.
- The researcher gave the respondents the forms to take home to be signed four weeks before the questionnaire was completed, this posed problems as many children left the forms at home, sometimes the form got lost amongst other school papers.
- The respondents were therefore those students who naturally wanted to help the researcher, the sample perhaps included the more 'responsible' students, those who volunteered and also remembered to obtain their parents consent. The researcher therefore wonders what the results would be if the more irresponsible students were also included in the sample, however it was almost impossible to ensure that these students would remember to obtain consent.
- The researcher reminded the student's everyday in the beginning of the day during assembly at School A to bring their signed consent forms and encouraged all of them to participate, this unfortunately was all that could be done on the part of the researcher, and the rest was up to the grade 11 and 12 learners.

- School A has employed the researcher for 3½ years and during this time the researcher has been able to build relationships with many of the grade 11 and 12 learners which was fortunate as a sense of trust had already been established and that is why many of the respondents were willing to participate. However it may have prevented others from participating, especially if the researcher had a difficult experience with any of them in the past.
- Before the group administered questionnaire was completed, the researcher had received 125 consent forms out of which only 111 actually completed the questionnaire. This could have been due to the fact that adolescents sometimes change their minds; they aren't 'in the mood'. This was something which was out of the researcher's hand, even though they had been reminded over and over again of the time and date that the questionnaire would be filled in.

## 1.12 DEFINITION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Key concepts from the proposed study can be defined as:

### *Adolescence:*

“The life cycle between childhood and adulthood, beginning at puberty and ending with young adulthood. Adolescents struggle to find self-identity and this struggle is often accompanied by erratic behaviour” (The Social Work Dictionary, 2003:8).

“The developmental period which we call adolescence extends broadly from the ages of 12 to 21 years. It is a time of opportunities and hazards” (Winkley, 1996:80).

For the study the researcher defines adolescence as the age of tremendous struggles and turmoil specifically as they begin to form a picture of themselves. The adolescent either internalizes messages from the environment or sees these messages as outside of who they are. The age involved in adolescence ranges from 13 to 18 years.



### ***Bullying:***

“Bullying is the repeated (not just once) harming of another through words or physical attack on the school grounds, or on the way to or from school. The act of bullying is unfair, because the bully is either physically stronger or more verbally or socially skilled than the victim(s)” (Hazler *et al.*, 2001:133)

“A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more students.” (Dake *et al.*, 2003:173).

The researcher defines bullying as an action which includes the following aspects:

- For the behaviour to be considered bullying there needs to be an imbalance in power between the people (or person) harassing and the person being harassed.
- The behaviour is a negative action which is intentional and aimed at hurting the person being victimized.
- The bullying behaviour takes place repeatedly.
- Bullying is aggressive behaviour.
- The act of bullying has severe consequences of which many happen within the child's inner world.

### ***Bullied child/victim***

Children who are bullied are victims. “Victims tend to be rejected not only by the bullies but typically by other non-bullying peers as well. They complain of being lonely and feel a great deal of stress because they do not have supportive relationships within their peer groups” Randall (1997:25).

Pikas as quoted by Smith and Sharp (1994:5) distinguishes between the ‘classic’ or ordinary victim, whose behaviour does not particularly cause bullying, and then the ‘provocative’ victim, who by being disruptive and behaving inappropriately can be seen as contributing to the bullying they receive.

The researcher defines victims as those children who are bullied, who have been exposed to one or more forms of bullying and who have been affected by this exposure in one or more ways. The victims may have been targeted due to various reasons such as being different from the rest of the group or being the new child in school.

### ***Impact***

*The Pocket Oxford Dictionary* (1996:439) defines impact as, “A strong effect or impression.”

“A forceful consequence, a strong effect. Influencing strongly. Alter, change, modify, cause to change, make different” (The American heritage dictionary...,2000)

For the purpose of this research, the term impact is defined as the effect that bullying behaviour has on victims. This bullying behaviour alters the way these individuals view aspects of themselves as well as the world around them.

The impact of the bullying undergone by the respondents are contextualized within the school environment.

### ***School***

“Educational institution for pupils up to 19 years of age” (*The Pocket Oxford Dictionary*, 1996:813).

Johnson in Coloroso (2003:188) defines the importance and function of school as, “Teaching math, reading, social studies and science, perhaps the most important thing for students to learn is how to interact effectively and peacefully with each other and the world at large.”

The researcher defines a school as an organization where children are educated in various fields of study but it is also a place where children interpret messages that they receive from the school environment as they begin to interact socially.

### *Sense of Self*

Blom (2004:113) defines the sense of self of children as, “Distinguished from the environment by means of the contact boundary which is the point where they make a distinction between that which is part of themselves and that which is considered to be outside them.”

Oaklander (1988:280-281) mentions how this sense of self is formed, “A baby is not born with bad feelings about himself. All babies think they are wonderful. How a child feels about himself after a time, however, is certainly determined to a great extent by the early messages he gets about himself from his parents. In the final analysis though, it is the child who translates those messages to himself.”

The researcher defines the sense of self as the view which an individual has of various spheres of this self, and this view is affected by the environment in which the individual finds him or herself.

## **1.13 DIVISION OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

The following is an outline of the research report:

### **Chapter 1 – Introduction and research methodology**

Introduction, problem formulation and research methodology.

### **Chapter 2 – In depth literature review regarding bullying and violence**

Definition of bullying.

Normal peer conflict versus bullying.

Types of bullying.

Characteristics of bullied, victims and bystanders.

Consequences of bullying.

Gender differences.

Interventions.

### **Chapter 3 – In depth literature review regarding sense of self and various aspects of the self**

Defining the sense of self.

Gestalt theoretical perspective.

The sense of self.

Aspects of the sense of self.

### **Chapter 4 – Empirical study**

Goal and objectives of study.

The research hypothesis.

Research approach.

Research design.

Ethical issues.

The pilot test.

Sampling.

Data collection.

Validity and Reliability.

Data analysis.

The impact of physical bullying on the adolescents sense of self.

Social bullying and the adolescents sense of self.

Verbal bullying's impact on the sense of self.

### **Chapter 5 – Summary, conclusions and recommendation**

## CHAPTER 2

# BULLYING AS A PROBLEM EXPERIENCED IN SCHOOLS

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

*‘I shall remember forever and will never forget*

*Monday: my money was taken.*

*Tuesday: name calling.*

*Wednesday: my uniform torn.*

*Thursday: my body pouring with blood.*

*Friday: it’s ended*

*Saturday: freedom’*

(Marr & Field in Coloroso, 2003:XV)

The above quotation was taken from the final pages of the diary of Vijay Singh. He was found hanging from the banister rail at home on the Sunday. Many adolescents are exposed to similar or worse cases of bullying by their school peers or friends. Not every adolescent who is exposed to bullying will choose bullycide (a term used by Garrett (2003:39) to describe children choosing suicide instead of facing another day of unrelenting bullying).

The research focuses on bullying taking place in the school system, therefore it is important to understand the phenomena in terms of this environment. Parsons (2005:7) describes the problem of bullying in schools as, “Schools are plagued with physical assaults, relationship bullying, cyber bullying, severe name-calling, untrue gossip, exclusion, unwanted sexual touching, intimidation, threats, and coercion. The only differences among schools are how widespread and oppressive the behaviours might be and how schools challenge and deal with these behaviours.” Bonds and Stoker (2000:1) add to Parsons’ (2005:7) description by stating that bullying in schools is often chronic, pervasive and harmful to a large number of students. It is often more

subtle than the violent acts which make headline news, but is far more damaging to a greater number of students. The researcher has found this to be true in School A and has also noticed that often the emotional and psychological damage which bullying causes, like the bullying behaviour itself, is ‘hidden’ from society and often not recognised by the adults in the victim’s environment.

To understand the phenomenon of bullying more fully, this chapter will discuss in detail the concept of bullying as well as related aspects. Although the researcher wishes to focus on the impact that bullying has on the sense of self, it is necessary for the reader to first understand the different facets of bullying and then the sense of self (chapter 3) before the empirical investigation is undertaken. Although the researcher is particularly interested in the victim of the bullying, there are usually other role players involved. In order for one to understand the victim better, the researcher is of the opinion that it is necessary to have an understanding of the other two key role players and therefore this chapter will also take a closer look at all the relevant role players.

To clarify the term ‘bullying’ the researcher includes various definitions from her review of literature.

## **2.2 DEFINING BULLYING**

Rigby in Lee (2004:13) defines bullying as, “Repeated oppression, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group or persons.” O’Moore and Minton (2004:72) add to this definition by stating that it does not constitute bullying when young people of the same age and power have occasional conflict. Hazler (1996:10) sees this conflict as being a normal occurrence between human beings. Bullying is also seen by Conoley and Goldstein (2004:11) as lower-level aggressive behaviour which is either hidden or covert. Olweus as cited in Lee (2004:38) suggests that one views bullying as a subcategory of aggressive behaviour and violence forms another subcategory but violence and bullying do not occur totally independently. Certain types of bullying are violent and others not.

Bullying is seen to have several key elements as described by Bonds and Stoker (2000:16):

- **An imbalance of power** – This can be physical, psychological or intellectual and causes an obstacle for the victim to defend him/herself.
- **Repeated actions** – The bullying actions usually occur repetitively and over a specific period of time.
- **Intentional actions** – The actions which are chosen are purposefully executed. The target is chosen and the actions are intended to hurt and/or intimidate the targeted victim.
- **Unequal levels of effect** – The victim and bully display very different emotional effects. The victim will show a high level of emotional distress such as crying or withdrawing whereas the bully shows very little emotion or anguish.

Parents have for many years trivialized or minimized the impact of bullying. Many myths were also believed about bullying as mentioned by O’Moore and Minton (2004:1)

TABLE 2.1: Myths about bullying

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘It’s part of life’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘It happens in all schools, so it’s nothing to worry about.’</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never harm you.’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘It’ll toughen you up/let you know what life’s about.’</li> </ul>

O’Moore and Minton (2004:1).

The tragic ending of Vijay Singh’s life is proof that exposure to this type of victimization can cause immense pain. Bonds and Stoker (2000:2) state the importance of no longer dismissing bullying behaviour as innocent teasing or harmless play as there have been serious reported consequences of exposure to this type of behaviour. Garrett (2003:5) mentions that recent school shootings have been the result of pain brought about by taunts and threats at school. The author continues with this line of thought by mentioning that more than two-thirds of school shooters said that they felt persecuted or bullied by other students. One can thus see the reason this problem needs urgent research and attention in schools.

## 2.3 NORMAL PEER CONFLICT VERSUS BULLYING

Normal peer conflict is when two students of the same status get into an argument, but it is more accidental and not serious (Garrett, 2003:9). If however the aggressor knows that his or her behaviours are disturbing to the victim, the act is known as bullying (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:15). In table 2.2, Bonds and Stoker (2000:19) clearly outline the difference between normal conflict and bullying:

TABLE 2.2: The differences between conflict and bullying

<b>Normal Conflict</b>	<b>Bullying</b>
Equal power – friends	Imbalance of power; not friends
Happens occasionally	Repeated negative actions
Accidental	Purposeful
Not serious	Serious – threat of physical harm or emotional or psychological hurt
Equal emotional reaction	Strong emotional reaction on part of the victim
Not seeking power or attention	Seeking power, control
Not trying to get something	Trying to gain material things or power
Remorse – take responsibility	No remorse-blames victim
Effort to solve the problem	No effort to solve problem

Bonds and Stoker (2000:19).

It is important for adults involved in the school to become aware of the difference between normal conflict and bullying so that a proper assessment is made of the problem.

## 2.4 TYPES OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Originally, the researcher thought that physical acts of violence were the only types of behaviour that could be classified as bullying. The stereotypical understanding of bullying was what the researcher had in mind, for example the big, tough kid in class who has repeated grades several



times and who threatens other students with beatings unless they do what he says (Parsons, 2005:10). A variety of literature, however, provides evidence that bullying can assume both **direct** and **indirect** forms (Lee, 2004:9; Piskin, 2003:556; Hunter & Boyle, 2002:324; Boulton, Trueman & Flemington, 2002:353; Olweus, 1993:10).

**Direct** forms of bullying can be defined as relatively open attacks on a victim (Boulton *et al.*, 2002:354) that are carried out face to face (Lee, 2004:10). Boulton *et al.* (2002:354) define **indirect** forms of bullying, as being more subtle and less direct and will include behaviour such as social isolation and exclusion from a group. Lee (2004:10) adds to this definition by mentioning that **indirect** forms of bullying usually involve a third party. Both forms of bullying which have been defined, have sub-type behaviours which should be investigated further.

#### **2.4.1 Sub-types of bullying**

Lee (2004:9) describes three basic sub-types of bullying behaviour:

##### **2.4.1.1 Physical bullying**

Coloroso (2003:16) mentions that, “Although it is the most visible and therefore the most readily identifiable form of bullying, physical bullying accounts for less than one-third of bullying incidents reported by children.” Larson (2005:2) explains that the problem for a school is that physical bullying presents a challenge for that school to maintain a safe and orderly learning environment. Even though not all physical bullying is reported, its overt nature induces fear in students.

Lee (2004:9) states that this particular type of bullying is more than punching or kicking (**direct** forms) and can assume **indirect** forms such as taking one’s possessions or damaging property. These **indirect** forms also have a physical manifestation of bullying but do not include physical pain. Included in the indirect forms of physical bullying, as mentioned by Lee (2004:9); Coloroso (2003:16) and Boulton *et al.* (2002:355) are:

TABLE 2.3: Indirect forms of physical bullying

Extortion – where threat of violence leads the victim to give up money or possessions	Threat of violence or gestures and body language which is intimidating	Making faces and dirty gestures
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Lee (2004:9); Coloroso (2003:16); Boulton *et al.* (2002:355).

In research conducted by Glover, Gough, Johnson and Cartwright (2000:144) the following were the physical bullying activities included on their questionnaires:

TABLE 2.4: Physical bullying activities

Physical Bullying	Damage to property
Threatened with violence	Food taken from me
Pushed	Schoolbag taken from me
Pulled by the hair	Property damage
Slapped	School books damaged
Punched	Clothes taken or damaged
Kicked	PE kit taken or damaged
Tripped	Money demanded
Stamped on	Dinner tickets demanded
Spat on	Made to fight

Glover, Gough, Johnson and Cartwright (2000:144).

The child who physically harms another child is seen as the most troubled of all the bullies and is more likely to move towards more serious criminal offences (Coloroso, 2003:17). Garrett (2003:54) contributes to this view by mentioning that physical bullying is a moderate risk factor for serious violence at ages 15-25 and that bullies are four times more likely to be convicted of crimes by the age of 24 than non-bullies. It should thus be assumed that this is a vital reason to stop the bullying at school level to prevent any future criminal activities (including serious violent acts).

### 2.4.1.2 Verbal bullying

Verbal bullying is seen as one of the most common types of bullying used by both boys and girls, accounting for 70% of reported cases which can have an immediate impact (Lee, 2004:10; Coloroso, 2003:15). Words are powerful tools that can break the spirit of the child who is on the receiving end of the verbal bullying (Coloroso, 2003:15). The difference between verbal good-natured teasing and verbal bullying is generally distinguished by the recipients' feelings. Children who are teased are not made to feel bad because it is done for fun (Garrett, 2003:5). Verbal bullying, on the other hand is often **directed** at vulnerable groups such as sexual orientation, ethnic groups, people with learning difficulties and the children are affected negatively. The types of verbal bullying which Lee (2004:10); Boulton *et al.*(2002:355) and Coloroso (2003:16) mention include:

TABLE 2.5: Types of verbal bullying behaviour

Name-calling	Offensive, threatening and insulting remarks
Threatening the victim	Taunting
Teasing	Belittling
Cruel criticism	Personal defamation
Racist slurs	Sexually suggestive or sexually abusive remarks.

Lee (2004:10); Boulton *et al.*(2002:355); Coloroso (2003:16)

It is important to remember that within the new technological age in which the 21<sup>st</sup> century finds itself, bullying can take place using new technology. Lee (2004:10) mentions 'technobullying', 'cyberbullying' or 'e-bullying', which involves using the Internet, e-mail and cell phones to inflict hurt on others. This is an **indirect** form of bullying where the recipient may never actually know the bully. Coloroso (2003:16) adds to Lee's (2004) contribution by stating that verbal bullying can also include abusive phone calls, intimidating e-mails, anonymous notes containing threats of violence, untruthful accusations, false and malicious rumours, and gossip. In many cases teachers and parents will not deal with verbal bullying and if this behaviour is condoned, it allows the targeted child to become dehumanized. It thus becomes easier to attack the same

child without eliciting normal compassion from those who observe the bullying (Coloroso, 2003:16).

It was necessary for the researcher to be aware of all types of verbal bullying when formulating the questionnaire, as an overall picture of the problem was required in this research.

### 2.4.1.3 Social bullying

Lee (2004:10) defines this subcategory of bullying as one which includes deliberate exclusion from a social group or intimidation within the group. Coloroso (2003:17) on the other hand calls this type of bullying relational bullying which is ‘The systematic diminishment of a bullied child’s sense of self.’ Social bullying can be difficult to detect from the outside. It can also be **direct**, with exclusion, ignoring, isolating, or shunning experienced by the victims. **Indirect** forms include exclusion carried out away from the victims and is not experienced by them until they are informed of it or they attempt to join the group (Lee, 2004:10; Coloroso, 2003:17).

Relational (social) bullying often involves, as mentioned by Coloroso (2003:17) and O’Moore and Minton (2004:72) subtle gestures such as:

TABLE:2.6: Subtle gestures involved with relational bullying

Aggressive stares	Frowns	Hostile body language
Rolling of eyes	Sneers	Shaking fists
Sighs	Snickers	Looks or glances that contain nasty messages

Coloroso (2003:17) and O’Moore and Minton (2004:72).

In this research the researcher is focusing on the adolescent years during which time this type of bullying is the most powerful (Coloroso, 2003:17). According to the developmental phase, the peer group is very important at this stage as adolescents are trying to discover who they are while finding a sense of belonging with their peers. Therefore one can assume the difficulties it causes when a child is not invited to parties or sleepovers. This type of bullying is not as readily

identifiable as the first two types, because the results are not as obvious, but the victim still experiences the pain deeply.

## **2.5 THE BULLY TRIAD**

When a child is bullied, interpersonal aggression (direct or indirect) takes place and there are individuals or groups of individuals who are involved. The adult supervisory community is generally ignorant of the bullying due to the reluctance of peer groups to provide information and the hesitation of bullied pupils to report such behaviour (Smith & Sharp, 1994:5). The bully triad consists of the person who bullies others (known as the bully), the person who receives this bullying behaviour, known as the bullied (or victim) and the other person/s who observe the bullying taking place and this person (the bystander/s). The chapter will now turn its attention to the first key player of the triad, the bully.

## **2.6 THE BULLY**

The bully is the child or group of children who carry out the bullying behaviour. They victimize their friends or peers through wilful, conscious and deliberate actions intended to induce fear. Parsons (2005:49) believes that this behaviour stems from personal values that have become ingrained over time and that this behaviour is consistent with how they perceive the world. Pellegrini (2002:161) suggests that an adolescent's need to strive for leadership and status among his/her peers is an important factor in motivating this aggression. Garrett (2003:72) states that temperament is seen as the best child factor in determining bullying behaviour. According to the author, children who are more active and impulsive may be more likely to develop into bullies.

One cannot assume that a bully looks a certain way, as some of them are big and others are small. A bully therefore cannot be identified by the way he looks, but by the way he acts (Coloroso, 2003:11). A distinctive characteristic of bullies is their aggression towards their peers. They are often also aggressive towards adults and teachers and their attitude towards violence is generally more positive than that of other students (Olweus, 1993:34). The typical bully has become embittered (often by an abusive upbringing) and is therefore seething with resentment or

is sometimes irritated by the fact that those around him/her have not fulfilled their sense of entitlement (Garrett, 2003:73). Whether a child is bullying or being bullied is irrelevant – children, who experience either or both, need help (Garrett, 2003:7). There are different types of bullies which will be discussed later in this chapter. One can classify bullies according to the way in which they actively or passively bully others. Table 1.3 has a description of certain traits that all bullies have in common according to Coloroso (2003:20) and Bonds and Stoker (2000:23):

TABLE 2.7: Common traits of bullies

They lack guilt and value the rewards they achieve from their behaviour (such as receiving attention or gaining control over somebody)	Will use other people to get what they want.
Difficulty in recognizing that other people have different vantage points. They lack empathy for their victims, feeling that their behaviour is justified.	Concerned with their own wants and pleasures, not concerned about the rights or needs of others.
Will generally bully when parents or other adults are not around.	Other peers or siblings who may seem weaker are observed by bullies as ‘prey’.
When confronted by a ‘united front’ of peers, who believe that the behaviour is unacceptable, the power of the bully is diminished.	Will not accept responsibility for own actions.
Cannot consider consequences of behaviour as they lack foresight and think in unrealistic ways.	Both boys and girls bully but their tactics for bullying differ.
They are not loners but have a group of peers who admire and often model the bullying behaviour.	Returned aggression is not effective and usually provokes the bully into further aggression.
A bully’s behaviour has often been modeled by a significant role model (either a parent or other role model).	Many times bullies become bored and are thrilled by exerting power over others.

Coloroso (2003:20) and Bonds and Stoker (2000:23).

Coloroso (2003:20) is of the opinion that the bullies often project their own insecurities onto the victim and Hazler (1996:26) supports this view by stating that bullies tend to have poor self-concepts and limited success identities due to internal feelings of inferiority and unimportance. Authors Bonds and Stoker (2000:23) as well as Garrett (2003:44) have a different view, stating that bullies are not insecure children but frequently have an average or above average self-esteem which may often be unrealistic. The researcher determines the necessity to first look at the bully in his/her individual capacity before deciding what type of view they have of themselves.

### **2.6.1 Types of bullies**

Different bullies behave in different ways and it is important for the adults dealing with them to observe their behaviour so that they can classify them into different typecasts. There are seven types of bullies according to Coloroso (2003:18). They are:

#### **2.6.1.1 The confident bully**

This type of bully has a large ego, an inflated sense of self, and a sense of entitlement. He/she has no empathy for the targets of their bullying. This type of bully is often admired by teachers because of his/her powerful personality but does not usually have many friends (Coloroso, 2003:18). Sullivan *et al.* (2004:15) have an alternative name for this type of bully calling them the ‘clever’ bully. The ‘clever’ bully is called this due to his/her ingenious way of masking his/her behaviour. Often people around this bully do not believe that he/she is capable of such negative behaviour.

#### **2.6.1.2 The social bully**

By using rumour, gossip, verbal taunts, and shunning, this bully isolates his/her targets by excluding them from social activities. Often this type of bully is envious of the victim’s positive qualities and generally has a poor sense of self, hidden behind exaggerated confidence and charm. This bully is manipulative and may act caring but it is often a deceptive tool used to get what he/she wants (Coloroso, 2003:18).

### **2.6.1.3 The fully armoured bully**

This bully is often cool and detached towards peers but yet very charming and deceptive, especially in front of adults. When no one will stop him or see him, is the time he will bully. The type of effect which is observed in this bully is flat (cold and unfeeling). He/she is usually vindictive and vicious towards his/her target (Coloroso, 2003:18).

### **2.6.1.4 The hyperactive bully**

Coloroso (2003:18) explains this type of bully as one who struggles with academics and has very poor social skills. As a result they bully other children. Their reason for bullying is an inability to read social cues and as a result they often react aggressively, even to the slightest provocation. This bully will place blame outside of himself or herself.

### **2.6.1.5 The bullied bully**

This child is both a target as well as a bully (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:16). Due to his/her own feeling of powerlessness and helplessness – as a result of being bullied by other children and adults - he/she will bully others too. This type of bully strikes out at those who have bullied them and at weaker children (Coloroso, 2003:18). It is difficult to deal with this type of bully because on the one end of the spectrum they exhibit aggressive and unacceptable behaviour but on the opposite side he/she is extremely vulnerable (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:16).

### **2.6.1.6 The bunch of bullies**

Coloroso (2003:19) defines this type of bully as a group of friends who collectively behave in a negative way towards a specific target. The way in which each member of the group behaves is different to how they would behave if they were by themselves. Usually they target somebody they would like to exclude or they use them as a scapegoat. It is difficult to understand why people act differently when they are in a group. Bonds and Stoker (2000:21) explain bullying in groups using the application of the social learning theory, whereby modeling is seen as central to individuals' learning specific behaviours. The bully often has personality characteristics which attract others to them. If peers or bystanders have a positive view and attitude towards the bully, they are more likely to replicate the bullying behaviour and 'join in'.



### **2.6.1.7 The gang of bullies**

Here one observes a group of people coming together to form a strategic alliance in pursuit of power, control and dominance. Initially the group is formed for members to feel as if they are part of a family of sorts and to fulfil their need to be respected and protected. They become devoted to their group even if it is to the detriment of other individuals (Coloroso, 2003:18).

Olweus (1993:34) adds an eighth type of bully known as:

### **2.6.1.8 The passive bully**

These are described by Olweus (1993:34) as those individuals who participate in the bullying but who do not usually take the initiative. Generally they are the insecure and anxious students.

Thus from the above paragraphs the researcher is of the opinion that, because of the peer group being such an important part in this developmental phase, some of the bullies rely heavily on others in their group (for example the gang of bullies and bunch of bullies). The individual is as strong as his group rings true for these types of bullies. The individual bully and group of bullies display this type behaviour for a reason. The researcher believes that often adults become angry with the bully but fail to recognise or seek the background of the bully and often this individual needs as much help as the victim himself.

Having looked at the different types of bullies it could be beneficial to explore the reasons that are instrumental in changing children into bullies.

## **2.6.2 Reasons why children become bullies**

The question that one begins to ask is what are the reasons that some children become bullies? What makes a child want to harm another child in such a degrading, harmful manner? There are various reasons which authors have outlined in their research and writings about the topic of bullying. Some are:

### **2.6.2.1 Inborn temperaments**

Coloroso (2003:18) mentions that genetic inborn temperaments of the child are a factor which results in certain children becoming bullies. Rigby in Bonds and Stoker (2000:24) agrees with this reason and is of the opinion that even though the genetic theory is controversial, children are born with dispositions which make some of them prone to more aggressive and impulsive behaviours. Parsons (2005:12) continues with the genetic reason by mentioning that some bullies are born with what is commonly called a behavioural control disorder. They are seen as emotional raw nerves that misunderstand interaction with others and justify their behaviour as they react to ‘perceived threats’. This makes sense, in the researcher’s opinion, particularly if dealing with the hyperactive bully described in paragraph 2.6.1.4.

### **2.6.2.2 Environmental influences**

Coloroso (2003:18) discusses environmental influences as a factor for encouraging bullying behaviour. Bonds and Stoker (2000:24) further refer to various environmental influences as having an effect on whether a child becomes a bully or not:

- Bonds and Stoker (2000:24) state that research has shown that certain child rearing practices and aggression may at times lead to bullying – Practices such as a lack of supervision, using harsh inconsistent disciplinary methods and lack of involvement in a child’s life have shown to have an effect. “Parents of children who develop bullying patterns are frequently unavailable both physically and psychologically” (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:24). Smith and Sharp (1994:8) add to the list of parental practices which contribute to bullying: a lack of warmth between parents in the family, the use of physical violence within the family environment and no clear guidelines for behaviour and monitoring.
- Children who bully are difficult to parents; they often become masters at justifying their behaviour because of their incorrect thinking patterns. Parents do not correct this thinking at an early age and often believe their children, thereby enhancing these unhealthy thought processes. They thus facilitate their children becoming bullies (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:25).
- Modeling has an effect on why children become bullies. When the child observes modeled bullying either by adults or by other children, they revere the power and influence which the bully exerts. The more the child is exposed to incidents of bullying the more desensitized he/she becomes. This modeled behaviour is many times even observed through television

programmes/movies and computer games where children are exposed to heroes, villains and those in-between, who all use violence to get what they want (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:25; Hazler, 1996:27). Garrett (2003:57) mentions that television is not a uniform cause of bullying, otherwise everyone who watched violence would become a bully. However the researcher is of the opinion that if a child is predisposed to aggressive behaviour, specifically in the more formative years, then exposure to aggressively violent behaviour could encourage the child to bully other children.

### **2.6.2.3 The benefit component**

Olweus (1993:5) adds a reason for children becoming bullies as he mentions the ‘benefit component’ whereby the bullies coerce their victims into providing them with goods such as money, cigarettes and other items. As Parsons (2005:13) states, “these students engage in voluntary aggression for their own advantage.”

Coloroso (2003:18) is adamant that bullies are taught to be bullies thus strengthening the social learning theory described in paragraph 2.6.1.6. It is important for the counsellor who deals with the bully to remember that there are reasons that the child behaves in that way. A full assessment is necessary in order to accurately discover and conclude what these reasons are.

Thus according to the above authors it seems that there are a variety of reasons as to why children actively participate in bullying, furthermore it is the researcher’s opinion that if a child has an inborn temperament it doesn’t mean that the outcome for this type of bully is bleak but that any child has the ability to learn and change. Adults can foster an atmosphere of mutual respect both in the classroom and out. It is also important that parents are aware of child rearing practices as they may be fostering a bullying nature in their child.

### **2.6.3 Bullies in the school environment**

Hazler (1996:31) sees a school as an important place for bullies as this is the place where they will find their victims and where they can exercise their control. They tend to perform an acceptable amount of appropriate school behaviour to be accepted in the school system but this

behaviour takes place in combination with a series of problems that arise from bullying activities. Lagerspetz, Bjorquist, Berts and King in Hazler (1996:32) speak about the fact that bullies tend to have a less positive attitude towards schoolwork, even though generally their intellectual abilities are average in nature. “Continual alertness and attention to controlling the flock is needed so that little time and energy is left for intellectual pursuits” (Hazler, 1996:32). Therefore one can conclude that due to all of the energy and time put into planning and executing bullying, little time is left for school work.

It has been the researcher’s experience at school A that bullying often happens within the classroom in front of the teacher’s eyes. The form of bullying is generally more subtle, for example a particular child (it is usually the same individual) will answer a question or give an opinion and immediately snickers and sneers from the other children in the classroom is observed. The researcher has the belief that teachers are not trained properly to deal with this type of behaviour in the classroom and this is a problem which should be addressed.

Details about bullies have been recorded. Victims need to be paid attention to, to put them and their role into perspective.

## **2.7 VICTIMS**

A child who becomes the target of the bullying behaviour is either called the target or the victim. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:17) explains that a victim is, “Anyone who shows vulnerability and does not have the support of the group. The roles are not fixed, a confident person in one environment can be vulnerable in another that is why children who move from one school to another are always at greater risk.” The authors continue to mention that often victims are on the periphery of the social group, meaning that they may be different in some way or be rejected due to specific behaviour which they display. Even though victims of bullying, just as in the case of the bullies themselves, come in all shapes and sizes, they have one thing in common and that is that each of them was singled out to be the object of scorn and thus the recipient of verbal, physical, or relational aggression (Coloroso, 2003:42).

Hazler (1996:7) mentions that the repetition of the behaviour which the victims are exposed to produces a very negative outlook on the world in which they find themselves. This negative view starts to form at an impressionable age and can therefore have long-term consequences that go beyond psychological hurt which victims of isolated traumatic incidences experience. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:18) explains that it is through this ongoing abuse that they begin to lose their sense of self worth and often experience depression. The extremes of victimization and low self-esteem become visible through self-harm and suicide. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:18) continues to state that often victims think that they are in fact responsible for the bullying because they are inadequate.

McCann (2002:117) states that it is important not only to focus on the bully, but also on the victim when dealing with threats of violence. The bully may view violence as a way of gaining power and control; however the victim may begin to see violence as the only way of stopping chronic bullying by others. Therefore victims need to be assessed with respect to how they are being affected (McCann, 2002:116). The researcher has the opinion that the bullying may not necessarily be physical or violent but may trigger aggression within the victim and therefore start a cycle whereby an individual learns one way to deal with problems and that is through aggressive behaviour.

### **2.7.1 Types of victims**

The following are the classification of victims according to the work of various authors (Hazler, 1996:8; Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:18; Bonds & Stoker, 2000:37):

#### **2.7.1.1 The innocent victim**

This victim has little to do with the causes of bullying but still has choices to make in how to best deal with the situation (Hazler, 1996:8). In the researcher's experience at school A, many of the victims who seek help fall within the boundaries of this category.

#### **2.7.1.2 The passive victim**

This is the most common type of victim and is also clearly recognizable (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:36). In this case the victim has few coping resources and makes for an easy target, finding

themselves at the bottom of the pecking order. Often he/she tries to please the bully in different ways and does not fight back hence the name the ‘passive’ victim (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:18; Bonds & Stoker, 2000:36). The child who becomes a passive victim is seen by Bonds and Stoker (2000:36) as a child who:

TABLE 2.8: Reasons why a child becomes a passive victim

Is nonassertive and submissive	Is cautious and quiet	Cries easily and collapses quickly
Has few friends and is not connected to a social network	Displays anxious and insecure tendencies	Lacks humour and social skills
Is physically weak (particularly evident in boys)		

Bonds and Stoker (2000:36).

### 2.7.1.3 The provocative victim

Bonds and Stoker (2000:37) state that the provocative victims are fewer in number and more difficult to identify than the passive victim. This type of victim may have very specific types of actions which encourage or aggravate the bullying (Hazler, 1996:8). Sullivan *et al.* (2004:18) lists some of the behaviours which encourage the bullying and that is: behaving in ways that are annoying, immature or inappropriate. In some cases the victims have not figured out how to behave and in other cases they have deliberately set out to irritate those around them. Bonds and Stoker (2000:37) explain that often this type of victim may be misidentified as a bully because they often fight back with the bully but are ineffective with bullies because of their poor social skills. Olweus (1993:57) states that the provocative victim shows a combination of anxious and aggressive reaction patterns. Bonds and Stoker (2000:37) describe this victim as displaying the following behaviour:

TABLE 2.9: Behaviour displayed by the provocative victim

Is aggressive and argumentative	Displays disruptive and irritating behaviours	Is easily emotionally aroused
Prolongs conflict even when	May be diagnosed with	

losing	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	
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Bonds and Stoker (2000:37).

A victim's provocative nature is not an excuse for the tormentor's abusive actions but it does however explain where the tormentor's motivations arise from (Hazler, 1996:9).

#### **2.7.1.4 The vicarious victim**

Bonds and Stoker (2000:37) give a synonym for this type of victim and call them the surrogate victims. These children have either witnessed or heard about incidences of bullying at their school and have become affected by the environment of fear which the bully creates. A vicarious victim is described by the authors as a child who:

- feels vulnerable as a potential target
- has a moderate to high degree of empathy and sensitivity
- does not take a stand against bullying due to fear
- experiences guilt about his or her failure to act

Bonds and Stoker (2000:37) describe these victims as being less easily identifiable than other types of victims; however they too suffer from the physical and emotional consequences of bullying and can be taught the necessary skills to become mobilized and begin standing against bullying.

#### **2.7.2 Reasons why children become victims/targets of bullying**

It is important to remember that anybody can become a victim of bullying (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:13). It was often thought in the past that victims of bullying were the weak children; however this is not necessarily true and no one is immune to the problem. There are studies however which look at particular groups who become targeted for bullying in a particular society (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:13). The groups who have been targeted are:

- Racist bullying – This is where bullying and racism meet. Groups are targeted because they look different, use a different language, have different customs and speak different languages.
- Special needs students – Here the children are targeted because of a physical or psychological difference which makes them stand out from their peers. Often they may not be able to defend themselves or they behave in ways which make them vulnerable to predators.
- Homophobic bullying – In this case, a child is bullied because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. At other times a child is labeled as gay, just to humiliate him/her and place their sexuality in question.

Sullivan *et al.* (2004:14) mention that the bully will find reasons to bully a child and that there are no shortages of excuses. Other reasons children are bullied are due to poverty, physical unattractiveness and behaviour. Coloroso (2003:43) adds to the list of reasons as to why children are targeted and these are: the child who is new on the block; the child who is the youngest in the school; the individual who has been traumatized; the individual who is submissive; the child who is unwilling to fight; the one who is shy, reserved or sensitive; the individual who is independent and doesn't change to suit the norm; the child who is fat or thin, short or tall; the one who wears braces or glasses; has acne or a skin condition. These are just many examples of the reasons why a child is bullied. There are many others and as was mentioned earlier, nobody is exempt from the problem of bullying. Sometimes a child may simply be at the wrong place at the wrong time.

### 2.7.3 Signs displayed by victims

It is important that teachers and parents be aware of the presence of bullying and to take note of the characteristics of children who are targeted (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:13; Rigby, 1996:240; Coloroso, 2003:52; Olweus, 1993:56):

TABLE 2.10: Signs that children have been bullied

Signs for parents	Signs for teachers
They have physical injuries.	Members of a class snigger or nudge each



	other when a particular student comes in or draws attention to him or herself.
Some of their clothes are missing or ripped.	A student seems listless, despondent or unhappy.
Their belongings disappear.	The child is usually alone and is left out of activities.
The moods they display are extreme.	The learner who was working well and achieving good grades seems to work less and his/her grades drop.
They become reluctant to go to school.	A student who is frequently absent.
They come home early from 'dates' and meetings with friends.	Change in behaviour within the classroom (for example, the child becomes withdrawn or irritable).
Asking to be driven to school.	Have few friends.
Psychosomatic signs such as non-specific pains, headaches and abdominal pains.	Appearing anxious and biting nails.
The child may wet his/her bed, sleep poorly or cry out in his/her sleep.	Withdraws from school activities and wants to be left alone.
Stops talking about peers and everyday activities.	Do not bring classmates or other peers home after school.
Uses demeaning language when speaking about peers at school.	Seldom or never invited to parties and not interested in arranging parties for themselves.
Does something out of character (for example is caught skipping school)	Request or steal extra money from family.

Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:13; Coloroso, 2003:52; Rigby, 1996:240; Olweus, 1993:56.

One of the most common reactions by victims is depression, this reaction needs to be recognized, by parents and teachers. Hazler (1996:48) explains that the reason these children feel depressed is because they perceive no way to gain more control of their life. What furthers this depression is the fact that labels that emphasize their powerlessness stigmatize victims of bullies.

In the researcher's opinion it is important for counsellors to establish why the child is being bullied because this will indicate important therapeutic processes.

## **2.8 BYSTANDERS**

The third member of the bully triad is known as the bystander. This member of the triad far outnumbers both victims and bullies (Bonds & Stoker, 2000:43). Coloroso (2003:62) defines the bystander as aiding and abetting the bully through their acts of omission and commission. Bonds and Stoker (2000:43) state that the bystander has the most potential for solving the problem of bullying, yet this group of students is the most ignored in schools. Often the bystander is not directly involved with the bullying but they know what is going on and who specifically is involved. Coloroso (2003:62) speaks about the bystander acting in one of four ways: firstly they can just stand by idly, secondly they can look away, thirdly they prompt and encourage the bully and lastly they join with the bully and therefore become part of a group of bullies.

A bystander is not necessarily a student but can also be a teacher who is inactive in dealing effectively with the bullying (Lee, 2004:41). It is the researcher's opinion that this can be extremely damaging, especially when the very people who are supposed to be protecting the child in the school environment (the teachers or leaders) are not doing anything about it. This encourages the child to be silent if the bullying takes place again.

Garrett (2003:76) states that bystanders although not necessarily directly involved in the bullying are negatively affected by the bullying that they observe. Often the bystanders experience fear and anxiety as they become caught up in the negative climate, which the bully himself creates. Another effect which bullying may have on the bystanders is that they themselves are then more likely to use aggression in the future and often become desensitized to the cruelty of the bullying if they observe that there are no negative consequences to the bullying (Garrett, 2003:77; Coloroso, 2003:62). If a bystander encourages or tolerates the bullies' behaviour, it reinforces the strength of the bully as these role players thrive on having an audience, as Parsons (2005:18) so aptly states that an audience 'empowers' a bully.

Coloroso (2003:63) describes the long-term societal consequences to which the bystander contributes. The lack of sanctions by the observer, lead to the breakdown of inner control, reduced feelings of guilt and magnification of a target's negative attributes. All of these contribute to the cultivation of a worldview reinforcing stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination. It also inhibits children from developing feelings of empathy, compassion and perspective taking (walking in somebody else's shoes) and these are three essential components for successful peer relations. Therefore even though the bystanders may not directly be involved in the bullying, their behaviour (or lack thereof) could lead to long-term consequences for the society in which the victim finds him or herself.

### 2.8.1 Types of bystanders

Twemlow in Parsons (2005:18) assigns various roles to bystanders, which are:

- **Bully bystander** – children who induce other children into acts for which they themselves do not want to be blamed for.
- **Victim bystander** – these are the bystanders who are too fearful to interfere with the bullying.
- **Avoidant bystander** – this is generally where the staff of a school plays a role and they deny that bullying takes place within their school systems.
- **Ambivalent bystander** – these are the bystanders who are most likely to intercede, as they are uncommitted to any particular role.

Olweus in Coloroso (2003:65) developed the 'bullying circle' in which he describes the various roles within the bullying situation, including the bystanders. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:19) also lists various roles regarding bystanders. Although the authors have given different names to the roles which bystanders may take on, the definition of the roles remain similar:

- **The sidekicks** – this type of bystander is closest to the bully and are sometimes also referred to as henchmen or sidekicks.

- **Supporters/Passive bullies** – these are the bystanders who will support the bullying but do not take an active part in the bullying (Coloroso, 2003:65). Sullivan *et al.* (2004:19) use a synonym for the supportive bystander calling these type of bystanders the ‘**reinforcers**’ as they act in ways that support the bullying.
- **Passive supporters/Possible bullies/Bullies** – these children are the ones that observe the bullying and like to watch but do not openly display support; they will not openly approve by cheering or verbally encouraging (Coloroso, 2003:65). These type of bystanders are named by Sullivan *et al.* (2004:19) as the ‘**outsiders**’ as they prefer to not draw too much attention to themselves but their lack of neutrality makes it seem as if they condone the bullying.
- **Disengaged onlookers** – here the children observe the bullying and silently say to themselves, ‘It is none of my business’. They do not take a stand against the bullying (Coloroso, 2003:65).
- **Possible defenders** – these onlookers do not like the bullying and often think that they should do or say something but they don’t (Coloroso, 2003:65).
- **Defenders of the target** – these bystanders take a stand; they dislike the bullying and therefore help or try and help the target (Coloroso, 2003:65). These bystanders are seen by Sullivan *et al.* (2004:19) to be furthest from the bully and may have courage to step out of their role as bystander and condemn the bullying.

### 2.8.2 Reasons for lack of intervention

Garrett (2003:78) and Coloroso (2003:67-69) mention that bystanders often have more excuses than valid reasons as to why they do not intervene:

- They become afraid to interact with the victim as they do not want to lower their own status or invite retribution from the bully.
- If the bully is the bystanders’ friend they are less likely to intervene.
- The child sees the situation as not being his or her problem and that it is not his/her fight. Children may be socialized to not interfere in other people’s affairs and therefore claim to be minding their own business.
- Often the bystanders fear reporting bullying as they will be labeled as a ‘snitch’.

- The observer thinks that the child being bullied is not his/her friend and therefore will not say anything.
- The bystander is afraid that by intervening he/she will only make the situation worse.
- The victim is seen as deserving to be bullied and if they do not stand up for themselves (the bullied child) then why must anybody else.
- Feel unsafe and unable to take action, or fear a loss of control.
- The bystander has the feeling that it is better to be in the in-group than to be the one defending the outcasts.
- Start feeling anger and helplessness, as they have no knowledge of how to deal with the problem.
- The observer needs to decide and weigh all the positive and negative consequences of remaining faithful to the group (also known as the clique) or siding with the victim.

The researcher has the opinion that an important way to stop bullying is for the bystanders to take a stand against the aggressive, humiliating behaviour of bullying. If children are watching and agreeing with the bully (by saying nothing, many of them are agreeing with the bully) then the behaviour is enhanced and it becomes positive feedback.

## **2.9 CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING**

Bullying is not just a part of growing up and once people recognize the emotional destruction and effect it has on societal values everyone involved should no longer ignore the problem. ‘All research on the effects of bullying shows how damaging and destructive it is’ (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:20). Garrett (2003:70) mentions that in some cases children do not survive the effects of bullying. In most situations, victims do survive, but carry scars for a lifetime.

In Rigby’s (1996:49) work mention is made of the fact that it is important to look at every individual bullying case as one would think that the consequences of children who were bullied once a week would be more severe as opposed to those who are bullied only once in a while. However, it is important to bear in mind that many children are very resilient and come through their experience relatively unaffected, both physically and psychologically (Rigby, 1996:49).

In school A, it has been the researcher's experience that the children who have come for therapeutic help because of the bullying have been severely affected to the point of wanting to leave the school. Perhaps, the children who are more resilient are the ones who don't seek intervention.

### **2.9.1 Consequences for the bully**

A consequence for the bully is that his/her behaviour is often extended into the wider world where bullying is not tolerated and the bully therefore ends in criminal offending and imprisonment (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:25; Garrett, 2003:74). Rigby (1996:64) agrees with the authors by stating that the outlook for children who adopt a bullying lifestyle is bleak and at school this type of lifestyle is associated with shoplifting, graffiti writing, and trouble with the police generally. Another consequence is mentioned by Dietz in Rigby (1996:64) and Garrett (2003:74), which is the fact that adults who have bullied others whilst at school reported a greater degree of depression than those who did not bully. Whether this stems from guilt which they may experience is just speculation by the researcher.

### **2.9.2 Consequences for the bystander**

The bystander is fearful of society and believes that everyone needs to look after him/herself (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:25; Garrett, 2003:76). One can see the long-term consequences of important social skills when being a bystander to bullying. In paragraph 2.8.2 reasons were given as to why bystanders often do not do anything about the bullying which they observe. The reasons and excuses contribute to the breakdown in civility in peer group interactions (Coloroso, 2003:70). 'It is when civility is diminished, replaced by a false sense of entitlement, an intolerance toward differences, and a liberty to exclude that allow kids to harm another human being without feeling empathy, compassion, or shame' (Coloroso, 2003:70). Once the erosion of civility takes place it leads to the breakdown of the child's ability to communicate, negotiate and compromise, which are three vital skills necessary for resolving problems, resolving conflicts, and reconciling differences peaceably. Therefore the bystander's social interactions as well as skills for healthy human relations will be affected.

### 2.9.3 Consequences for the victim

For the victim consequences are usually interpreted as messages in his environment; the main message is that the world is a horrible and unsafe place. The extreme, ultimate response is attempted suicide (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:25). Even if the victim is not driven to suicide his/her emotional, academic and social development are affected (Garrett, 2003:75). Laflamme, Engström, Möller, Alldahl and Hallqvist (2002:21) add to these consequences by stating that children who are bullied become isolated from their peers. Garrett (2003:75) sees victims of bullying as being generally unhappy with low self-esteem, avoiding places such as school due to the social interactions taking place there.

Research conducted by Smith, Singer, Hoel and Cooper in Chapell, Hasselman, Kitchin, Lomon, MacIver and Sarullo (2006:634) found that those who had been both bullies and victims in school were even likely to be bullied as adults at work, thus confirming the negative internalizations of the world around them. Hazler *et al.* (2001:135) have found that even low levels of harm delivered again and again and over an extended period of time diminish the victims' sense of hope. Victims usually suffer psychological or physical harm which will now be discussed in detail:

#### 2.9.3.1 Physical effects on the victim

Garrett (2003:68) mentions that bullying has the following consequences on the physical health of the victim:

TABLE 2.11: Consequences of bullying on physical health

High levels of stress and anxiety.	Frequent illnesses such as viral infections, especially flu and glandular fever, colds, cough, or chest infections.
Aches and pains in joints and muscles with no obvious cause. Often these don't go away or respond to treatment.	Headaches and migraines.

Tiredness, exhaustion, constant fatigue.	Sleeplessness, nightmares, waking early, wakes up more tired.
Flashbacks and replays, obsesses about the bullying.	Irritable bowel syndrome.
Problems with the skin such as eczema, athlete's foot, ulcers.	Poor concentration.
Intermittently functioning memory, forgetfulness with day to day things.	Swearing, trembling, shaking, palpitations, panic attacks.
Bursting into tears over trivial things.	Irritability and angry outbursts, which is uncharacteristic.
Being constantly on the edge.	Shattered self-confidence.

Garrett (2003:68).

### 2.9.3.2 Psychological consequences for the victim

Victims have spoken about bullying leaving one 'bruised' inside (Garrett, 2003:69); these psychological scars often last for years. The climate that is created when a student abuses power and bullies others is seen as similar to the one created in an abusive home. Rigby (1996:50) states that one of the most common effects of bullying is that it reduces the self-esteem of victims. Clarke and Kiselica as cited in Garrett (2003:69) have indicated that this loss in self-esteem lasts all the way into their adult lives. Some psychological consequences as mentioned by Garrett (2003:69) include:

TABLE 2.12: Psychological consequences

Continual emotional stress creates a deficit in a child's intellectual abilities and therefore one observes a decline in grades.	A child under stress cripples his capacity to learn and is robbed of potential.	The victim's social and personal development is also affected.
Fear of going to the bathroom or less supervised areas at	Fear of the bus ride to and from school.	Fear leads to absenteeism or dropping out of school.



school.		
Losing or failing to develop self-esteem, experiencing feelings of isolation or becoming withdrawn and depressed.	Hesitation in taking social, intellectual, emotional or vocational risks as students and adults.	Occasionally the victim deems it necessary to take drastic measures such as vengeance in the form of fighting back, carrying a weapon or even suicide.

Garrett (2003:69).

Thus the researcher observed that each member of the bully triad may have to face numerous possible consequences as a result of the bullying that happened at school, many of these consequences have a lasting impact on the individual's life. However it needs to be established how these individuals have been affected.

## 2.10 GENDER DIFFERENCES

Studies have shown that different genders bully differently and are exposed to different types of bullying. Garrett (2003:11) mentions that a recent study conducted by Olweus and Limber (1999) found that males tend to bully, as well as be on the receiving end of bullying behaviour more often than females. Clarke and Kiselica in Ma (2002:65) have found that boys usually bully both boys and girls whereas girls tend to only bully other girls. Ma (2002:65) states that within the bully situation one finds that boys will take on the role of bully or encourager of the bully, whereas girls will take on the role of bystander and defender. When it comes to types of bullying, physical and verbal bullying are most common in boys whereas with females, spreading rumours (relational/social) and verbal bullying is observed more frequently (Garrett, 2003:11). The author also notes that girls view bullying more negatively than boys.

In a study conducted by Paul and Cillessen (2003:39), the researchers found that there were negative short-term consequences for early adolescent girls who were victimized but not for the boys of the same age. They found that the girls had higher levels of depression, anxiety, negative social self-perceptions and self-reported disruptive behaviour. Paul and Cillessen

(2003:39) explain that the reason for this finding is that girls are socially more perceptive than boys and the nature of the victimization which they face is usually relational therefore the internalization of these events for girls is more prominent. Thus it would appear, according to the researcher that girls would be more negatively affected by bullying than boys.

## **2.11 INTERVENTIONS**

Hazler (1996:72) notes that people who are bullies or victims are people who find themselves in troubled relationships which involve difficulties in power and control distribution. The author continues to state that when the bully or the victim acquires new skills or information that helps them revise this distribution of power, a shift takes place within the relationship. To help this shift take place various people and programmes can be used to help provide the bully or victim with helpful skills and information.

The researcher recognizes the importance of certain role players in dealing with the problem of bullying, these being the school, parents, bystanders and teachers. The research is focusing specifically on bullying within the school environment and therefore will focus on the role players within this educational environment. Rigby, Smith and Pepler (2004:2) define this approach as a ‘whole-school approach’ where elements and initiatives of programmes are carefully selected and co-ordinated at different levels such as the school, the classroom and the individual student. Existing programmes often increase adults’ and students’ awareness of the problem, decrease the existing bully problem and prevent the onslaught of new problems (Hanewinkel, 2004:81).

It is important that the children who are being bullied feel safe enough to share with someone. This will only happen if the child is secure in the fact that the matter will be taken further and actively dealt with. The development and evaluation of programmes in Canadian and Flemish schools have shown a decrease in the prevalence of bullying thus showing the importance of intervention at this level (Pepler, Craig, O’Connell, Atlas & Charach, 2004:136; Stevens, Van Oost & Bourdeaudhuij, 2004:151).

The fact that most bullying takes place at school necessitates the discussion of how schools can intervene.

### **2.11.1 What schools can do**

Even though bullying in school stems from external, wider social problems (Lee, 2004:53), Garrett (2003:93) states the importance of adult involvement in the school environment with regards to the problem of bullying as schools have a capacity to make a difference (Lee, 2004:53). These adults need to become more aware of the extent of the problem in the school and not turn away and think it will just, ‘go away’. They need to become focused and begin to change the situation (Garrett, 2003:93). Olweus (1993:69) mentions that once a school has decided to initiate systems against bullying it is a good idea to organize a school conference day around the problem. The author mentions that various people should be invited such as: the principal, teachers, school psychologist, school counsellor as well as parents and students.

One of the reasons that the adults in a school don’t intervene is that they find it difficult making moment-to-moment decisions on whether a child is playing, teasing, fighting or actually bullying (Hazler *et al.*, 2001:135). Research conducted by Hazler *et al.* (2001:141) showed that often physical confrontation was misidentified as bullying and that verbal or social abuses were less likely to be identified correctly. The problem shown by the research is that people are less likely to show concern, attempt to prevent or to intervene in situations involving social or emotional or verbal harm (Hazler *et al.*, 2001:142). It is therefore important, in the researcher’s opinion, that these important role players should be trained with regards to the problem of bullying (not only recognizing the problem but also appropriate actions to take).

Awareness should also be raised amongst pupils as well as the promotion of positive pupil relationships; one way to do this as suggested by Lee (2004:60) is to begin to embed ideas of pupils’ rights and responsibilities. The rights to:

- Feel safe at school as well as to be safe.
- Be free from insult and negative teasing.
- Be able to associate with other people for friendship.
- Feel that possessions are secure.

The responsibilities are to ensure:

- The safety of others.
- The security of their possessions.
- Freedom from teasing and name-calling.

### **2.11.1.1 Bully prevention programmes and anti-bully programmes**

There are many bullying prevention programmes which can be implemented within the school to facilitate this change (Garrett, 2003:93). There are also many anti-bullying programmes which usually go hand in hand with staff training and are powerful in reducing the effects of bullying behaviour (Garrett, 2003:93). Programmes typically include both preventative and interventive procedures. Some however place emphasis on either one or the other (Rigby *et al.*, 2004:3). The latter mentioned authors draw attention to various programmes which can be used depending on the individual needs of the school. Some programmes focus on developing a positive climate in the classroom, others focus on using curriculum work to prevent the problem of bullying and in some the emphasis lies with countering social prejudice and undesirable attitudes such as racism. Pellegrini (2002:160) mentions that effective programmes do share common attributes such as the whole process is inclusive and usually one individual (for example principal, teacher or counsellor) resumes a leadership role.

A problem which Olweus (2004:13) has found with many of the programmes is that most of them have failed to document positive results or have never been subjected to research evaluation. Another problem as outlined by Pepler, Smith and Rigby, (2004:318) is that there seems to be differing views as to whether intervention efforts should focus on addressing cases of bullying or if there should be more subtle ways such as changing the classroom climate. It is therefore important, according to the researcher, that programmes chosen for different schools have been empirically tested and proven to be effective.

### **2.11.1.2 The whole-school approach**

Sullivan *et al.* (2004:94) lists a number of active processes in a whole-school approach:

- Gaining knowledge and expertise (reading as much literature as possible so that one can become familiar with various definitions).

- Convincing key groups that an anti-bullying initiative is vital (for example principal, school board, senior management).
- Forming a planning group to develop a genuine whole-school approach.
- Developing an action plan (this helps with guidelines of implementation).
- Implementation (the plan is put into action).
- Evaluation (a process which provides a check on the programmes success).

Garrett (2003:95) mentions factors which will ensure that the whole school campaign is a success:

- A code of conduct needs to be communicated to all students (Garrett, 2003:95). Rules that should apply to all students are:
  - “We will not bully other students.
  - We will try to help students who are bullied.
  - We will make it a point to include all students who are easily left out.
  - When we know someone is being bullied, we will tell a teacher, parent or adult we trust” (Garrett, 2003:51).
- The school needs to become a ‘telling school’; children who are bullied or who are bystanders are urged to report it to a designated person. The researcher is of the opinion that this causes the child to feel empowered as he/she begins to have faith that something will get done.
- Coaching is given on what to do when being bullied and how to explain the incidences to adults.
- Experts from the ‘outside’ are used to train staff. There are many programmes which can be brought into the school to assist with the whole school campaign.
- Social skills instructions are incorporated into classroom activities and school events.
- Demonstration of alternative behaviour is shown to the ‘bullies’ (Garrett, 2003:95).

### 2.11.1.3 Anti-bully policy

It is important for every school to have a written anti-bully policy which is given to everyone in the school community (Garrett, 2003:94). A need for a policy must first be identified with the motivation of participants to change problem behaviour (Pellegrini, 2002:160). The researcher is of the opinion that this will guide all the adults in the school community when it comes to dealing with the problem of bullying. A written document is always important as all involved realize that this problem will be dealt with and it also serves as a protocol for the school (Rigby *et al.*, 2004:2). It is important that this policy is fairly and consistently applied (Lee, 2004:55; Garrett, 2003:94). Policies usually include procedures and actions in dealing with bullying (Rigby *et al.*, 2004:2) and they are also important for the learning environment as it is maximized if students feel psychologically and physically safe in the environment and if they feel valued by those around them (their peers and adults) (Parsons, 2005:67). Garrett (2003:98) has suggested the following steps for intervening with the bullying situation:

- Intervention should be immediate. It should be stopped the minute one becomes aware of it.
- The intervener needs to speak to the bully and the victim separately.
- Consult with administrator and other teachers to get a wider reading on the problem.
- The perpetrators will tend to deny their actions and responsibilities. They are thus to be reminded that their behaviour will not be tolerated and then told of what is expected of them.
- The victim is to be reassured that all steps will be taken to prevent a recurrence.
- The bully's parents need to be informed as soon as possible. A phone call followed by an appointment (if it is deemed necessary) is usually best.
- Where possible, parents are invited to help design a plan of action for the perpetrators.
- Allowing victims to get involved in groups where they can develop their social skills and confidence again is very important.
- Re-education about their behaviour is important for bullies. Consequences such as removal of privileges are enforced.
- Follow up with parents and other teachers about the situation is important until the situation is clearly resolved.

- The behaviour of the bully as well as the safety of the victim is to be monitored throughout the school.
- If the bully does not change his/her behaviour despite the efforts of the staff involved, the child should be placed in an alternative programme or removed from the class or school.

Possible themes which could be communicated within the policy are outlined by Sullivan *et al.* (2004:99):

- A belief that bullying can be stopped.
- A culture in which students feel able to tell if they are being bullied.
- The fact that everyone needs to share responsibility to help stop bullying behaviour.
- The fact that the problem is the bullying behaviour rather than the victim's behaviour.

#### **2.11.1.4 Shared concern method and no-blame approach**

Although the above steps can be used with overt type of bullying such as physical bullying, Rigby *et al.* (2004:4) recognize that it is often difficult to apply these rules to other forms of bullying such as excluding individuals from a group or spreading rumours. Pikas as mentioned by Rigby *et al.* (2004:5) has developed the Shared Concern Method which is specifically directed at resolving problems of group bullying. Robinson and Maines in Rigby *et al.* (2004:4) on the other hand have developed the No-Blame approach which is a post-event intervention and is similar to the Shared Concern Method (Lee, 2004:77). The teacher or person conducting the intervention first meets with the victim and obtains a picture of how the victim was harmed. A meeting is then held with the bully and the victim and other students who can influence the outcome of the meeting positively. The intervener (for example teacher or counsellor) then explains to the group how the victim has been hurt and seeks proposals on how the problem can be improved (Rigby *et al.*, 2004:4). Both above mentioned methods do not focus on the past but towards a relationship that has a positive future and looks as if it is possible to resolve differences (Lee, 2004:78).

It is also important for schools to establish a bullying prevention coordinating committee which will deal with all aspects of the school's violence prevention efforts (including anti-bullying). Should the school wish to determine the extent of the problem an anonymous questionnaire can be administered (Garrett, 2003:96). To help with the practical problems of bullying, supervision

of the outdoor environment of the school should be improved and parents should be involved (Garrett, 2003:96). It is the researchers opinion that parents should always be aware of the school's policies and procedures so that if their children are caught bullying they will not be surprised at the punishment which is enforced.

Teachers have a pivotal part to play in combating bullying.

### **2.11.2 The role of teachers**

It is important for the teacher to intervene in the bullying situation not only on the playground but also in the classroom as this is where the child spends most of his school day. The teacher is at the forefront of any effort to cope successfully with the problem (Goldstein, Apter & Harootunian, 1984:16). Galloway and Roland (2004:37) mention that bullying is likely to be influenced by the quality of the social and educational climate in the classroom and school. This climate, as mentioned by Pepler *et al.* (2004:311), is one that discourages bullying and supports peer processes that help vulnerable children. Teachers are therefore seen to play a key role in the problem of bullying, not only on the field but also in their classrooms. In the classroom, the teacher can implement the following (Garrett, 2003:96):

- Establish rules (involving the students) regarding bullying. This establishes a responsibility for each student to conform to those rules.
- The teacher should create both negative and positive consequences for behaviour displayed in the classroom setting. The negative consequences should be appropriate and related to the behaviour.
- Holding regular classroom meetings which help develop and clarify rules for anti-bullying.
- Meeting with parents in an effort to inform them of the anti-bullying efforts being made.

Thus it becomes clear that the very environment where most of the bullying takes place (the school environment) needs to become involved with the problem.

It is also important to involve pupils in this matter.



### 2.11.3 The role of learners

Lee (2004:84) states, “Peer involvement in prevention and response to bullying forms a natural part of a school in which children are invited to contribute to decisions at a variety of levels including teaching and learning issues and policy formulation.” DeLara (2006:343) adds to Lee’s view by stating that students have very important contributions to make in the prevention not only of bullying but also of other forms of school violence. The researcher is of the opinion that due to the learners involvement in the problem, either being a bully, a bystander or a victim, it would seem obvious that they need to be included when it comes to prevention and intervention even though it does not lie totally within their hands (the role of adults is seen as pivotal).

**Peer support** can be used in schools where children are bullied. In secondary schools (such as the one used in the research) peer counselling-based interventions can be adopted (Lee, 2004:86). Training and supervision of such learners are essential and the persons who present the training should be experienced counsellors themselves (Sharp & Cowie, 1994:117).

The researcher has mentioned that many times the bullying problem remains a secret as the victim is reluctant to tell an adult. However, when a peer forms part of a support system, they may seem more willing to share their story (Lee, 2004:87). The author mentions that the peer counselling works on two levels: one aims at changing the pupils’ response to bullying and the other is changing the pupils’ condoning the bullying to viewing it as unacceptable. Although the support programme should ensure confidentiality so that learners feel secure in this service, the school still has a responsibility to oversee the problems faced by learners (Sharp & Cowie, 1994:116). Sullivan *et al.* (2004:97) have particularly found that senior students can be useful in an anti-bullying initiative. The researcher recognizes the importance of using the peer group in addressing the issue of bullying and believes that in South African schools the ‘leaders’ could help with the problem.

### 2.11.4 The role of counsellors

Hazler (1996:74) states that the counseling of victims or bullies cannot take place until at least some basic level of control is in place. Once this has taken place then reason and emotions can

be used in conjunction within the therapeutic process. Hazler (1996:72) describes various steps of a therapeutic model known as the Promoting Issues in Common (PIC) model which attempts to give attention to the needs of all those involved in troubled relationships. It is important to note that the PIC model can only be used if a better relationship is actually desired (Hazler, 1996:73). The stages of the model are now described:

#### 2.11.4.1 Evaluation stage

- **Step 1 – See the probable bully first.** Hazler (1996:87) states that ideally the counsellor who is dealing with the bully and victim should first see the bully as it helps build a therapeutic relationship and also serves as a protection factor for the victim.
- **Step 2 – Identify concerns regarding the problem.** Hazler (1996:89) mentions that it is very important during this stage to build a level of trust. The bully and victim who find themselves in the counsellor's office have many unanswered questions regarding what will be done about the problem (for example, 'Will they really want my opinion on what to do or will they just want me to say what they think should be done?'). It therefore helps when the counsellor does not beat about the bush about why they are in the counsellor's office (Hazler, 1996:89). Hazler (1996:89) also suggests that important information regarding the bullying situation is provided.
- **Step 3 – Gain the individuals understanding of the situation.** Usually by this stage, the counsellor has some knowledge of things that occurred through various biased accounts of people who observed the bullying (Hazler, 1996:92). As Hazler (1996:93) states, "The content of a situation makes a good starting place for evaluation because it allows for the development of scenarios that can be matched with the observations of others. The scenarios involve who, what, where, when and how things occurred" (Hazler, 1996:93).
- **Step 4 – Explore the feelings of the individual being seen.** The PIC counselling model will seldom be effective with just the thorough knowledge of the problematic event (Hazler, 1996:95). Hazler (1996:95) is of the opinion that the counsellor is to go beyond objective facts to the feelings, thoughts and emotions behind the behaviours of each individual involved.

- **Step 5 – Explore potential feelings and situations as seen from the other participant’s point of view.** Hazler (1996:98) mentions that it is during this step that the therapist attempts to help the student see the other person’s point of view. A transition is made from self-exploration to developing empathy for others. Hazler (1996:98) also suggests that the counsellor needs to decide when to bring the bully and victim together or not to bring them together at all based on how open and willing they are to see each other’s points of view.
- **Step 6 – Explore bully and victim issues in common.** The final step as described by Hazler (1996:101) is seeing the victim and bully together in therapy. By doing so common concerns are identified by both parties. The PIC method emphasizes that by gaining an understanding of issues in common an increasing in understanding occurs and thus an improvement in relationships (Hazler, 1996:101).

#### 2.11.4.2 Direct intervention stage

- **Step 1 – Decide on individual therapy needs.** Hazler (1996:108) notes that psychological reactions to bullying are more similar than with other forms of victimization. The greater the extent of the trauma the more therapy will need to address individual needs (Hazler, 1996:108).
- **Step 2 – Have individual discussions of common concern.** This step should be a smooth transition from the last stage of the evaluation (Hazler, 1996:110). The goal of this stage is to lay the groundwork for the individuals to meet jointly. The counsellor needs to decide if enough commonalities have been identified and be convinced that the meeting of the two individuals will be a positive experience (Hazler, 1996:111).
- **Step 3 – Meet jointly.** In the bullying problem two or more people are affected and the more all these people are involved in the solution, the greater the benefits for each one (Hazler, 1996:113). Limited productive steps need to be achieved as this is only the first meeting where commonalities are identified and confidence is gained in the joint meeting format (Hazler, 1996:113).
- **Step 4 – Identify common goals** – These are goals identified by the bullies and the victims and serve as a picture of what the two parties are seeking together (Hazler,

1996:114). These goals should be clarified, reviewed on a regular basis and modified if necessary; they are the reason that therapy continues (Hazler, 1996:115).

- **Step 5 – Agree upon actions, time frames, and conditions.** Hazler (1996:117) describes the aim of the goals as providing pictures people should envision for better ways of living. The author continues with the premise that the goals will be obtainable if they are accompanied by actions, time frames and appropriate conditions
- **Step 6 – Evaluate and redesign goals and actions regularly.** By regulating and evaluating goals regularly, everyone involved has recognized that actions taken at one point in time may not likely fit the same people at another point in time (Hazler, 1996:119).
- **Step 7 – Successfully terminate joint meetings.** ‘The PIC model emphasizes a model for improvement that increasingly relies on clients to take control of their relationships as their understanding, skills, and tension level improves’ (Hazler, 1996:121). Clients are directed towards more independent functioning and as pairs or groups are encouraged to monitor and adjust behaviours (Hazler, 1996:121). The author states that termination needs to take place in an organized way which recognizes the value of gains made, reinforces skills learned, confirms the ability to self-control, and establishes sources for additional assistance if necessary in the future.

## 2.12 SUMMARY

Bullying is a problem that has and still is affecting the children and adolescents of this day and age. Many times it becomes a problem in the school environment where children are interacting socially on a day to day basis. There are different reasons that children can become a victim: belonging to a certain race or even because of being physically different. No-one is exempt from becoming a possible target. In the bullying problem there are three role players which are generally involved these being: the bully, the victim and the bystander. Children in a school will usually fall under one of these three categories when it comes to the victimization.

There are various forms of bullying which need to be understood if the problem is going to be addressed correctly. Some forms of bullying are more obvious to recognize such as physical

harassment but other forms such as social aggression are more hidden and not as obvious but the consequences for the victim are just as detrimental. Many times the problems of bullying go unnoticed because children do not report incidents because they do not think that the adults in their lives will take action against the victimization. It is important for the adults that are involved in the school environment such as teachers and the principals to educate the children about the problem as well as have systems in place which will make the child feel safe enough to disclose important information regarding the bullying. Each school should also address their specific bullying problems and choose programmes accordingly. These programmes could be of a preventative, educational or therapeutic nature.

Whether adults want to or not, the problem does exist in schools and one cannot turn a blind eye anymore. It is time for the community of the school to take charge and decide exactly what is going to be done to prevent this problem from escalating further.

## **CHAPTER 3**

# **THE SENSE OF SELF WITHIN THE GESTALT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

In chapter two the researcher looks at the concept of bullying in its entirety, however the research does not focus on bullying and stop there. It looks at what the impact of bullying is on the sense of self. The researcher believes that every human being has a ‘self’ and no two ‘selves’ are the same. It is important to understand this ‘self’. Why can two human beings (two ‘selves’) both be bullied and yet one person internalizes the experience and commits suicide and the other is relatively unharmed by the experience?

What affects and makes up this sense of self? Is it the emotions one experiences? Is it the innate personalities one is born with? Is it the purpose which individuals fulfil in their lives? The researcher recognizes the importance of understanding this concept more fully before the impact of bullying on this ‘self’ can be studied. Sullivan, as cited in Kalapac (1994:8), defines this concept as, “There is within the personality a system of experience which we apply the terms ego or the self. Our self is made up of the reflections of our personality that we have encountered, mirrored in those with whom we deal.”

This chapter focuses firstly on the Gestalt therapeutic approach, specifically those terms which relate to the aspect of bullying. Then focus is shifted to the adolescent’s sense of self and related terms. Finally the main categories of the sense of self, which is what the research is focusing on, will be discussed.

### 3.2 DEFINING THE SENSE OF SELF

The self include one's personality as well as reflections of experiences of the world in which individuals find themselves. Robinson in Czuchta and Johnson (1998:32) defines the 'self' more simply as the part of a human being that knows himself as 'I'. This is the thinking, knowing, feeling part of the organism which copes with the environment (world). In answering the question to what the 'self' looks like, Kihlstrom and Klein (1997:5) assume that the self is a person's mental representation of him/herself.

The development of the 'self' is not a static structure but involves a fluid process which lasts a lifetime (Rapoo, 2002:35). It is this sense of self which gives a person the feeling of identity, uniqueness and self-direction (Kalapac, 1994:3). Grohol (2003) agrees with the latter mentioned author and believes that a healthy sense of self is derived from a variety of processes: some are innate but it is also built on the growing up and learning from friends, families, teachers and classmates. The researcher is of the opinion that often this sense of self is affected by external negative factors and these feelings of identity, uniqueness and self-direction thus become warped or unclear. Nelson (1997:103) aptly sums up what has just been written in this paragraph, 'The general claim is this: a sense of self as an enduring object in space and time begins in infancy but takes on an objective character, a representation of a self-concept, only when the child constructs others as both like and different from the self, and at the same time constructs a self that has both a past and a future.'

Steffenhagen and Burns (1987:20) discuss how the self emerges from a psychodynamic point of view. The authors state that there are two types of acquisition of this self which compromise the development of the ego. Firstly the 'existential self' is where the concept of self is seen as different and distinct from other social objects and secondly the 'categorical or empirical self' and this is the part of the self which is the perceived attitudes of others about oneself; how the individual thinks and believes that others see him or her (Steffenhagen & Burns, 1987:20). From the research point of view it would appear that the 'empirical self' would be the self that would be affected by bullying behaviour.

Mead in Steffenhagen and Burns (1987:21) views the development of the ‘self’ as dependent on language as this is the means by which individuals interact with each other and that the overall ‘self’ which is developed is dependent on a cognitive and behavioural structure that arise out of interaction with and reinforcement with the environment. The ‘self’ which emerges is a lifelong process. Children, as they grow up, absorb ideas and beliefs from adults and children around them. These ideas and beliefs are strongly affected by the culture in which a child grows up. A view begins to develop of themselves within their family context as well as the wider community (Geldard & Geldard, 2005:114). If this environment is providing negative interactions (for example, the individual who is being victimized at school) one can see that the development of the ‘self’ will be affected. This self is seen by Powell ([sa]:83) as the platform of a person where all of one’s experiences build upon this basic ‘sense of self’.

The research has focused on the self from a Gestalt theoretical perspective. From this perspective, ‘The self is seen as the subjective organization of the elements of awareness and the ability to use this organization constructively’ (Serok, 2000:121). The elements which the author mentions include:

- Bodily dimensions (the physical boundaries of the body)
- Recognition of various abilities, personality traits, sensitivities and interests

The self from this perspective is therefore seen as a subjective personal profile (Serok, 2000:121).

The research is focusing on adolescents and their emerging self, therefore it is important to understand how this approach views their sense of self. The Gestalt approach views a child’s sense of self as being distinguished from the environment by means of the contact boundary which is the point where they distinguish that which is part of who they are (themselves) and that which is considered as outside of who they are. This sense of self is seen as important to their development (Blom, 2004:113). It is thus important to understand this ‘self’ before the research can determine if various forms of bullying (discussed extensively in chapter 2) has an effect on different parts of the self.



### **3.3 GESTALT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The word ‘Gestalt’ is a German word which is difficult to translate into English terms. It includes various concepts such as shape, pattern, whole form, configuration (Clarkson, 1989:1). In forming a gestalt individuals start to give meaning to what is happening to them (O’Leary, 1992:10). Clarkson (1989:1) states that the aim of the Gestalt approach is for an individual to discover, explore and experience his or her own wholeness. This wholeness is seen by O’Leary (1992:10) as having many parts which function together. Often the person has many disparate parts and the aim is to integrate all these parts so that people can truly become totally what they are and potentially can be (Clarkson, 1989:1). Gestalt therapy sees people as capable of becoming self-regulating beings who can achieve a sense of unity and integration in their lives (Rapoo, 2002:13). This self-regulating behaviour means that the individual can take full responsibility of their own lives, for example of their behaviour and emotions.

The therapist using this approach thus focuses on the fullness of experience which then becomes available to them throughout their life (Clarkson, 1989:1). When working with children, this approach focuses on the child’s internal and external works and is based on the notion that change can occur due to raised awareness (Geldard & Geldard, 2005:67). The Gestalt approach is a comprehensive approach to counselling and thus cannot be focused on in its entirety, however the researcher will focus on aspects which explain the effect bullying may have on the self of the adolescent.

#### **3.3.1 Awareness**

The founder of Gestalt therapy Fritz Perls in O’Leary (1992:13) believed that individuals should have the capacity to become fully aware of and act upon their needs. He believed it was this awareness which was the basis of knowledge and communication. Schoeman and Van der Merwe (1996:30) believe that it is through awareness that an individual can make choices to regulate themselves.

Serok (2000:13) states that Gestalt therapy focuses on the present (the ‘here-and-now’) which means that the focus is on what the individual is experiencing at the present moment. The past is

not disregarded but is seen as a place where a certain response style was developed and introduced to the present (Serok, 2000:13). Therefore the past is reviewed in terms of how it affects the present. If the child is not aware of the unmet need, then growth will not be able to take place. Awareness is therefore of primary importance (Serok, 2000:81). With bullying, the researcher has the opinion that the child needs to become aware of how the bullying has affected his thoughts and emotions.

### **3.3.2 Homeostasis/Organismic self-regulation**

Children usually experience various differing needs:

- Physical needs
- Emotional needs
- Social needs
- Spiritual needs
- Intellectual needs

The needs that the child experiences causes discomfort until action is taken, the need is satisfied and thus homeostasis is restored (Blom, 2004:11). Therefore the elements in the situation have thus been organized in one whole formation or gestalt (Serok, 2000:18). Wexler (1991:14) calls this ‘cohesion of the self’ when an individual has the internal sense that pieces of their experience fit together and are integrated, when they feel confident, centered and recognized. In the bully situation, the self could begin to feel uncomfortable because of the actions or words of others and the confident, centered and recognized feelings are thus disturbed.

With regards to homeostasis, various theoretical concepts exist such as figure-ground and organismic self-regulation of the child as outlined by various authors (Blom, 2004:12; Clarkson, 1989:5):

#### **3.3.2.1 Figure-Ground**

When it comes to an individual’s (including an adolescent’s) life there will always be the figure-ground need. The figure need is the most pressing need: that which is most relevant or meaningful to the person and is essential for the person’s survival or self-actualization (O’Leary, 1992:11; Clarkson, 1989:5). Once attention is paid to the figure need it will recede into the

background (Thompson & Rudolph, 1996:185). In a bully situation, the researcher is of the opinion that the bullying situation will become a child's figure need, therefore school work and sport may suffer because these aspects of his/her life become less important (the ground need). In a healthy functioning individual, the dominant need is easily recognizable (O'Leary, 1992:11).

The ground need refers to the 'background need'; it is a need which exists but is not the most urgent need. Once the figure need which is temporarily the central, dominant need has been satisfied, the gestalt is completed and the figure disappears (becomes part of the background) and thus the background need now becomes the foreground need (Blom, 2004:12; Serok, 2000:8). The researcher is of the opinion that in the case of the bullying situation, this needs to be dealt with effectively first, for example the child's safety should be ensured (if that is the figure need), and then the emotional work can begin. Support systems become an important part of this process.

Blom (2004:13) states that a child's senses, thoughts, behaviour and cognition become organized around a figure need until this need is met. Therefore in the bully situation if it is the child's figure need, he/she will think about the situation and behave in ways that will help him/her resolve the problem. Schoeman and Van Der Merwe (1996:35) mention that it is the therapist's job to explore what the needs of the child are. The researcher recognizes the importance of helping the bullied child recognise what his/her needs are so that they can be addressed, for example, does the child need to be taught assertiveness skills? Or does the child need to be taught anger management techniques? These tools are used to help the child reach a state of balance known as organismic self-regulation.

### **3.3.2.2 The child and organismic self-regulation**

O'Leary (1992:12) states, "At every moment the person is faced with dissonance, either through an external demand or through an internal need, so that balance is never maintained. In relation to external factors, the individual can choose to accommodate behaviour to the environment, or to adjust the environment to himself." The author continues to state that once equilibrium has been achieved then the organismic self-regulation has been achieved. Wexler (1991:15) talks

about the cohesive self which is very similar to the Gestalt organismic self regulation. This author states that other people in an individual's life known as self-objects provide experiences which help the emerging self to develop. The self stays whole as a result of ongoing, satisfying self-object experiences.

As babies, individuals are able to make extensive use of their senses, emotions, bodies and intellect to satisfy their needs by adults. Their uninterrupted development contributes to a healthy sense of self (Oaklander, 1988:281). The way in which adults react when children experience a need will determine to a large extent how they will satisfy their needs in the future (Oaklander 1988:281). In an infant's life Wexler (1991:15) mentions that the self-object is a relationship with a person (who meets his/her needs), however the more advanced self-object function could be a place, an image, piece of music, thought, activity or any other object which invokes the cohesion of the self. If a child is bullied, his/her need for social interaction (for example) is not met, cohesion of the self is not satisfied and therefore the development of a healthy sense of self could be hindered.

Wexler (1991:15) determines that each individual at different stages requires a consistent supply of, or perhaps consistent access to, self-object experiences, at different stages of their lives. The author gives an example of the adolescent needing an authoritative figure with whom a respectful adversarial relationship can be formed to foster identity development.

### 3.3.2.3 Self-object functions

Kohut in Wexler (1991:16) describes the two most vital functions of self-objects. The first is the **mirroring** function which is the desire to feel recognized and affirmed by somebody else. The self-object experience involves having one's inner experience or accomplishments recognized and appreciated (Wexler, 1991:17).

The second function is the **idealizing** function of self-objects. This is when an individual doubts his/her abilities to cope with or worry about certain personality deficits. It then becomes important to form an idealized self-object relationship where one becomes connected to

somebody larger than oneself (Wexler, 1991:17). This person provides a soothing or protective function. There is usually contact taking place between the individual and the self-object.

### 3.3.3 Contact

O’Leary (1992:29) claims that contact is found at the centre of gestalt therapy. Blom (2004:19) states that contact takes place when an individual is able to use the environment that he/she is in to satisfy his/her needs. A child who is able to use his/her senses, awareness of and suitable use of his/her body, express his/her emotions and use his/her intellect to express ideas, thoughts and needs is seen by Oaklander (1997:294) as able to make use of healthy contact making. In gestalt theory two types of contact take place, there is intrapersonal contact and interpersonal contact. Intrapersonal contact is the contact which a child has between various aspects of themselves whereas interpersonal contact is the contact which takes place between the child and his/her environment (Blom, 2004:19).

O’Leary (1992:29) states that the meeting place of individuals and their surroundings is called a contact boundary. These boundaries allow the child to connect with other people but also help form a separation between the child and others (Blom, 2004:19). Often however this contact gets blocked according to O’Leary (1992:39) through what is known as boundary disturbances (Clarkson, 1989:45). The boundary disturbances which the individual (including the adolescent) uses to satisfy their needs are:

- **Introjection** – this is the unquestioning acceptance of ideas of significant others (Blom, 2004:22; O’Leary, 1992:39; Clarkson, 1989:52). With regards to bullying, if the teasing is accepted as true by the victim, the bullying becomes an introject for the individual. The self has therefore accepted false accusations or statements from others and may change to suit these views.
- **Projection** – this is the tendency to hold the environment responsible for that which happens to the self. Individuals do not accept their own feelings but blame others (Blom, 2004:24; O’Leary, 1992:41; Clarkson, 1989:53). In the bullying situation, the researcher believes that at times the victim may blame the bully for what is happening, will not take responsibility or acknowledge his/her own feelings and therefore will not be able to think

of coping strategies. The self has not used assertiveness skills and focus is shifted to the external environment.

- **Confluence** – here the boundary between the individual and environment becomes blurred and there is no distinction between the individual and environment as being two separate entities. The environment and person therefore have no clear boundaries and this hinders children from making proper contact with the environment (Blom, 2004:25; O’Leary, 1992:42; Clarkson, 1989:55). Oaklander (1997:294) sees a necessity for individuals to withdraw appropriately from others for good contact to take place. The researcher is of the opinion that the child who is bullied may not see the victimization as something separate from who he/she is and therefore the self accepts and begins to define itself according to the views and perception of others. This may have lifelong consequences for the development of this person’s self.
- **Retroflection** – The person who retroflects does to himself what he originally did or wanted to do to other people or objects (Blom, 2004:27; O’Leary, 1992:41; Clarkson, 1989:53). In extreme cases of being victimized, the adolescents may be angry and frustrated and want to lash out at the bully, however if they retroflect they turn this anger onto themselves and may even commit suicide.
- **Deflection** - This refers to avoiding direct contact with the environment which may be characterized by reducing or avoiding eye contact, politeness, excessive use of language or lessening emotional expression (Blom, 2004:28; O’Leary, 1992:43). The targets of the bully may deflect the situation by ‘pretending’ that it doesn’t affect them or by ignoring their emotions, they may try and avoid what their inner self is feeling. This would be a contact boundary disturbance.
- **Desensitization** – This is the process by which the individual removes himself from the situation so as not to feel a sensory or physical experience (Blom, 2004:29). This could be the victims who have been bullied for so long that they don’t feel the pain of the physical, verbal or social bullying anymore. This is used to protect themselves from further pain; it is used as a coping mechanism.
- **Egotism** – The person steps out of the situation and becomes an objective spectator of his experience instead of having a subjective emotional experience (Blom, 2004:31;

Clarkson, 1989:54). This is the child who likes to control his/her situation and with bullying this is not always possible.

Thus the experience of these contact disturbances for the self is that it becomes defined, shaped and changed through the various experiences of life. This in turn will have an effect on the behaviour and emotions of the individual. For a child the total sense of well-being is affected by these disturbances as well as positive feelings of the self (Oaklander, 1997:298).

Once a child's positive feelings are affected, the following are the possible long-term negative impacts as defined by Rugel (1995:5):

- **Self-concept factors** – The child with low self-esteem will experience a deficit in one of three major domains of self-esteem which is a sense of competence, social acceptability and physical attractiveness. They also experience themselves as globally unworthy which often leads to poor choices (Rugel, 1995:6).
- **Information processing factors** – The poor self-concept of low self-esteem individuals personalize negative encounters and consider them to show various weaknesses and shortcomings. These individuals have also acquired negative schemas in how they select and interpret information from their environment. They reject positive information about the self because it is inconsistent with these schemas (Rugel, 1995:7).
- **Motivational factors** – Low self-esteem individuals have an inner sense of unacceptability and because of this they try and gain the love of somebody else. Therefore they are often in relationships which are unhealthy and cause themselves great pain (Rugel, 1995:8). They also believe that by achieving outstanding accomplishments they are able to overcome their self-esteem deficit. Although low self-esteem individuals focus on negative aspects of themselves they also sometimes fall into the habit of using self-protective processes such as defense mechanisms to protect themselves where they avoid recognizing negative aspects of the self that are embarrassing or shameful (Rugel, 1995:9).
- **Interpersonal factors** – The person with low self-esteem often struggles to assert him/herself because of the sense of inequality they experience (Rugel, 1995:9). Problems of low self-esteem can also be manifested in marital and family dysfunction where they

begin to display behaviour such as criticism-blame, defend-counterattack or patterns of withdrawal-avoidance (Rugel, 1995:10).

- **Childhood disorders** – Pope, Mchale and Craighead (1988:5) add to the negative impact as listed by Rugel (1995) by mentioning that low self-esteem is often an associated feature of several childhood disorders such as attention deficit disorder and avoidant disorder (due to social anxiety).

Youngs (1991:27) gives some warning signs which one can look out for in determining if a child is struggling with negative self-esteem which could have also been caused by the contact boundary disturbances:

- **Negative behaviour** – sometimes repeated negative behaviour is a message to those children that they have little respect for themselves (Youngs, 1991:27). Therefore a healthy sense has not been established.
- **Constant self-belittling** – It is cause for concern when a child makes comments such as ‘I can’t’ or ‘I’m not’ as frequent part of his/her language (Youngs, 1991:27). According to the researcher this also shows that the individual cannot take responsibility for the self and healthy development has been affected.
- **Admiration without emulation** – A child naturally wants to be like those they admire and look up to. If however the child just speaks about them and makes no effort to be like them it is perhaps because he/she feels that he/she is not as good as these heroes (Youngs, 1991:27). This could be because of the fact that the child has not been able to make contact with the support systems in his/her environment.
- **Lack of caring about attention from you** – It is natural for a child to want his/her parents to notice their accomplishments and when the child stops seeking his/her parents’ approval there is a need for concern (Youngs, 1991:28).
- **Excessive criticism of others** – Children’s way of trying to escape and feel better about themselves is to criticize others which indicate a lack of confidence in themselves (Youngs, 1991:28). This could also be a sign of projection; the child projects his feelings of inabilities onto others.
- **Excessive concern with the attention and opinion of friends** – Children who make the opinions and ideas of their friends as of paramount importance are rarely able to assert



themselves as they don't judge their own ideas and thoughts (Youngs, 1991:28). In Gestalt therapy the aim is for one to become oneself and not what others want one to be.

Therefore it is important to find out what impact bullying has on the adolescent. Has it affected their sense of self? It could lead the individual to experience any one of the above-mentioned factors. Usually the way the child responds to events in his/her life is stated by Rigby (1996:71) as having been established years before even starting school. This would explain why with some children bullying affects their sense of self and others not. It is important to pay closer attention to the term 'sense of self'.

### 3.4 THE 'SENSE OF SELF'

Whilst reviewing literature the researcher discovered that often when looking at the sense of self various related concepts are mentioned such as self-concept; self-esteem and self-worth. Literature based on the independent concept of sense of self is limited or used many times in combination with either one of the latter mentioned concepts, therefore for the purpose of this study the latter mentioned concepts will be seen as interrelated terms. To support this rationale various definitions will be noted as Barker (2003:387-388) defines the following concepts of the related sense of self as:

- **The self** – “An individual's unique identity; that part of the personality or character that distinguishes the person or entity from all others”.
- **Self-concept** – “The image or picture people have of themselves, including their own identity, body image, personality and evaluation of self (that is, self-esteem)”.

*Encyclopaedia of Social work* (1995:818) defines the following related term:

- **Self-esteem** – “The most important part of self-concept; it represents the extent to which one feels competent, respected, and worthy. Hence, it significantly influences human thinking and behaviour”.

Grohol (2003) supports the relationship between sense of self and self-esteem by mentioning that whilst considering self-esteem, one needs to consider the 'sense of self'. The author explains that self-esteem is really a sense of self that is balanced and whole. Blom (2004:113) on the other hand determines that self-esteem is the amount of their 'real' self that they are willing to show

the world. Steffenhagen and Burns (1987:19) state that psychologists who have constructed tests to measure self-esteem have often referred to it as self-concept, social concept, ego strength and other terms thereby also confirming the importance of linking the related terms.

“Self-esteem is fundamentally based upon knowing what you do well, and what you aren’t good at. It’s about knowing how far you can go, but also about the boundaries of your competence, knowledge and skills” (Grohol, 2003). You therefore have a realistic awareness of yourself, your abilities and needs (Youngs, 1991:13). Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger and Vohs (2005:84) mention that intuitively people know that self-esteem is very important to their psychological health and therefore individuals will enhance it in whatever ways they can. This is explained by Blaine and Crocker (1993:55) as self-serving bias which is the tendency to interpret and explain outcomes which are favorable for the self. It has been the researcher’s experience that often an adolescent will manipulate the truth in the school setting so that he/she is seen as the innocent party in various conflict situations so that this self-esteem is not harmed.

### **3.4.1 Perspectives on self-esteem**

Leary (1999:32) and Kalapac (1994:3) look at various perspectives on self-esteem:

- The humanistic psychologists have traced a high self-esteem to a congruency between a person’s ideal self and real self (Leary, 1999:32).
- The ethological perspective believes that self-esteem has evolved to maintain dominance in societal relationships (Leary, 1999:32).
- Terror management theory has a more controversial view of self-esteem by believing that the function of self-esteem is to buffer people against the terror they experience when they think about their own death (Leary, 1999:32).
- The phenomenological perspective holds that to be held in positive regard by others is necessary for the development of a positive self-concept and when this positive regard is lacking or inconsistent maladjustment occurs (Kalapac, 1994:3).
- Erik Erikson who used an extension of Freudian theory referred to the ‘self’ as ‘identity’ and viewed an optimal sense of identity in those individuals who felt personal direction and inner assuredness (Kalapac, 1994:3).

- William James was of the opinion that one's self-esteem is determined by the position that one wishes to hold in the world, that self-esteem is determined by one's success or failure (Kalapac, 1994:2).

Even though there are many different theories and perspectives on how self-esteem and self-concepts are formed and why these concepts are important to the psychological well being of individuals, one aspect remains constant: these aspects are important, they do exist and they do have an impact on individuals. The research is therefore focusing on how bullying affects this sense of self of the adolescent.

### **3.4.2 The Adolescent's sense of self**

Wexler (1991:3) states that the adolescent period of life can be seen as a time of intense 'chaos'. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:27) explain this 'chaos' as being the consequence of a period in an individual's life involving a process marked by rapid physical development, changes in their moods, crisis of identity, skirmishes into extreme areas of human behaviour and entering from the secure world of childhood to an insecure world of adolescence and then adulthood. They often grapple with issues relating to sexuality, relationships, drug use, career decisions, academic demands and events in their families (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:377). Powell ([sa]:78) mentions that as the adolescent separates from his/her parents he/she experiences the individuation process of becoming independent. For these teenagers it is essential that their self-concept and self-esteem be strong to overcome the struggles and conflicts during this time of their life.

Erikson in Powell ([sa]:78) includes socio-emotional tasks in all his stages of human development. According to Erikson in Powell ([sa]:78) the adolescent is in a developmental stage known as the 'Identity versus Identity Confusion' stage and it is during this stage that the socio-emotional task which need to be completed is for the adolescent to find his/her own unique identity. Finding this identity and this 'self' can be a difficult task as Harter (1997:85) points out that the adolescent is often confronted to create multiple 'selves' associated with social roles or contexts, for example they may display various selves with their friends or with their parents. Finding the 'real' self is therefore difficult during the adolescent stage of life.

In adolescent-development literature Blasi and Milton in Marshall and Arvay (1999:43) examine the development of identity (seen by the latter mentioned authors as a crisis) and they define this process as the 'sense of self'. The development of this sense of self is often affected particularly by two contexts which are families and schools. Here they develop skills as well as struggle with factors that put them at risk for difficulty during the transition to adulthood (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:376). Schools can provide an important environment where the adolescents develop their sense of self through the supportive teachers. Schools, however, can also provide an atmosphere of risk which will have an impact on the learner's sense of self-definition (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:377). In the researcher's experience at school A, often the atmosphere for the adolescents was one that didn't enhance the development of this sense of self but rather provided risk.

It is favourable for the adolescent to have a high self-esteem as it effects every sphere of his/her life.

### **3.4.3 The characteristics and value of high self-esteem**

According to Youngs (1991:20) a child with a high self-esteem is a child with a can-do attitude who can accept weaknesses and failures without feeling worse about who they are. Blom (2004:113) continues with this line of thought by stating that children who have a strong sense of self do not need accomplishments or grades to feel good. Blaine and Crocker (1993:76) also mention that people who have a high self-esteem are confident in their important positive qualities and their negative qualities are not seen as an important part of who they are. When the people who have a high self-esteem fail, they are surprised as it is inconsistent with their self concepts. They therefore seek explanations that will line up with their positive self-concepts (Blaine & Crocker, 1993:77).

Youngs (1991:25) mentions that when working with children (adolescents) it is important to be able to recognize if they have a healthy sense of self. One cannot assume that because a child is quiet and shy that he/she is struggling with his/her self-esteem or the child that is outgoing and playful has a strong self-esteem. Youngs (1991:25) lists some guidelines to help make an accurate assessment of a child's self-esteem:

- **Willingness to participate** – How does the child react when invited to participate in activities? A child with a high self-esteem will joyfully engage in a number and range of experiences. These children feel secure in their ability to succeed and will have fun in trying to do so (Youngs, 1991:25).
- **Willingness to share** – Children with a healthy sense of self will be willing to talk about themselves and their interests with others. They are also willing to give compliments to others (Youngs, 1991:25). The researcher is of the opinion that bullying may hinder this willingness to share.
- **Ability to accept advice without viewing it as criticism** – Such children are willing to accept when they are wrong and have made a mistake (Youngs, 1991:26). In the researcher's experience, the child who has a healthy sense of self will be able to accept advice as constructive and learn from their experience.
- **Comfortable when alone with themselves** – Children with a healthy self-esteem do not mind being in their own company and are not looking for social interaction every minute of the day. Even though the normal desire does exist to be 'one of the crowd', they are not dependent on this to define who they are (Youngs, 1991:26).
- **Commitment to achieving** – The child who displays behaviour of a healthy sense of self will tackle challenges which come their way; they are comfortable with themselves and will compete with themselves rather than with others (Youngs, 1991:26).

#### **3.4.4 The origins of a low self-esteem**

Children are not born with a negative sense of self or a low self-esteem (Oaklander, 1988:280). It is therefore interactions with the environment such as family background factors, psychosocial, biological and contextual factors (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:375) which effect this self-esteem. Rugel (1995:5) gives examples of negative interactions during childhood such as traumatic experiences of abuse, neglect, criticism and disinterest within the family system which often lead to dysfunctional ways of maintaining self-esteem. When it comes to a task whereby an individual with low self-esteem has to evaluate him/herself he/she may begin to prepare for possible negative outcomes (Blaine & Crocker, 1993:77). The authors also mention that people with low self-esteem still do care about having positive qualities and not negative ones.

Often negative or traumatic experiences in childhood have resulted in the internalization of messages, both at a conscious and unconscious level (in Gestalt terms it becomes an introject).

The messages are interpreted in a series of three as mentioned by Fouché and Williams (2005:4):

Message 1 – A message about self

Message 2 – A message about other people

Message 3 – A message about the world/life

The authors state that once a situation is internalized it can become inaccessible to the child's accurate observation and judgment (they are unaware of the internalization), but it still influences the way the child sees himself and the world around him. Therefore, 'the taking in and processing of the meaning of outer experiences as they relate to the self is called internalizations' (Fouché & Williams, 2005:4). Therefore low self-esteem is a result of negative internalizations which happened in the family or whilst growing up. It is through contact boundary disturbances that these internalizations have taken place.

In a qualitative research study conducted by Whitney-Thomas and Moloney (2001:381) examining the self-definition (being able to describe themselves) of adolescents, the following was a description of those adolescents who struggled with their self-definition:

- The individuals, who were able to describe how they learned about the self, reported that they did so through difficult situations such as drug involvement, illness and struggles in their family.
- They had changeable or non-existent visions for the future, especially in terms of concrete plans.

In the researcher's opinion when adolescents define themselves there are a number of ways they do this, through the view of others, their innate temperament and from first hand experiences.

### **3.5. ASPECTS OF THE SENSE OF SELF**

Blom (2004:117) believes that in order to empower the self an individual should have self-knowledge. The author also states that a child's sense of self has two dimensions, their need to feel loveable and their need to feel capable (Blom, 2004:114). Sullivan *et al.*, (2004:33) mentions that teenagers have an innate sense of self. The researcher however believes that even these

innate senses of self can be affected and shaped by external stimuli. Children's value of themselves will have a strong impact on how they perform in different aspects of their lives.

Humphreys (2002:125) lists six main sub-categories with regards to a child's sense of self. It should be noted that some of these categories are so closely linked that the researcher may at times mention one category in conjunction with another category in the paragraphs that follow. The reason that the various domains of the sense of self are important to consider is because as Harter (1993:93) states, "We are living in a society where scholastic competence, athletic competence, physical attractiveness, social acceptance and appropriate behavioural conduct are highly valued and sought after by the majority of youths in the cultural mainstream" thus the impact on any of these areas is important to consider. The six categories of the sense of self are seen as:

### **3.5.1 Physical sense of self**

Humphreys (2002:125) mentions that the physical sense of self in a child is seen as the appearance of the child. The physical identities of the adolescents play an important role in how they perceive themselves within their peer groups (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:32). The importance of physical appearance as seen by Seidah and Bouffard (2007:264) is a normal phenomenon which is observed across cultures and at different moments of an individual's life, however, it tends to heighten during adolescence. Seidah and Bouffard (2007:256) believe that for some young people their physical appearance plays such a critical role in their developmental process that it is central to determining their holistic sense of self. Therefore according to the researcher these authors are of the opinion that if the physical sense of self is severely damaged it will have an effect on their social, emotional, intellectual, creative and behavioural sense of self thereby showing how closely related these aspects are.

During research conducted by Seidah and Bouffard (2007:263) some of the findings were that young people who acknowledge that their appearance proceeds and influences their sense of self report lower self-esteem and satisfaction with physical appearance than do other adolescents. Part of the physical appearance and perception of the adolescent is the body image, which is a combination of physical appearances and capabilities (Pope *et al.*, 1988:4). It is during this

period in an individual's life that the body is prone to rapid modifications – most of them are connected to weight and height (Viviani, 2006:303). The author states that the desire to weigh less is more common in women than men, but males are more concerned about muscular masses.

Marshall & Arvay (1999:43) mention that a girl's early adolescence (ages 12 to 13) is marked by a developmental transition in terms of their psychological self-structure, gender-role identity and body image (in other words as they start to develop their physical sense of self, they are overly aware the opinions and views of others). Seidah and Bouffard (2007:263) conducted research interesting in focusing on the adolescents' physical body image and found that males have become more preoccupied with their physical appearance in recent years than ever before (Seidah & Bouffad, 2007:264).

Papalia, Olds and Feldman (2002:383) mention the findings of research on early and late physical maturation in adolescence. A different reaction was found for early-maturing boys than for girls. The early maturing boy was found to be more poised, relaxed, popular with their peers and more likely to be leaders. The early maturing girl on the other hand was seen to be less sociable, less expressive, less poised and more introverted (Papalia *et al.*, 2002:383). Therefore it would seem that these girls would lend themselves more to bullying than the early maturing boys who are seen in a more positive light by their peers.

Fox and Corbin as quoted by Welk, Corbin, Dowell and Harris (1997:164) developed the Physical Self-Perception Profile (PSPP) which is composed of five different scales that assess the nature of physical self-perceptions and their relation to global self-esteem. The five scales are:

- Sport competence
- Physical conditioning
- Body attractiveness
- Physical strength

Welk *et al.* (1997:175) found that children may perceive a positive body image as a symbol of sports ability. The researcher is of the opinion that this is probably why many children do not



participate in sport at the school where she is employed. If they are being verbally insulted about their bodies, they have a negative body image which will affect their view of their sports ability.

Therefore the physical sense of self is formulated from the combination of the perceptions of the individual on the above aspects. The researcher is of the opinion that bullying would affect all of the above mentioned concepts and that the child who is physically ‘different’ from the norm will perhaps become the target of bullying.

### **3.5.2 Emotional sense of self**

Whether a child is loveable and interesting is known according to Humphreys (2002:125) as the emotional sense of self. Sullivan *et al.* (2004:34) state that adolescence is often a time of emotional turmoil where the line between what is healthy and unhealthy becomes blurred and therefore the child needs to be encouraged that he/she is loveable, capable and important (Youngs, 1991:73). It is during adolescence that social, emotional and gender identity form and solidify (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:38). Therefore according to the researcher it is important that a healthy emotional sense of self develops during this stage before it solidifies.

Gouws and Kruger (1994:94) mention that the adolescent period is one where emotions are heightened. The reason for this heightened emotionality as outlined by these authors is due to their interaction and adjustment to the environment as well as unrealistic expectations by society. Society, according to the researcher, is not just extended society but also the school ‘society’ where bullying takes place and if one does not meet a particular ‘standard’ then it may be a cause of bullying. Sometimes a person needs to have other people to step on to boost his own self image and to gain control of their own self identity.

One of the building blocks of self-esteem as outlined by Youngs (1991:73) is emotional security. To help a child develop a positive emotional sense of self, the child needs to be empowered to improve his or her inner language (Youngs, 1991:79). The author continues by stating that a child is emotionally secure if they aren’t fearful of being made to feel unworthy and if they are safe from intimidation or emotional putdowns. From chapter two it is clear that bullying takes this emotional security away from a child.

It is important to note that the children who are victimized more than others are those who are timid, non-assertive, introverted, shy and quiet (Zarzour, 2000:75; Rigby, 1996:73; Olweus, 1993:32), therefore in some ways they are emotionally ‘immature’ or ‘stunted’. When this child is bullied instead of growing in emotional maturity it could lead, according to the researcher to the child even becoming more inept or stunted and therefore a vicious negative cycle has begun.

### **3.5.3 Intellectual sense of self**

Humphreys (2002:125) describes this dimension of the sense of self as whether the child is able to understand certain aspects of the world. Adolescents, as described by Sullivan *et al.* (2004:39), go through changes in cognition. The way that they process ideas change; they learn to reason and think in different ways. During these changes they learn to think in more abstract terms and organize experiences to make sense of the world. Santrock in Sullivan *et al.* (2004:39) explains that this way of thinking fits in with Piaget’s theory of formal operational thought where adolescents are motivated to understand their world because by doing so it is biologically adaptive.

Students who have missed out various developmental steps may perform poorly and therefore feel frustrated and begin to look for weaker students to assert their power (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:39). This may to a large extent be why some children are more inclined to bully others. It may also pertain as to why some children have a low intellectual sense of self as they have missed out on developmental steps and therefore do not perform to the expected standard.

Owens *et al.* (1996:1378) mentions that people often make conclusions about themselves by observing their own performances and attainments. He also states that achievements will be seen as reflecting the self when they are internally motivated and not because of the result of other external forces. It does not necessarily mean that the straight ‘A’ students will have a positive intellectual sense of self as it is the child him/herself who decides if what he/she has achieved is ‘good enough’, therefore if the child meets his/her own standards which may not necessarily be all ‘A’s then his academic self-esteem (sense of self) will be positive (Pope *et al.*, 1988:3). Sometimes they may meet their academic standards and still have a low sense of self.

The researcher Hagborg in Marshall and Arvay (1999:44), when using the Harter's Self Perception Profile for Adolescents (SPPA), discovered that girls and boys rated themselves as being similar in terms of school competence. Seidah and Bouffard (2007:264) disagree with these results stating that even though females outperform males, they will report lower perception of their scholastic competence than their counterpart males. It would seem to the researcher that in general females tend to be either more modest or hard on themselves than males are. In the researcher's opinion the child who is bullied is often just targeted due to being a nerd or because of being 'different' not fitting into the stereotypical box which adolescents often create (for example being arty). The bully is also seen by the researcher as being somebody who often achieves enjoyment from the pain of the victim. They thrive on the rush of having another person submit to them. The researcher wonders if this is because often in many of their lives this sense of control has been taken away due to coming from very unstable family backgrounds. In Gestalt therapy having a sense of control is important in the therapeutic process as it helps the child develop a healthy sense of self (Oaklander, 1997:302).

#### **3.5.4 Behavioural sense of self**

Humphreys (2002:125) mentions that this aspect is whether a child is skilled, able and independent. Self-determination goes hand in hand with the behavioural sense of self as this term is defined as one knowing what one wants in life and having the mechanisms to achieve these goals which play a critical role in directions for adult life (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:376). The authors continue to mention that self-determination is the umbrella term for various skills such as problem-solving skills, adaptability, choice and decision-making skills and clarity of personal vision. Thus, if the individual has a low behavioural sense of self, making decisions, having a clear vision for the future and feeling a sense of control and independence would be affected. Self-determination begins at childhood when parents, teachers and friends teach skills and provide opportunities for individuals to make decisions and exercise control (Whitney-Thomas & Moloney, 2001:376). When somebody is being bullied the opportunity for exercising control is taken away and therefore the researcher is of the opinion that it would affect the behavioural sense of self negatively.

Behavioural responses which girls acknowledged in the Casey-Cannon *et al.* (2001:44) study on victimization were retaliation, ignoring or minimizing the event. The researcher is of the opinion that if the behavioural sense of self is strong and positive then they will be skilled and able to stand up for themselves in an independent way.

### **3.5.5 Social sense of self**

This part of the sense of self is whether the child has a sense of uniqueness or inferiority, (Humphreys, 2002:125). Rapoo (2002:39) describes the self as growing within a social framework. Individuals are consistently engaging with others in their environment and how an individual (including the adolescent) is accepted in this environment plays an important part in enhancing the social sense of self. In primary school the peer group plays an important role in developing this sense of uniqueness or inferiority but in secondary school (high school) the peer group comes into its own and the family is challenged because the values of the peer group take over (Sullivan *et al.*, 2004:35). Sullivan *et al.* (2004:37) explain that the ‘social group’ in high school emerges out of chaos during the first year but then is quickly established, rigid, inflexible and unforgiving to those who do not fit in. One can thus suspect that social bullying can be crippling to this part of the sense of self of the adolescent because to try and fit into another social group would seem almost impossible.

The social sense of self would begin to develop as the adolescent asks him/herself various questions such as: Do other children like him/her and value their ideas? Are they included in activities? Does he/she feel satisfied with their interactions and relationships with peers? (Pope *et al.*, 1988:3). The authors believe that if a child’s social needs are being satisfied that he/she will feel comfortable with this aspect of him/herself. Thoits and Virshup (1997:106) speak about the development of the ‘social self’ explaining that there are two predominant conceptions of this ‘social self’. One is the individual-level identity which is, for example, the kind of person he/she is but the collective-level is the identification of the self with the group as a whole, using categories to describe ‘who we are’. The individuals in the group often obtain a view of their in-group’s value relative to an out-group through a social comparison process and if the group that the individual is part of is identified as less highly valued, the individual will try and improve the group’s standing (Thoits & Virshup, 1997:115). It is therefore clear to the researcher that

although the individual-level of the social self is important, individuals long to have the second more collective-level with whom they can identify with.

### **3.5.6 Creative sense of self**

Humphreys (2002:125) defines the creative sense of self as to whether the child conforms or resists conformity, whether the child is a people pleaser or does things in his or her own way. The adolescent girls in Marshall and Arvay's research (1999:48) revealed that often, when they wanted to speak out and didn't, it was because they feared that they would be perceived as 'mean', 'uncaring' or 'rude'. Gilligan's (in Harter, 1997:86) research found the same findings with adolescent girls mentioning that many of these individuals did not speak their mind as it may cause tension in their relationships. Thereby showing that many times in adolescent girls they would conform (lack of a creative sense of self) instead of resisting conformity because social relationships are so important to them. This is referred to by Harter (1997:86) as a 'loss of voice' which is the suppression of thoughts and opinions. The researcher is of the opinion that if a child conforms, he/she has experienced this 'loss of voice' (not in control of self) and it is probable that the child has a low creative sense of self.

### **3.6. SUMMARY**

The self, in very nature, is the essence of every human being and is not an easily definable concept. The various aspects related to the self which are seen as existing in combination with each other is the self-concept, self-esteem and self worth and all these forming part of the sense of self. Every individual has one's own 'self' which is shaped by innate temperaments as well as experiences through one's life. These experiences will often cause individuals to internalize messages about themselves whether they are true or not.

The self in the research is observed through the Gestalt theoretical perspective which is a humanistic, existential approach. Aspects such as awareness, figure-ground needs and organismic self-regulation should be considered when the self is studied and especially when interested in how bullying has affected this sense of self.

The importance of self-esteem needs to be understood so that teachers and other adults in a child's life can identify whether a child has a high or low self-esteem. This sense of self will impact the way that they function in their present lives as well as hinder their futures as healthy functioning members of society. When looking at the sense of self, it is important to look at various sub-categories of the sense of self such as the intellectual, behavioural, social, creative and emotional sense of self. Each part of the sense of self plays an important role in the adolescent's life.

## CHAPTER 4

# RESULTS OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY INVESTIGATING THE IMPACT OF BULLYING ON THE ADOLESCENT'S SENSE OF SELF

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature study was one of the imperatives of this investigation; therefore before the empirical research could be undertaken the literature review had to be completed. In chapter two bullying was described, as well as other important aspects related to bullying. In chapter three focus was shifted to the sense of self within the Gestalt theoretical perspective. The previous two theoretical chapters served as a basis for the formulation of the questionnaire as well as an interpretation of the results. The researcher used the questionnaire to investigate the impact of bullying on the sense of self.

The second objective of this research namely the research methodology and results of the empirical study is discussed in chapter four.

#### 4.1.2 Goal and objectives of the study

**The goal of the study was:** The goal of the research was to investigate the impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self, within the high school environment.

**The objectives of the study were:**

- To build a knowledge base on:
  - The phenomena of bullying in high school.
  - Classifying various types of bullying.
  - The relationship between bullying and the adolescent's sense of self.
  - The holistic impact of bullying on the adolescent.

- The characteristics of the bullied adolescent.
- Consequences of bullying.
- Signs of bullying.
- Involvement of teachers and counsellors.
- Importance of intervention and prevention programmes.
- To empirically investigate the impact that bullying in the school has on the adolescent's sense of self.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for teachers of school A as well as counsellors who, in the counselling setting, work with bullied children.

In order to prove that the above mentioned objectives were achieved it is necessary for the reader to have a clear and extended description of the research methodology, including data collection and analysis.

## **4.2 THE RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS**

During the beginning stages of this research, it was decided that it would be best to formulate a research question instead of a hypothesis based on the nature of the study. The research question asks if one variable has an impact on the other (bullying and the sense of self). The research question is therefore:

*What would the impact of bullying in high school be on the adolescent's sense of self?*

The researcher set about to investigate the impact of bullying on different aspects of the sense of self.

## **4.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.3.1 Research approach**

For the purposes of this study it was decided that it would be most suitable to use a structured quantitative design. The impact of one variable (bullying) on another (sense of self) could be



more accurately measured by making use of a measuring scale. The researcher believed that there would be a statistically significant relationship between bullying and the sense of self. The researcher decided to use the quantitative approach so that all individuals (420 Grade 11 and 12 learners, in total) would be given an equal opportunity to participate.

#### 4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The researcher made use of the quantitative-descriptive design as outlined by Fouché and De Vos (2005:137). This design requires a questionnaire as the form of data collection method. The researcher made use of the group administered questionnaire.

##### 4.4.1 Development of questionnaire

The researcher formulated an anonymous questionnaire (Appendix A) which included the following important elements as outlined by Olweus (1993:11):

- A definition of bullying (to give the students a clear understanding of the problem). Refer to **Section B** of the questionnaire; the researcher used a definition from the work of Cornell & Brockenbrough (2004:67).
- Olweus (1993:11) says it should refer to a specific time period (a ‘reference period’). The researcher wanted the respondents to think about their high school years when answering the questions - refer to **Section A** of the questionnaire.
- The response alternatives should be fairly specific such as ‘about once a week’ in contrast to ‘often’ which lend to more subjective interpretation (Olweus, 1993:11). Please refer to the code before **Section D** and **Section E** of the questionnaire.

When beginning to plan and draft the questionnaire the researcher needed certain demographics to describe the sample and to explain if the convenient sample was representative of the population. **Section C** described the sample in terms of:

- Gender (male or female)
- Grade (either grade 11 or 12)
- Age (ranging from 16 to 20)
- Ethnicity (this was important as the data was taken from a multicultural school)

- Number of years they had completed in high school)

During the formulation of the questionnaire, some of the statements particularly in **Section D** of the questionnaire (which measured the types of bullying the respondents had been exposed to) were taken but adapted from the bullying survey used by Parsons (2005:33-34). The researcher added other statements based on the types of bullying behaviour described in the theoretical material. The code was formulated based on the frequency of the bullying (how often it had happened).

**Section E** of the questionnaire was also formulated from theory to make sure that the statements were measuring the different parts of the sense of self. The code was used to find out how severely the respondents had been affected by the bullying.

The respondents completed section D and E. The researcher was interested to see if bullying behaviour (section D) had an impact on the sense of self (section E).

In **Section D**, the questionnaire measured the types of bullying which the respondent had been exposed to. The following statements measured the different types of bullying:

TABLE 4.1: Statements measuring physical bullying.

<b>Physical</b>	D1	D3	D4	D7	D10	D11	D14	D15	D16	D20	D23
<b>Bullying</b>	D24	D28	D29	D36	D38	D40	D41	D42	D43	D48	

TABLE 4.2: Statements measuring social bullying.

<b>Social</b>	D2	D8	D12	D17	D18	D22	D25
<b>Bullying</b>	D26	D31	D33	D35	D45	D47	

TABLE 4.3: Statements measuring verbal bullying.

<b>Verbal</b>	D5	D6	D9	D13	D19	D21	D27
<b>Bullying</b>	D30	D32	D34	D37	D39	D44	D46

**Section E** was drafted to measure the various aspects of the sense of self (of which there were six categories); once again the statements were jumbled. The statements in this section aimed at measuring the following aspects of the sense of self, as outlined by the following table:

TABLE 4.4: Statements measuring the various aspects of the sense of self.

<b>Physical</b>	E1	E4	E7	E9	E12	E14	E35				
<b>Emotional</b>	E2	E5	E10	E13	E15	E33					
<b>Intellectual</b>	E3	E6	E16	E37							
<b>Behavioural</b>	E11	E18	E20	E22	E24	E25	E28	E40			
<b>Social</b>	E8	E19	E21	E36	E38	E42	E43	E44	E45		
<b>Creative</b>	E17	E23	E26	E27	E29	E30	E31	E32	E34	E39	E41

The Department of Statistics of the University of Pretoria helped with the development of the questionnaire and the questionnaire and research were approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Pretoria (Appendix C). Whilst developing the questionnaire the researcher took the following into consideration:

- The questionnaire should not be too long as the respondents might become bored and just start completing the questionnaire randomly thus not yielding accurate data.
- The researcher needed to include all types of bullying as well as various aspects of the sense of self.
- The statements were spread out so that the respondent didn't start to figure out which statements were measuring which types of bullying or sense of self and subsequently leading to respondent bias.
- The questionnaire had to be set out in such a way that the respondents could understand each question; it had to be relevant to their language development.

#### 4.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

During the research the following ethical issues, as described in chapter one, were taken into consideration:

#### **4.5.1 Avoidance of harm**

None of the participants were harmed in any way during the course of the investigation. All procedures and purposes were explained to the participants. Counselling services were also provided.

#### **4.5.2 Informed consent**

Informed consent was received from School A, the Department of Education, the parents of the participants, the participants themselves, as well as from the Ethical Committee from the University of Pretoria. The questionnaire was only completed once all the relevant parties had given written consent.

#### **4.5.3 Anonymity, confidentiality and privacy**

The questionnaire was anonymous ensuring that every participant remained anonymous and that the information they shared would remain private. There were no respondents who mistakenly filled in their name on the questionnaire and therefore confidentiality did not become a cause for concern.

#### **4.5.4 Deception of participants**

To ensure that none of the participants were deceived the children were informed four weeks prior to the study regarding the process, the procedure as well as the aim of the research. During the first meeting with each of the groups, several learners asked questions regarding what constitute bullying. This gave the researcher an opportunity to explain as well as to say that they didn't have to necessarily have been bullied in order to participate and that their questionnaires were still important to the research results. None of the participants were therefore deceived during any part of the study.

#### **4.5.5 Actions and competence of the researcher**

The researcher possessed all the necessary skills to conduct the study. The Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria also helped with the formulation of the questionnaire which increased the researcher's competence.

#### **4.5.6 Debriefing of respondents**

Debriefing was offered to all participants as well as post-test counselling if any participant needed further individual debriefing. None of the participants requested further debriefing.

## 4.6 THE PILOT TEST

The researcher used five grade 10 pupils for the pilot test, including three females and two males from the population as outlined in 1.9. They were chosen because their age is close to that of the learners in the sample. The learners that formed part of the pilot test were taken from various racial groups as the grade 11 and 12 group would also include these various racial groups. Feedback that was given included:

- There were some repeated questions which the researcher had not picked up on and therefore the repeats were taken out.
- On average the questionnaire took them 20 minutes to fill in. This was important information because the researcher only had 30 minutes with the grade 11 and 12 learners. It was therefore important for the learners to arrive at the venue quickly and promptly.
- About three of the learners felt that the researcher should include statements about whether the victim fought back. Therefore some statements were included as this formed part of the creative sense of self.
- One of the participants recommended that the researcher repeat the key (code) on each page so that the respondent doesn't have to keep paging to a previous page. The researcher made the necessary adjustments to the final questionnaire.
- It was also suggested that some of the questions be changed so that the respondents could relate to them, for example using phrases such as, 'The whole social scene.' The researcher made use of this suggestion.

The pilot test therefore gave the researcher a good indication of what needed to be reformulated and also how long it would take to fill in the measuring instrument.

## 4.7 SAMPLING

When choosing the sample the criteria (as outlined in 1.9.1) was taken into consideration and because the exact number of bullied pupils was unknown to the researcher convenience sampling was used. All the grade 11 and 12 pupils were encouraged to participate in the study; the fact that the questionnaire would be anonymous was stressed to all learners. The type of sample used

was a non-probability type sample as described by Yegidis and Weinbach (1996:135). The researcher had to use this type of sampling method because all the respondents had to take consent forms home, get them signed and return them to school in four weeks. The questionnaire had to be anonymous and therefore the consent forms and questionnaires could not be completed on the same day.

There were 54 grade 11 pupils who completed the questionnaire. The sample from this group can be tabulated as follows: for the male and female population of the grade 11's there are two columns. The first describes the sample size for that particular race group and the second describes the actual population of that group.

TABLE 4.5: Description of the sample of respondents from the grade 11 group (males  $n=21$  and females  $n=33$ ):

<b>GRADE 11</b>	<b>MALE SAMPLE</b>	<b>MALE POPULATION</b>	<b>FEMALE SAMPLE</b>	<b>FEMALE POPULATION</b>	<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>
<i>ASIAN</i>	<b>4</b>	<i>14</i>	<b>2</b>	<i>18</i>	<b>6</b>	<i>32</i>
<i>BLACK</i>	<b>5</b>	<i>42</i>	<b>16</b>	<i>37</i>	<b>21</b>	<i>79</i>
<i>COLOURED</i>	<b>0</b>	<i>12</i>	<b>3</b>	<i>10</i>	<b>3</b>	<i>22</i>
<i>WHITE</i>	<b>12</b>	<i>29</i>	<b>12</b>	<i>42</i>	<b>24</b>	<i>71</i>
<i>TOTAL</i>	<b>21</b>	<i>97</i>	<b>33</b>	<i>107</i>	<b>54</b>	<i>204</i>

There were 57 grade 12 pupils who completed the questionnaire. The sample drawn from the group is tabulated in the same manner as for the grade 11's.

TABLE 4.6: The sample drawn from the grade 12 learners (males  $n=12$  and females  $n=45$ ):

<b>GRADE 12</b>	<b>MALE SAMPLE</b>	<b>MALE POPULATION</b>	<b>FEMALE SAMPLE</b>	<b>FEMALE POPULATION</b>	<b>TOTAL SAMPLE</b>	<b>TOTAL POPULATION</b>
<i>ASIAN</i>	<b>1</b>	<i>7</i>	<b>5</b>	<i>10</i>	<b>6</b>	<i>17</i>
<i>BLACK</i>	<b>1</b>	<i>40</i>	<b>14</b>	<i>46</i>	<b>15</b>	<i>86</i>

<i>COLOURE D</i>	<b>1</b>	5	<b>1</b>	9	<b>2</b>	14
<i>WHITE</i>	<b>9</b>	55	<b>25</b>	67	<b>34</b>	122
<i>TOTAL</i>	<b>12</b>	107	<b>45</b>	132	<b>57</b>	239

From the above one can see that the sample was not a representative sample as the percentage per group was low. Only 38.9% of the possible 47.5% of grade 11 male boys formed part of the respondents. For the grade 11 girls it was higher. Only 61.1% of the possible 52.5% filled in the questionnaire. In the grade 12 group, only 21.1% of the possible 44.8% of males formed part of the sample and the females are much higher: 78.9% of the possible 55.2% of females in grade 12 responded to the questionnaire. One can speculate as to why the sample is not a representative one and this could be due to the fact that many adolescents forgot to get their consent forms signed or perhaps even misplaced them. The researcher believes that if a sample could have been drawn from the population and used without their parents' consent it would have been more of a representative sample. However due to ethical issues, the researcher had to receive written permission from the parents and adolescents before the empirical study could proceed.

#### **4.8 DATA COLLECTION**

The empirical study was carried out on the same day for the grade 11's and 12's. The grade 11 boys and girls who had received written consent from their parents met in the hall during their Life Orientation Period. The researcher asked that all participants spread themselves all over the hall and then explained to them how to fill in the questionnaire and that they were not to talk during the process of completing it. During the completion of the questionnaires the respondents remained quiet, seating themselves further from their friends, arriving on time at the venue and leaving quietly once they had finished. This allowed them to focus on the questionnaire and to read each question carefully. On average it took each respondent about 18 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The researcher was available for questions. As soon as the participants had completed the questionnaire they handed them in and were allowed to leave the hall and sit outside. The research process was then repeated but this time with the grade 12's.

School A was cooperative in supporting the researcher, allowing the two groups of learners to be called into the hall, giving up teaching time for the researcher to allow the respondents to fill in their questionnaires, giving a venue for the completion of the investigation and supporting the researcher in any way possible.

After the questionnaires were completed and handed in the researcher then gave each questionnaire a respondent number (for example 1). This was so that if the researcher needed to refer to a questionnaire it would make it possible as no names were written on them. The researcher then went through every questionnaire and in the block next to each statement (please refer to Appendix A) wrote what each respondent had answered (for example if they had ticked block 4, the researcher would write 4 in the block next to the statement). This helped with data capturing.

#### **4.9 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY**

Delport describes validity as an instrument which actually measures the concept which it is supposed to and also measures it accurately (Delport, 2005:160). In terms of this research, the researcher set out to measure the impact of different forms of bullying on the holistic sense of self. The researcher believes that the measuring instrument was valid as it was formulated based on theoretical literature and using other questionnaires as examples such as the one used by Parsons (2005:33-34).

The reliability of the measuring instrument is how stable and consistent it is (Delport, 2005:162). The Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria used the Cronbach Coefficient to find out the consistency of all the questions related to a particular group (for example physical, social and verbal bullying). When the consistency was measured, it was looking at each question for example relating to physical bullying and how consistently each individual answered the questions related to the physical bullying. The closer to one (1) the result, the better the consistency among questions. The Cronbach results for the different kinds of bullying were the following:



TABLE 4.7: Table showing the Cronbach coefficient based on different kinds of bullying

Physical Bullying	0.86
Social Bullying	0.92
Verbal bullying	0.89

The Cronbach coefficient did show that removing some of the questions will increase the Cronbach results (making them closer to one). However the change was so slight that the researcher decided to leave those questions in the measuring instrument.

The Cronbach was then also used to measure the consistency of the sense of self, and these were the results:

TABLE 4.8 Table showing the Cronbach coefficient based on the sense of self.

Physical sense of self	0.92
Emotional sense of self	0.87
Intellectual sense of self	0.91
Behavioural sense of self	0.89
Social sense of self	0.77
Creative sense of self	0.92

Once again the Cronbach coefficient showed that by omitting certain questions it would increase the consistency, only slightly though and therefore the researcher decided to leave those particular statements as part of the instrument. There was an exception though and that was for the **Social Sense of self**, the researcher omitted the following statements to increase the consistency:

E 21 - I physically fought back when I was picked on.

E43 - When I was verbally insulted I reacted by insulting the bully/group of bullies back.

E 45 - I treated the bullies exactly the same way that they treated me.

The Cronbach then increased from 0.70 to 0.77. The consistency of measuring the social sense of self was therefore increased. The researcher could therefore conclude that the questionnaire was reliable.

## 4.10 DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.10.1 Analysis and interpretation of empirical data.

The Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria used the SAS statistical package to analyse the data. Once the data had been captured the results were printed out and given to the researcher who took the results home and checked that every questionnaire's responses matched those of the printed out data to ensure that no errors had occurred during the data capturing process. The researcher found three errors which could then be altered.

At first the researcher, together with the statistician, looked at the results of the boys and girls together. There were no results for Physical bullying on any parts of the sense of self. Therefore it was decided to split the boys and girls separately and this yielded to some interesting results.

Please note that the impact of the different types of bullying on the holistic sense of self was measured, however these results were not all statistically significant. The researcher will therefore only discuss the results which were 60% as these are considered to be relevant.

TABLE 4.9: Impact of bullying on the adolescent **females** sense of self ( $n=78$ ):

SENSE OF SELF	TYPES OF BULLYING	
	Social Bullying	Verbal bullying
Physical sense of self	62%	65%
Emotional sense of self	73%	72%
Intellectual sense of self	62%	63%

Behavioural sense of self	71%	66%
Social sense of self	63%	63%
Creative sense of self	76%	72%

The above table shows the impact of bullying (in percentage form) on the different aspects of the female adolescent's sense of self. Social and verbal bullying have an impact on every part of the sense of self. It was interesting to note that there was no impact of physical bullying on any aspects of their sense of self and that is why it is not included in the table. Table 4.9 will be discussed in more detail later on. When the results were calculated for the male respondents, the researcher found the following:

TABLE 4.10: Impact of bullying on the adolescent **males** sense of self ( $n=33$ ):

SENSE OF SELF	TYPES OF BULLYING		
	Physical bullying	Social Bullying	Verbal bullying
Physical sense of self	62%	No impact.	No impact.
Emotional sense of self	No impact.	67%	64%
Behavioural sense of self	No impact	74%	69%
Social sense of self	No impact	No impact	60%
Creative sense of self	60%	81%	81%

As with the girls we can interpret the above table (discussed in detail later): Physical bullying had a 62% influence on the males physical sense of self. The researcher did not include the intellectual sense of self in the above table as there was no impact from any forms of bullying on this part of the adolescent male's sense of self. For the purpose of the discussion that follows the

researcher wishes to revise the definitions of the sense of self by Humphreys (2002:125). These definitions should be kept in mind when reading the interpretation of the data:

- Physical sense of self - In chapter three the physical sense of self was seen as the appearance of the child.
- Emotional sense of self - Whether a child feels lovable and is seen as an interesting human being.
- Intellectual sense of self – whether the child is able to comprehend certain aspects of the world.
- Behavioural sense of self - This part of the sense of self is the part which is able, skilled and independent.
- Social sense of self - This part of the self is that which is seen as unique or inferior.
- Creative sense of self – This is described as the part of the self which either conforms to the standards set around them or resists it.

#### **4.11 THE IMPACT OF PHYSICAL BULLYING ON THE ADOLESCENT’S SENSE OF SELF**

It was necessary to look at the results for the male and female adolescents differently and the reasoning is supported by Zarzour (2000:29) who mentions that during childhood, girls and boys are equally aggressive although this aggression may manifest itself in different ways. Therefore it would be incorrect to analyze the results of the males and females together.

##### **4.11.1 Females**

When looking at the statistical results (table 4.9), the researcher found that there was no impact from physical bullying on any part of the female’s sense of self. One can speculate that this is because girls are not often physically bullied and therefore there were no statistically relevant results. This is in line with Sullivan’s (2000:21) work when he mentions that girls rely more on a range of psychological weapons than physical means even though there have been cases of serious physical injury amongst girls. Simmons in Dutton (2003:12) also mentions that girls are discouraged (from a young age) from engaging in direct or physical conflict, but mentions that girls are just as aggressive as boys. The researcher believes that it would be interesting to

observe if physical aggression increases over the years as, even though the impact of physical bullying on the sense of self was low and not significant, there was still a score which shows that girls are exposed to physical bullying (although not to the extent that it has an impact on their sense of self).

#### **4.11.2 Males**

The physical bullying which the male adolescents are exposed to has an effect on their physical sense of self (62%) (table 4.10) as well as their creative sense of self (60%) with their other 'selves'; however there was no significant correlation. Out of a sample of 111 respondents, only 33 (30%) were male. This could possibly show that boys are not as willing as girls to admit that they have been bullied. On the other hand it could simply show that girls tend also to be more responsible when it comes to getting consent letters signed by their parents and are also usually more willing to help, seeing they are more concerned about relationships and caring (helping) than boys are. Therefore the girls would naturally want to help the researcher by filling in the questionnaire but for boys (in most cases) it requires more of an effort to participate.

The fact that boys are more physically bullied than girls is clearly mentioned in literature. Garrett (2003:11); Sullivan (2000:20) and Rigby (1996:45) state that when it comes to types of bullying, physical and verbal bullying (being threatened) are most common in boys. Results from The South African National Youth Risk Behaviour Survey conducted by Reddy, Panday, Swart, Jinabahi, Amosun, James, Moneki, Stevens, Morejele, Kambaran, Omardien and Van den Borne in Nesor & Prinsloo (2004:5) revealed that more males than females participated in physical fights; that learners involved in physical bullying were unrelated to variables such as race and age and that learners from the Free State were more likely to be involved in physical fights than those from Kwazulu-Natal.

##### **4.11.2.1 Physical bullying and the physical sense of self**

From the results the researcher showed that amongst the boys, physical bullying has a 62% impact on their physical sense of self. A reason for these results could possibly be that in relationships boys seek power and dominance (Sullivan, 2000:21; Zarzour, 2000:31) and that in the boyhood race for popularity weaknesses and strengths are seen as crucial even amongst

teenagers (Zarzour, 2000:74). Viviani (2006:303) states that males are concerned about muscle masses and want a lean, muscular physique. The researcher believes that this is because it gives him a physical sense of power. The teenage boy is therefore seeking to develop this strength and prove that he is a man. When he is physically picked on and hurt, it shows a weakness which will affect the physical sense of self where he begins to think that he has not lived up to the physical expectation which has been set for him. He begins to think of his looks differently and may possibly even become anxious because of these unmet standards.

#### **4.11.2.2 Physical bullying and the creative sense of self**

The research showed that amongst boys, physical bullying has a 60% impact on their creative sense of self. Therefore one can see that when individuals stand up for themselves in a bullying situation they are not people pleasers and will do things their own way without ‘buckling’ to the bully’s demands. Therefore it would seem that the adolescents who endure being physically bullied are pushed to stand up for themselves or withdraw which impacts their creative sense of self. One tends to wonder about the way in which the victims are standing up for themselves. If they are retaliating with aggressive behaviour this has a negative impact on all concerned parties.

In Piaget’s view of cognitive development the adolescents find themselves in the formal operations stage where they are able to solve a wide range of verbal, hypothetical and abstract problems and can think about their thoughts or feelings (Cummings, 1995:120). The researcher believes that many of the adolescent males begin to stand up for themselves because they can solve their own problems. It is also due to the pressure of being seen as strong by society that that they need to prove they are independent and can stand up for themselves.

#### **4.12 SOCIAL BULLYING AND THE ADOLESCENT’S SENSE OF SELF**

The different types of social bullying were mentioned in chapter two (2.4.1.3) and the questionnaire measured the effect of this type of bullying on the sense of self. One would expect that the social bullying would have an impact on the sense of self as it is important for adolescents to feel that they belong to and are accepted by a group (Karcher, 2004:12). It is at school where adolescents make friends (Coterrell, 1996:49) but it is also often the place where

bullying begins to unfold. Because the adolescent years are a time of considerable uncertainty, both about the self and society in general, the role of the social group is to provide individuals with the guidance and support of defining their role and values in society (Schaffer, 1996:318).

According to Erikson's eight psychosocial stages of development (Papalia, Olds & Feldman, 2002:26) adolescents are in the identity versus identity confusion stage where they are determining their own sense of self. They are developing an identity with a set of values and goals (Louw, van Ede & Louw, 1998:426) and these values and goals are often learnt from their social environment. Erikson believed that in order to develop an identity there were certain tasks which needed to be mastered (Louw *et al.*, 1998:426). These were:

- Having to form an integrated, unified form of the self (ego-synthesis).
- Forming a sociocultural identity (values from their own culture).
- Gender role identity (accepting their identities as male or female).
- Career identity (being realistic about abilities and achievements to make a career choice).
- Own value system (rethinking certain values so that they can form their own basic philosophy).

When looking at the results of the male and female respondents of the research there were marked differences (table 4.9):

#### **4.12.1 Females**

The results of the empirical research indicated that every aspect of the female respondent's sense of self was affected by social bullying (table 4.9). This is not surprising as Garrett (2001:11) states that the spreading of rumours and verbal bullying are more common amongst girls. The girls, bullied in this way, react and view bullying more negatively than boys. One of the reasons that girls report higher relational victimization is the importance that they place on social relationships (Casey-Cannon *et al.*, 2001:139). The researcher believes it is because they view this victimization more negatively that it will have an effect on the way that they see themselves. Girls are also better at hiding their secret world of nasty, subtle nuances (Dutton, 2003:12) and therefore this type of bullying often goes unnoticed and is psychologically damaging to the individual.

The time of adolescence is a time when an identity is being formed and it is during this time that adolescents explore various roles and values within their environment and they start to not only form an individual identity but also a social one (Louw *et al.*, 1998:426). When the female experiences her social environment as negative she starts to form a personal identity as well as a social one, where she perhaps feels like an outcast. This may cause identity confusion where a girl begins to believe that she is not what she ought to be and she may begin to make decisions about her life based on the expectations of others (Louw *et al.*, 1998:427). The researcher is of the opinion that making decisions based on other people's expectations can lead her to make incorrect choices about her life and lead to long-term consequences of unhappiness as she continuously tries to 'fit in' and wants the approval of others.

#### **4.12.1.1 Social bullying and the physical sense of self**

As was discussed in chapter two (2.4.1.3), social bullying can also be referred to as relational bullying and involves actions by the group or within the group. From the research social bullying had a 62% impact on their physical sense of self. With girls physical appearance and social success – in addition to academic achievement – is highly important and when excluded from groups or being ignored, the individual may begin to think that it is because of her physical appearance (even though it may not necessarily be because of this) that she is not good enough for the particular group (Feldman, 2004: 472). The social group and peer friendships establish ideas about the self as well as define their identities and abilities to form relationships (Feldman, 2004:475; Cairns, Man-Chi & Cairns, 1995:35) and when the social group is acting in a negative way towards the individual, ideas are formed not only about the personality but about the external appearance and this is why it has a notable effect.

Offer, Ostrov, Howard and Atkinson in Marshall and Arvay (1999:43) as well as Seidah and Bouffard (2007:256) reported that in general girls have a more negative body image and lower global self-esteem than boys do. Girls tend to be more conscious of and concerned with their body image and therefore adopt high standards which are often difficult to meet (Seidah & Bouffard, 2007:256; Feldman, 2004:473). Hence if she is not meeting her own expectations and is then treated differently by the group, the expectations of the way she should look become higher and even more difficult to meet.



#### **4.12.1.2 Social bullying and the emotional sense of self**

This research shows that social bullying had a 73% impact on the female adolescent's emotional sense of self. This could be due to the fact that usually during interaction in a female adolescent's friendship there is an amount of physical contact, ranging from stroking, hugging and back-patting (Cotterell, 1996:51). The researcher believes that this social interaction makes the female feel lovable and interesting but when social bullying is taking place, the contact is lost as the group ignores, isolates and excludes the individual and therefore the emotional sense of self is affected as she begins to think that she is not lovable and that the group consensus is that she does not meet the specific standard of the larger group. The emotional sense of self is a significant feature of the self (Schaffer, 1996:168) and that is why the impact was probably as high as what it was.

It is also a concern that with research showing that females tend to be more depressed than males (Newton, 1995:196; ) it is very possible that social bullying may lend itself to the victim feeling depressed. Depression has a huge impact on every part of the child's life. Feldman (2004:479) agrees with the above by viewing the research of Aseltine, Gore and Colten (1994), Hammond and Romney (1995) and Lau and Kwok (2000). He states: "Being unpopular, having few close friends, and experiencing rejection are associated with adolescent depression." (A study conducted by Paul and Cillessen (2003:39) also proves this theory; the researchers found that there were negative short-term consequences for early adolescent girls who were victimized but not for the boys of the same age. In all the above research it was found that the girls had higher levels of depression and anxiety. Consequently girls are more prone to these elevated feelings of depression and anxiety and therefore they will be more sensitive to the way that they are treated by others. Feldman (2004:479) states that the rate of adolescent suicide in the USA has tripled in the past 30 years and found that it is higher for boys than girls although girls attempt suicide more frequently. The reason for this seems unclear although one probable factor is depression. The researcher believes that one of the reasons for this is that girls seem to be more emotional and often express themselves more easily. They also tend to reach out more and therefore the suicide attempts are often a cry for help. Boys on the other hand tend to internalize all of their experiences and not share how they are feeling until it reaches the disastrous consequence of suicide.

#### **4.12.1.3 Social bullying and the intellectual sense of self**

According to the research, social bullying had a 62% impact on the female adolescent's intellectual sense of self. The reason for this could be that because belonging is so important to the female adolescent, exclusion and isolation affect her motivation and concentration when she is at school. Another reason could be that she is seen as a 'nerd' because of her good grades and once again is left out. Carnell (2007), who has developed a website dedicated to the victims of bullying, allowing teenagers to write in and share if they are being bullied, has found a large number of girls staying at home because they are afraid of going to school. Zarzour (2002:19-20) has found similar results stating that the psychological distress from being bullied can cause an adolescent intense fear every morning causing her to skip classes because she is afraid of the bully's 'eyes'. In school A the researcher has noticed that often during break times some girls will ask teachers to sit in their classroom as the fear of being seen 'alone' on the corridor during recess is just too much to handle. The researcher also noticed that often the bullied girl was so busy trying to be part of a social circle that this became her foreground need and her academic work did not receive as much attention as it should, causing her marks to drop.

#### **4.12.1.4 Social bullying and the behavioural sense of self**

Social bullying had a 71% impact on the female adolescent's behavioural sense of self. Thus when the female experiences this type of victimization from the bully or group of bullies, the part of her which is seen as independent and able is taken away. One of the reasons for this is that usually expectations for females involve nurturing, relationships and cooperation (Newton, 1995:31). When she experiences these manifestations, her feelings of being skilled and able are affirmed and her sense of self is healthy. However the isolation and exclusion which accompany social bullying denies the child this company and social interaction causing her to feel incompetent (Sullivan, 2000:27).

#### **4.12.1.5 Social bullying and the social sense of self**

The research results showed that social bullying had a 63% impact on the sample of girls' social sense of self. Hagborg in Marshall & Arvay (1999:44) found that when investigating gender differences in self-concept ratings, boys rated themselves higher on physical appearance and athletic competence but girls rated themselves higher on close friendships (social sense of self).

This shows the researcher that close friendships are such an important part of the girl's sense of self that it will even have an effect on the way she feels about herself socially. She may begin to feel conscious in a group setting, overly aware of how others are looking at her or begin to read into the body language of others thinking, 'I'm being ignored now' or 'I've got so many people around me but I feel so alone.'

Marshall and Arvay (1999:43) believe that in the female adolescent this social part of the sense of self would appear to be more important than in males, as during female adolescent development emphasis is placed on caring and connection in the development of relationships with others. Therefore interdependence is important as they have a higher degree of social awareness. Relying heavily on peer feedback to inform their self-worth makes adolescent girls more susceptible to the impression of others regarding physical appearance and being part of the social network (Casey-Cannon *et al.*, 2001:139). Thus if the group gives her feedback that she does not match their expectations, she will feel inferior and begin internalizing this inferiority until it becomes a part of her social sense of self and influence her other senses of self such as behavioural and emotional.

Smith (2000:299) also mentions that a risk factor for becoming a victim of bullying is having few friends. Thus the researcher believes that when a group of friends has made an individual feel alone and withdrawn from her, they allow her to be seen as having no friends and have allowed her to become vulnerable and thus a target for other forms of bullying too.

#### **4.12.1.6 Social bullying and the creative sense of self**

The research result shows that social bullying has a 76% impact on the female sample's creative sense of self. Therefore the sneers, snickers or exclusion by the group impacts the way the child conforms or stands up for herself. Many girls conform by keeping quiet or just 'ignoring' the situation. This is supported by a qualitative research study conducted by Marshall and Arvay (1999:48) where adolescent boys and girls were interviewed regarding their experiences of silencing or loss of voice, their aspirations regarding the future and their values regarding gender. Girls answered (to the questions regarding self-silencing) that they were often unwilling to assert

themselves during conflict for fear of being excluded or shunned by their friends. Girls are therefore more likely to conform and thereby affecting their creative sense of self.

#### **4.12.2 Males**

The results from the social bullying on the sense of self of the adolescent male were totally different to the females. One of the reasons could be that as Marshall and Arvay (1999:43) describe it, when male identity is being achieved, separation and independence are usually involved. The ‘group’ or ‘social’ types of bullying therefore do not affect the male as much as the female for whom relations define who she is and her importance as a human being. There was however significant impact of social bullying on the male’s emotional, behavioural and creative sense of self and the reasons for this will now be discussed (refer back to table 4.10).

##### **4.12.2.1 Social bullying and the emotional sense of self**

From the data collected social bullying had a 67% impact on the male adolescent’s emotional sense of self. The researcher found this interesting, as society sees the male figure as an unemotional being who doesn’t really care whether he is lovable or not. Often however this may be a mask for internal processes which are going on. Internalizations take place because society says that boys must be tough (Zarzour, 2000:21) and hide the fact that they hurt when excluded. This is an important finding for those working with the male victim and these internalizations need to be unveiled so that unfinished business regarding the emotional effect of social bullying can be revealed and dealt with appropriately.

##### **4.12.2.2 Social bullying and the behavioural sense of self**

The data shows that social bullying has a 74% effect on the male’s behavioural sense of self. Social bullying has a devastating effect on the male adolescent. In paragraph 4.12.2 the researcher discussed the fact that it is important for the male identity to reach independence and separation. However when social bullying takes place this independence (behavioural sense of self) is hindered and therefore the male adolescent struggles to form an identity. If he doesn’t form his own individual identity it may take him years to recover and he will take this negativity into the adult world. A reason that this relationship is so strong is that even though the male is forming his independent identity he still relies on his friendships to confirm his sense of self. Friendships are seen by Sullivan (2000:21) as held together by common interests and are

generally conflict free. Therefore if he is made to feel like an outsider by the group his skills and abilities are not affirmed and his behavioural sense of self is affected.

#### **4.12.2.3 Social bullying and the creative sense of self**

Social bullying has an 81% effect on the adolescent male's creative sense of self. Therefore the males do react to the social bullying and usually with anger (he wants to be part of the group and by being bullied socially he is not accepted and looks like a 'fool' which makes him angry and this anger forms part of his creative sense of self). This once again confirms the fact that male power is seen as important for the adolescent. Their reactions may be hiding the fact that they are fearful and neurotic about the bullying scene (Sullivan, 2000:26).

### **4.13 THE IMPACT OF VERBAL BULLYING ON THE SENSE OF SELF**

Verbal bullying and social bullying are sometimes seen as one and the same concept. However they are very different. Social bullying often involves the unspoken word where the bully or group of bullies uses non-verbal forms of communication to send a message to the victim where as verbal bullying usually uses the spoken word as a form of bullying. Verbal bullying is seen as one of the most common types of bullying used by both boys and girls, accounting for 70% of reported cases which can have an immediate impact (Lee, 2004:10; Coloroso, 2003:15). During a study conducted by Naser and Prinsloo (2004:7) across various schools in South Africa, results showed that most learners had actually observed name-calling and teasing on a frequent basis. The research showed this to be true as it was the only type of bullying which had an impact on four aspects of the sense of self for males (the other types of bullying impacted three or even two aspects). For the girl adolescents it also had an effect on all aspects of their sense of self, and how they dealt with it.

#### **4.13.1 Females**

Coping strategies for victims of bullying vary. Kristensen and Smith (2003:48) mention that studies have found that strategies in the 9-13 year old victims show that coping strategies vary by gender. A study revealed that 'internalizing' was clear in the female victims of direct bullying (for example verbal bullying) but coping mechanisms for female victims of relational bullying were less clear. From the experience of the researcher, it has been observed that girls are often

degraded through verbal bullying but that many of them have learnt how to defend themselves. The media has a lot to do with this. If we watch sitcoms of girls and how they use derogatory ways of speaking to one another when they are teased shows that society's girls are learning to become more and more vulgar in the way that they not only bully others but also how they defend themselves.

#### **4.13.1.1 Verbal bullying and the physical sense of self**

The results from the research show that verbal bullying had a 65% impact on the adolescent female's physical sense of self. In school A the researcher would often observe that on civvies days (opportunities for the school children to wear casual civilian clothes instead of their school uniforms), the girls would tease the others about what they were wearing or how they looked. During 'normal' school days terrible names were given to girls such as 'fatty' or 'Shrek'. The results show that there is an impact on the physical sense of self, a part of them which is already so fragile. In research conducted by Casey-Cannon, (2001:141) in which the consequences of peer victimization amongst girls were studied, they found that insults about undesirable physical and psychological traits were common. The insults were generally about weight, race or other characteristics. It was also found that that victimization frequently impacted how the girls thought about themselves when (Casey-Cannon, 2001:144):

- Girls were insulted about certain characteristics that they could not change.
- When aspects of themselves which they disliked, were confirmed by others.
- When the bully projected an unrealistic characteristic on them.

As has been discussed, fitting in for a girl is very important, her sense of self is very fragile and therefore one comment is 'soaked' up and internalized. However if the self is already strong and they have a good overall image then verbal insults will not have such a devastating effect.

#### **4.13.1.2 Verbal bullying and the emotional sense of self**

After the empirical study was conducted, results showed that verbal bullying had a 72% impact on the emotional sense of self of the adolescent female. Being part of the social network is very important to the growing female adolescent (Casey-Cannon *et al.*, 2001:139) where her emotional self of feeling loved and accepted is nurtured. Most girls indicate feeling sad, unhappy, hurt or rejected as a result of being rejected (Casey-Cannon *et al.*, 2001:142).

Therefore the latter mentioned research can clarify the findings of this research. The researcher believes that girls are more emotional and with their hormonal changes, growing bodies and developing personalities, it is not surprising that verbal insults would affect their emotional sense of self to such a degree.

#### **4.13.1.3 Verbal bullying and the intellectual sense of self**

Results show that verbal bullying had a 63% impact on the female adolescent's intellectual sense of self. Casey-Cannon *et al.* (2001:139) confirm these findings by stating that studies have showed that the outcomes of overt forms of aggression (in this case verbal bullying) have an effect on academic functioning. It would seem that for a girl academic achievement is more important than for boys as there was no correlation between any forms of bullying and the male's intellectual sense of self. It is important to note the fact that in the self-esteem model, adolescents who feel good about themselves do better in school (Ross & Broh, 2000:270). Therefore it would appear that if bullying affects any other aspect of the sense of self it could have a negative effect on the intellectual sense of self. If the individual feels physically unattractive, it could have a result on academic performance.

It is also important to remember that just because a child succeeds academically it does not necessarily mean that she has a strong intellectual sense of self because she could be verbally belittled by being called a 'nerd.' Having a strong intellectual sense of self is important as it shapes the perception that one is in control of one's life (Ros & Broh, 2000:270). The researcher is of the opinion that when the female feels that she is in control she will be able to handle the verbal bullying better, not allowing internalizations to happen. However if she is not in control she will allow the bullying behaviour to exercise control over her intellectual sense of self. According to Powell ([sa]:78) adolescent conflicts (for example verbal bullying) may manifest in problems with discipline which lead to a lack of focus on their school work.

#### **4.13.1.4 Verbal bullying and the behavioural sense of self**

Verbal bullying had a 66% effect on the behavioural sense of self. The researcher believes that verbal bullying, with regards to the behavioural sense of self, eventually becomes like a self-fulfilling prophecy: If I'm constantly told that I'm no good and cannot do something eventually I

will believe it. Kristensen and Smith (2003:486) also found that children are more likely to ask for help from others in bullying situations when the bullying situations are more overt and therefore easier to ‘prove.’ The researchers found that distancing themselves was a more favourable coping strategy. The researcher believes that this is significant for girls who are bullied more covertly (verbally and socially) and therefore will be less likely to ask for help and try to distance themselves from the bullies and the situation. This will in turn affect their behavioural sense of self as their ability to take control of the situation (empowerment) is taken away.

#### **4.13.1.5 Verbal bullying and the social sense of self**

In this case the verbal type bullying had a 63% impact on the social sense of self of the female teenager. The researcher believes that girls are so in tune with the group dynamic that if they are verbally bullied by a group of bullies or even individually, in front of their peers they are going to start to become aware of what they say within the group and how they behave as they don’t want to be humiliated in front of others. Powell ([sa]:84) states that a girl can modify her self-esteem through the caring of others. The researcher believes that if the girl is being verbally bullied she is not receiving this care and her feeling of being unique and belonging is therefore affected. This is a very negative experience for the girl as she strives to be a part of a group.

#### **4.13.1.6 Verbal bullying and the creative sense of self**

Results show that verbal bullying had a 72% impact on the female adolescent’s creative sense of self. Some of the girls in the research conducted by Casey-Cannon *et al.* (2001:142) reported that they either ignored the act of bullying or they responded with a verbal retort. The research therefore shows that girls do react and that they feel that they should do something. They either withdraw or become aggressive; both of these reactions impact on this part of their creative sense of self.

#### **4.13.2 Males**

Interpersonal communication is so important to the functioning of a larger society. During childhood children need to learn to form positive relationships with others and research has shown that children who have poor communication skills are less liked by their peers (Pope *et al.*, 1988:109). Gouws and Kruger (1994:03) mention that a positive self-concept is important for



an adolescent's mental well-being, but also influences social relationships, progress at school and performance in different areas. The researcher found it interesting that having a positive self-concept influences social relationships and that social relationships influence the presence or absence of a positive self concept. Verbal bullying forms part of the communication which exists in these social relationships and thus one can see why it would have devastating consequences on the sense of self as the child tries to form important relationships. Verbal bullying is not enhancing these relationships but affecting them negatively.

#### **4.13.2.1 Verbal bullying and the emotional sense of self**

From the empirical evidence, one can see that verbal bullying had a 64% impact on the male adolescent's emotional sense of self. When being verbally insulted the individual's already shaky emotional sense of how he is seen by the group is affected. Powell ([sa]:84) mentions that self-image is based on intrapersonal experiences and whether the interactions with various social environments satisfy psychological needs. The researcher believes that one of the psychological needs of any adolescent (including males) is the need to be loved and interesting. Verbal abuse does not help them to meet this need which is why their emotional sense of self is affected. It is also the opinion of the researcher that another effect which verbal bullying has on the emotional sense of self of the male is that he begins to feel that he has lost control; he feels powerless over his situation. Bandura (1998:424) states that a low sense of efficacy to exercise control leads to depression and anxiety. If a male's aspiration is to be seen as an important human being and through verbal bullying it becomes clear that many or a particular individual/s do not see him in this light it can leave him feeling depressed, thus affecting his emotional sense of self.

#### **4.13.2.2 Verbal bullying and the behavioural sense of self**

The results from the research show that verbal bullying had a 69% impact on the adolescent's (male) behavioural sense of self. The researcher has already made mention of the fact that for a male it is very important to be independent and that through the verbal bullying and taunting of his peers his feeling of independence is threatened. The importance of being independent may be an internalized expectation which may not even enter his awareness. He may feel uncomfortable or dissatisfied with himself without even knowing why (Pope *et al.*, 1988:77). When his secret insecurities are verbally insulted by others his ideas and feelings regarding his

abilities will be impacted. His performance standards could be in almost any area of life: social relationships, athletic endeavours, academics or hobbies (Pope *et al.*, 1988:77). Therefore the male adolescent has certain criteria by which areas of his life are to live up to. These criteria are sometimes self-imposed or sometimes they are the silent expectations of society. When others notice (especially his peers) that these expectations are not being met and verbally begin insulting him, his behavioural sense of self is affected.

Adolescents need to be encouraged and need people to believe in them in order for them to succeed in their abilities. Bandura (1998:422) mentions that people who are verbally persuaded that they possess the capabilities to master various activities are more likely to mobilize greater effort and sustain it than if they harbour self-doubts. The researcher is of the opinion that if male adolescents are not encouraged but harmed verbally, they will begin to believe their self-doubts and their behavioural sense of self will be negatively impacted.

#### **4.13.2.3 Verbal bullying and the social sense of self**

Results show that verbal bullying has a 60% impact on the male adolescent's social sense of self. Interestingly this is the only type of bullying which has any effect on the social sense of self of the male. Once again it is because he is made to look like a 'fool' in front of others, made to feel inferior as his weaknesses (whether they are personality characteristics or physical characteristics) are highlighted by the verbal bullying. Pointing out his weaknesses to everybody removes his uniqueness and makes them seem somehow unacceptable. Pope *et al.* (1988:109) state that successful interaction with others is necessary for positive social self esteem. This explains why verbal bullying which is considered as unsuccessful interaction (as another's dignity is stripped from him) will affect a male adolescent's feelings about himself on a social level.

#### **4.13.2.4 Verbal bullying and the creative sense of self**

The research results showed that verbal bullying had an 81% impact on the male adolescent's sense of self. The researcher believes that it is because the male is often seen as the one who is supposed to have strength, and stand up for himself. If he doesn't he will be seen as a weak individual. Verbal bullying often takes place in front of other people who are watching the

victim's reaction. This has a high impact on his creative sense of self as he is trying to 'show' the group that he is not conforming but rather resisting conformity. Pope *et al.* (1988:38) mention that children can solve many of their problems without an adult's assistance. The children who acquire problem-solving strategies can cope better with stress and frustration. Children who can use these strategies are more competent in academic performance (Pope *et al.*, 1988:38). The researcher believes that perhaps the reason that there is no effect from any of the types of bullying on any of the other parts of the sense of self of the male adolescent is that perhaps males have better problem-solving skills than females do.

#### **4.4 SUMMARY**

During a time of immense insecurities and formation of the self, bullying has the ability to hinder this formation. Social bullying and verbal bullying has been seen as critical in affecting this self of both male and female adolescents as they begin to look to their peers as they start forming their own value system. Some adolescents are not as negatively affected by bullying others are. This could be because of the strength of self which has already been formed even before the adolescent stage of life, the temperament of the child may come into play as well as the support systems within the individual's immediate and extended environment.

The empirical study was conducted with 111 grade 11 and 12 pupils who volunteered to be a part of the research. Results from the empirical study showed that boys and girls are both bullied, however the ways in which this bullying affects the sense of self is very different for these genders. The self is often affected by bullying due to the contact boundary disturbances which may occur, individuals cannot see the bullying experience as something outside of who they are and separate to the self, they begin to enmesh the bullying and the self as one and the same experience.

For the females, overt, physical bullying did not affect any parts of their sense of self. However the more covert ways such as verbal bullying and social bullying impacted every part of their sense of self. Males on the other hand did have their sense of self affected by all three main types of bullying but not every part of their selves was affected. A possible reason for the

differences is the way that the different genders internalize the messages they receive from the bullying behaviour. In some instances the ways girls are bullied are internalized easier and it forms part of all their selves where boys only internalize some of the bullying and others not.

## CHAPTER 5

# SUMMARISED CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

**“Today’s kids are growing up in an angry, fast-paced, media-saturated, economically and ecologically unstable world, and their bullying seems to be crueler, nastier, more callous. It’s certainly more sophisticated and no longer one-on-one.”**

Zarzour (2000:50).

From the above quotation the researcher realizes that the pace of life in our world cannot be compared to that of even five years ago. Society is now aggressive, cruel and unrelenting. These negative changes are often adopted by a smaller part of society known as ‘school’. This research has shown that School A’s learners are exposed to every type of bullying and that this bullying has consequences for the victims, especially in terms of their developing sense of self.

According to objective three of this research (see 5.2.2); this chapter will make summarised conclusions and recommendations.

### 5.2 EVALUATION OF THE GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

#### 5.2.1 Goal of the study

The goal of the study was to determine the impact of bullying in the high school setting on the sense of self.

The study was conducted in School A, which is a high school in Gauteng, and the results showed that there were statistically significant results proving that bullying does have an impact on an adolescent’s sense of self. The male and female respondents were analyzed separately as they

interpret life experiences differently and are bullied in different ways. The male results showed that:

- The physical bullying which they are exposed to impacts their physical sense of self (62%) as well as their creative sense of self (60%).
- Social bullying has an impact on their emotional sense of self (67%); behavioural sense of self (74%) and creative sense of self (81%).
- Exposure to verbal bullying impacts their emotional sense of self (64%); behavioural sense of self (69%); social sense of self (60%) and creative sense of self (81%).

The female results showed:

- There were no statistically significant results showing a strong relationship between physical bullying and their sense of self.
- Social bullying had an impact on all parts of the self: physical (62%); emotional (73%); intellectual (62%); behavioural (71%); social (63%); creative (76%).
- Verbal bullying also impacted all the parts of the self: physical (65%); emotional (72%); intellectual (63%); behavioural (66%); social (63%); creative (72%).

The goal of the study was therefore realized as bullying did have an impact on either all or some parts of the sense of self of the adolescent. According to the following objectives, the goal was fully realized.

### **5.2.2 The objectives for the study**

The objectives of the study can be described as:

- To build a knowledge base on:
  - The phenomena of bullying in high school.
  - Classifying various types of bullying.
  - The relationship between bullying and the adolescent's sense of self.
  - The holistic impact of bullying on the adolescent.
  - The characteristics of the bullied adolescent.
  - Consequences of bullying.
  - Signs of bullying.
  - Involvement of teachers, counsellors and parents.
  - Importance of intervention and prevention programmes.

- To empirically investigate the impact that bullying in the school has on the adolescents' sense of self.
- To provide conclusions and recommendations for teachers of school A as well as counsellors who, in the counselling setting, work with bullied children.

### **5.2.2.1 Building a knowledge base**

The objective of building on a knowledge base was realized when a proper literature study was conducted and described in chapters two and three. Chapter two focused specifically on the phenomena of bullying (2.2; 2.6), the various types of bullying (2.2), holistic impact of bullying (2.9), characteristics of a bullied child (2.7.2), consequences of bullying (2.9), signs of bullying (2.7.3), involvement of teachers and counsellors (2.11.2; 2.11.4) as well as intervention programmes (2.11.1). Chapter three focused on the Gestalt therapeutic perspective (3.3), defining the sense of self (3.4) as well as describing the various parts of the sense of self (3.5). The empirical study helped realize this objective by proving that a relationship exists between bullying and the adolescent's sense of self. The literature study was used to develop the questionnaire (Appendix A) as well as to support the findings of the empirical research. This objective was therefore fully achieved.

### **5.2.2.2 To empirically investigate the impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self**

By using a questionnaire as the measuring instrument for this applied research study, the researcher divided the questionnaire into two sections: the first measured the types of bullying the adolescent was exposed to, and the second section sought to discover the impact that bullying has on the sense of self. A comparison was then made between the first and second parts of the questionnaire so that conclusions could be drawn. The objective of empirically investigating the impact of bullying on the sense of self could thus be realized. The results from the empirical study are described throughout chapter four.

The Statistical Department of the University of Pretoria also assisted with the realization of this objective by helping with the capturing and analysing of the data.

### **5.2.2.3 To provide conclusions and recommendations**

Once the literature review was completed and the empirical study conducted, the researcher was able to form a holistic picture of the problem of bullying as well as gain a better understanding of the impact that bullying has on the adolescent's sense of self. In this chapter the researcher will provide conclusions and recommendations for both teachers and counselors in the sections that follow.

### **5.2.3 The research question**

In this study the research question was:

*What would the impact of bullying in high school be on the adolescent's sense of self?*

Once the respondents were divided into boys and girls the quantitative study proved (with significant results) that bullying does have an impact on the adolescent's sense of self (see 5.2.1). Different types of bullying, however, affected various parts of the sense of self. Physical bullying does not affect the adolescent female's sense of self, yet her sense of self is affected by social and verbal bullying. A male adolescent's intellectual sense of self is not affected by any type of bullying yet his other parts of his self are sometimes affected depending on the type of bullying. The research question was therefore answered as a result of the empirical investigation.

## **5.3 SUMMARIZED CONCLUSIONS**

The following paragraphs serve as summarized conclusions for the various chapters of this research:

### **5.3.1 Chapter 1**

Due to the sensitive nature of the topic and the researcher's desire to protect the victims from further victimization (if bullies found out they were disclosing information in a qualitative approach they may target these victims further), a quantitative research approach was selected. The main focus of the research was to help the victims. It is the opinion of the researcher that the



utilization of anonymous questionnaires when investigating cases of bullying allow the victims to feel that the information that they are disclosing is highly confidential. This would most likely lead to more honest answers from the respondents. Another advantage of using the quantitative research approach was that the researcher could objectively measure the impact of an independent variable (bullying) on a dependent variable (sense of self). This would have been more difficult if a qualitative study had been used. The only negative side to making use of questionnaires is that they are generally formulated using existing knowledge about bullying and there may be types of bullying which have not yet been discovered or investigated more (such as cyber bullying, which years ago did not exist because this type of technology had not been developed). The researcher would recommend using the quantitative approach when investigating the problem of bullying. However if a study is more explorative in nature then a qualitative study may be best.

### **5.3.2 Chapter 2**

Schools are often plagued with the problem of bullying; children are living in fear during a time in their lives where they are supposed to be preparing for their adult future. It is often an uncertain time and the problem of bullying contributes to this uncertainty. Bullying models an aggressive world full of aggressive people who are successful in life. When the bully gets away with his/her behaviour, the victim receives the message that bullies dominate without ever having to face the consequences of their behaviour.

Much of the literature used in this chapter is from research conducted in other countries or from books written by foreign authors. Other countries seem to realize the extent of the problem of bullying as their governments insist on policies being put into place at schools. In South Africa there seems to be a lack of awareness of the problem. Perhaps it is because this country is still in the ignorant ‘myth-believing stage’ that says that ‘children need to learn to stand up for themselves’ or the infamous belief that, ‘it’s all part of growing up.’ It may also be due to the fact that nobody wants to ‘get their hands dirty’. Few are willing to do something about preventing this problem or stepping in and helping those who have been bullied.

An important definition was discussed during this chapter and the researcher therefore concluded that there is a definite disparity between normal conflict and bullying. Bullying is an aggressive

act usually carried out by one or more students where there is an imbalance of power; the act which is done with purposeful intent to harm the victim is repeated and there is a different level of effect (that of the bully and of the victim). It was also discovered that there are various types of bullying. Some are easier to recognise (physical bullying) while others are less obvious to detect as they are often very subtle and can take place secretly (verbal and social bullying). It is important to understand the types of bullying and to be aware of the different subcategories to each type of bullying.

In the bullying situation there are three key role players: the bully, the bystander and the victim. The researcher is of the opinion that it is important to understand each of these players as policies and programmes need to include all three members of the triad. It would be foolish to only focus on one character as each member forms such an important part of the problem. Solution- focused intervention and prevention should include all three. There are various types of bullies, victims and bystanders which should also be noted as this gives a clearer understanding of the problem.

There are consequences for all members of the bully triad, from psychosomatic symptoms, to future criminal behaviour and living with intense anxiety. At the moment it seems as if, in South Africa, not enough is done to prevent the problem or intervene where necessary. Should society negate their societal duties and ignore the problem or should existing programmes and policies of other countries be used and adapted to suit the multi-cultural needs of the victims in South African schools? The researcher believes that it is time to educate the local Government, society as a whole, stakeholders within the educational system and individual schools about the extent of the problem.

### **5.3.3 Chapter 3**

Within every victim lies an important core being known as the 'self'. As the self journeys throughout life various experiences shape the formation of certain aspects of the self: the physical, creative, intellectual, behavioural, emotional and social self. It is this 'self' which makes the individual distinct from others in society. As individuals grow they establish a sense of this self which is usually based on messages received in various forms and from many people

and experiences throughout their lives. Bullying can be seen as one such experience which hinders this sense of self (important for the development of children).

The researcher used the sense of self from the Gestalt theoretical perspective which views the sense of self as being distinguished from the environment by means of a contact boundary; this is the point where the individual distinguishes that which is part of them from that which is outside of them.

Whilst completing this chapter the researcher realized that when various Gestalt processes are in play, the self is an important aspect to consider when studying bullying as it is found at the core of bullies, victims and bystanders. The ‘self’ of each individual has ideas, hopes and dreams for the future. The researcher pictured the various aspects of the self as a wheel with six segments each segment representative of the various parts of the sense of self (for example physical sense of self). When one of these segments is put under strain or removed (for example the physical sense of self), the wheel is incomplete and ends up putting strain on each of the other parts. Therefore even if bullying is only affecting one area all others areas are affected.

#### **5.3.4 Chapter 4**

The empirical study was conducted as planned and proved that adolescents are exposed to bullying and that it does have an impact on their sense of self. The strength of the impact often depended on the gender, type of bullying and sense of self. The evidence from the research showed that adolescent male and females are being bullied sometimes on a daily basis. Therefore this type of violence eventually becomes the ‘norm’. The prospect of learners witnessing or forming part of school violence ought to be a cause for concern to all educational stakeholders.

The researcher has had a few students come to report bullying, however it has not even been half of the sample of students. This therefore indicates that many children are being bullied and not talking about it, which often leads to an internalization of events. It is important that all those in the school environment decide to do something regarding the problem. Violence is

contaminating our schools and therefore affecting the learning environment which a school should be fostering.

If we are rearing violent children or anti-social children the future of a peaceful, healthy society looks extremely bleak. Our children are supposed to represent the future of the world and, for many who are fighting a daily battle, their future does not look very promising.

The results of the empirical questionnaire proved that bullying does have an impact on the sense of self but that it was different for the female and male adolescents. The results showed that in line with the Gestalt therapeutic assessment (as outlined in chapter three (3.3)), most respondents were aware of the bullying that took place. The results of the empirical study showed that bullying caused emotional discomfort with regards to their various parts of self. It also showed that often bullying was at the foreground of their needs and that's why parts of their sense of self were impacted.

It would also seem that the self becomes fragmented during bullying as the adolescent tries to regulate his/her experiences but struggles because the intimidation/victimization happens on a continuous basis. Cohesion of the self therefore becomes almost impossible. Contact boundary disturbances take place (see 3.3.3) when bullying happens and the results of the study show that female adolescents internalize their emotions when they experience social and verbal bullying. They thus make it part of themselves; they do not see the incident as something outside of who they are.

The male adolescent seem to be able to make the distinction between some forms of bullying and aspects of themselves but for other parts the distinction is undefined. Therefore bullying often becomes an introject for many adolescents. Confluence then takes place and when the creative sense of self is affected, deflection may also be taking place. The victim who begins bullying may be projecting his experience onto others.

## 5.4 SPECIFIC COMMENTS ON THE ADOLESCENT'S SENSE OF SELF

If the self of the adolescent is affected, society is going to see more aggressive adults progressing from school – adults who are over-sensitive and therefore not functioning to their full potential. The researcher believes that education must play an important role and victims should be given detailed instruction as to how to assertively deal with the bullying situation.

## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.5.1 Recommendations for Government

Krige, Pettipher, Squelch and Swart (2000:5) mention that a number of human rights are listed as being fundamental in the Bill of Human rights in the 1996 constitution of South Africa. “Every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation (section 10 of the Bill of Rights)” (Krige *et al.*, 2000:5). Bullying is therefore clearly in conflict with children’s rights. The researcher is of the opinion that Government, who enforced the Bill of rights, should take responsibility to ensure that these rights are properly instated. Bullying violates a child’s basic human rights in the following ways (Kirge *et al.*, 2000:5):

- **Bullying violates a child’s right to human dignity** – All forms of bullying diminish a child’s right to dignity. If they are made to feel humiliated and uncomfortable they are more likely to suffer with low self-esteem.
- **Bullying violates a child’s right to privacy**- This can be seen when a child has his/her possessions stolen or damaged by a bully. Their right to privacy has been violated.
- **Bullying violates a child’s right to freedom and security** – A child has a right not to be treated or punished in an unfair, cruel or inhuman way. Physical, verbal and social bullying are clearly in violation of this basic human right. When a child is thrown down the stairs or verbally taunted his/her rights are taken away.

The researcher believes that the Government should:

- Ensure that, by law, every school has a bullying policy as is the case of the schools in the United Kingdom (Carnell, 2007). These policies should be revised on an annual basis and adjustments made where necessary.

- Enforce stricter age restrictions on various violent movies and computer/play station games (social learning theory explains that if a child observes aggression often he/she starts acting out what has been seen).
- Make it compulsory for every school in South Africa to have intervention programmes in place to help victims, bystanders and bullies.
- Ensure that every school using questionnaires on various types of bullying, do their own research to establish what types of bullying are most prominent in their school (the researcher is of the opinion that not every school will experience the same problems with the same types of bullying).
- Involve society as a whole by using bullying awareness campaigns; have an anti-bullying day, print posters for school classrooms and have a bully helpline where children can call in and remain anonymous.

### **5.5.2 The Department of Education**

- Whilst reading literature on prevention methods, one possible way of preventing bullying and solving this adolescent dilemma is to include the problem in the National Curriculum. When the AIDS in South Africa began to escalate to pandemic proportions, the Department of Education made it part of the school curriculum. The problem of bullying has dramatically increased in South Africa and it is necessary for the Department of Education to somehow include it in the Curriculum, perhaps as part of the Life Orientation syllabus.
- The Department of Education plays an important role in ensuring that each school has an anti-bullying policy in place. They have more contact with each school than the local Government and would therefore be able to have stricter control.
- The Department of Education must also inform its educators about the problem and also make various anti-bullying interventions available such as the no-blame approach, peer counselling and the whole school approach. The researcher believes that these approaches are used in overseas countries and therefore should be adapted to suit the South African context. Even though schools experience the same type of bullying every

school can be seen as a micro society with its own needs. Therefore it would be necessary to adapt programmes to suit different schools.

- The various districts involved in the Department of Education should also provide support for each school with regards to the bullying problems. They could formalize a team of anti-bullying consultants that could be contacted when advice is needed.

### **5.5.3 Policies on bullying (schools, provincial and regional)**

- Bullying in our schools is a cause for public concern. Something needs to be done, firstly by all who are directly involved with the children, particularly in high school, before approaching the broader society for help and intervention.
- People who should be involved in the problem of bullying are: the principal, the heads of department, the teachers, school counsellors and the learners themselves.
- The researcher believes that policies are an important *starting* point when dealing with the problem of bullying. The policies must, however, be adhered to. Having a piece of paper with rules and regulations in the form of a policy does very little if the procedures and outlines are not followed.
- When reading through Rigby's [sa] recommendations of what should be included in a policy the researcher agreed with the author and believes it should include:
  - 1) A statement about where a school stands with regards to bullying.
  - 2) A definition of bullying – what constitutes and includes bullying behaviour.
  - 3) A declaration of the rights of individuals.
  - 4) Statements with regards to the responsibilities of those who see it.
  - 5) A description of what the school will do to prevent the problem, risk management procedures, including certain content in the curriculum and how the school proposes to deal with individual cases.
  - 6) A section which ensures that there is collaboration with parents, especially in the resolution of cases.
  - 7) A statement indicating the agreement that the policy will be evaluated in the near future.

The researcher also believes that it is important to include a section in the policy of various strategies for victims or actions which they can take to get help and that this

should be clearly outlined (for example, report it to the individual's class teacher verbally as well as document exact descriptions of the events). Having a plan in place will allow the victim to feel safe. The learners of the school should also receive a copy of the policy.

- An example of a framework for a no-bullying policy can be seen in Appendix D. The researcher believes that there cannot be one standard policy on a provincial or regional level due to the fact that in South Africa we have multi-cultural schools with different socio economic backgrounds. Each school however can use the framework as well as the guidelines as described by Rigby [sa} to draft a policy for the individual school.
- Involved in the drafting of the policy should be: the principal, governing body, teachers, parents and learners (the leaders of the school).

#### **5.5.4 Recommendations for schools**

- As the school plays a central role in a child's socialization, it is critical that schools offer a safe environment in which learning and growth can take place (Neser & Prinsloo, 2004:5). From the research one can conclude that a majority of our children are not growing up in a safe environment; parents are leaving their children at school to be academically educated however many times these children are more focused on how to get through a day at school without being victimized than actually concentrating on their school work.
- Every school has the responsibility of establishing a safe environment for each of their learners, as well as the creation of a zero tolerance culture towards bullying. Schools need to also be aware that parents can take legal action against teachers, principals or governors who are aware that a child is being bullied but fail to take reasonable steps to stop the bullying (Krige et al., 2000:22).
- Schools that ignore bullying and even condone it in the form of initiation where children are forced to perform acts that are inhuman or degrading contribute to bullying behaviour (Krige *et al.*, 2000:6). Therefore the researcher is of the opinion that schools need to be extremely cautious when it comes to what type of behaviour they allow.



- Schools should have policies in place that are reviewed on a regular basis. As part of the policy, a school should have detailed procedures concerning punitive measures for bullies as well as preventative and educational strategies regarding bullying.
- The researcher believes that schools should institute a zero tolerance attitude towards bullying. Each child should know that victimization will not be tolerated at all and that there will be serious consequences to contend with should individuals be involved in such negative behaviour.
- It is important that each school have a dedicated team to focus on the problem and reported incidents. They should also be involved with the training of teachers. This could be their ‘extra-mural’ activity. Having a dedicated team will ensure that certain cases do not ‘fall through the cracks.’
- Every school should do their own research to establish the extent of the problem as well as begin to identify the bullies in the school. They should also investigate how many children have been affected by this problem.
- The principal, who is the head of the school, needs to be meaningfully involved in the school’s approach towards bullying. If the principal is not actively involved then the whole school approach is not going to be effective.
- It is perhaps necessary for schools to involve outside organizations to provide training for the teachers and all who are involved with the children of the school. For bullying prevention to be successful, all involved need to be educated.
- Rigby and Johnson (2004:40) state that countering bullying involves not only a whole school approach, but a whole-community approach which can be facilitated through parent-teacher meetings and newsletters to parents in which the question of bystander and perpetrator behaviour can be discussed. It has been the researcher’s experience in a high school (School A) that parents are less likely to get involved than the parents of primary school children. This may be a result of lack of knowledge and therefore parents need to be educated about bullying and the effect it has on their children.

### 5.5.5 Recommendations for teachers

- Teachers play a vital role in identifying bullying and acting in such a manner which prevents the problem from escalating.
- Teachers need to be trained with regards to the forms of bullying which exist as well as how to handle observed victimization within the classrooms. Often teachers are on the forefront of bullying but they allow things to happen because they are not educated concerning their role with regards to bullying.
- It is difficult to get teachers involved and educated on these bullying issues because of the nature of their demanding and pressured jobs. However if teachers are aware that preventing bullying in the school and classroom may improve the response and work of their learners they may be more willing to go for extra training.
- Teachers also need to be supported in their endeavours to stop bullying in their classrooms. There should therefore be certain protocols in place where a teacher knows that she can send the child to a higher authority figure should any victimization take place in her classroom.
- The negative acts of bullying often happen on the playground; teachers are often on playground duty will therefore often be able to observe victimization first hand. Unfortunately there are usually only two teachers on duty so they cannot be completely effective. Supervision should take place before, during and after school (Krige *et al.*, 2000:22). The researcher is of the opinion that much is expected of the teachers and it is difficult for them to give up the short break that they do have, therefore mature and responsible learners could also be trained to effectively deal with the problem.
- When a victim speaks to a teacher, it is important that the teacher not be in close proximity to other children as this may make the victim feel unsafe. It is important that the child be spoken to in an environment where others cannot see and hear what is being discussed. If a victim wants to speak to a teacher and privacy is (at that particular time) impossible, the teacher should make another appointment to see the child. He/she can in the mean time ask the child to write down what had happened during the specific incidents.

- According to Rigby [sa] some interventions have reduced bullying by up to 50% and the cause for this was thorough implementations that were carried out by teachers who:
  - Really care about the problem of bullying in schools.
  - Are meaningfully involved in the development of the anti-bullying policy and who know what is expected of them as teachers. Therefore the researcher believes that teachers have a vital role to play in addressing this problem and that the above mentioned strategies have to be thoroughly implemented.

### **5.5.6 Recommendations for learners**

- Rigby [sa] has found that although most bystanders do nothing to discourage bullying, when they do they have a 50% chance of reducing it. Typically teachers are not present or not told about the bullying but learners are generally around when it happens. Rigby [sa] also found that a large number of pupils want to see it stop and therefore a good starting point is to promote positive bystander action. The researcher agrees with Rigby [sa] and believes that learners play an important role in preventing bullying. They just need to be given the skills to intervene.
- Bullying usually requires an audience. The audience usually consists of the other learners of the school. Therefore if learners are persuaded to somehow get involved to the point where the bullying no longer has an audience, the ‘thrill’ of bullying may be affected and this could solve some of the problems related to bullying.
- The leaders of the school could have ‘anti-bully’ training as part of a leadership programme where they also learn various protocol with regards to bullying.
- Children need to learn to care for one another again so that the percentage of bystanders of bullying can decrease. If every bystander of bullying was willing to stand up for the rights of the victim, the problem should eventually start dissipating.
- Bullying should form part of the learner’s Life Orientation syllabus. The researcher is of the opinion that it is important for learners to understand the problem, to know what acts constitute bullying and which are seen as normal conflict. They should also learn how to deal with the victim and know where to go should they be victimized in any way.

### 5.5.7 Recommendations for counsellors

- The researcher agrees with Carnell (2007) who gives advice on how to deal with the victim. Carnell (2007) says that, when dealing with someone who is being bullied, it is important to remember that they will be very upset even though they may not show their feelings outwardly. Carnell (2007) importantly recognizes that if a victim has plucked up the courage to talk to somebody about the problem it generally means that they believe that the problem will be taken seriously. Therefore the researcher believes that the bullying should be taken seriously.
- The researcher believes that counselling should be provided not only for the victim but also for the bully as often a bully is an ex-victim who is now acting out his/her frustration. Therapy could provide a way in which the therapist can establish the reasons for his/her behaviour and therefore help him/her learn alternative behaviours.
- The counsellor and child need to work through a process where together they understand the problem, identify solutions and decide on what actions to take (Krige et al., 2000:13).
- Krige *et al.* (2000:13) state that counsellors help the children verbalise how they feel so that they are able to express themselves and thereby deal with the pain and humiliation they have experienced as a result of bullying. The researcher believes that these feelings are very important and need to be affirmed in a safe therapeutic environment. The counsellor needs to help the victim develop assertiveness skills as well as coping strategies and bullies need to be taught how to behave in social circles. Krige *et al.* (2000:13) declare that, “Bullies and victims often lack social skills and have difficulty in relating to others.”
- Counsellors should be aware that a child’s sense of self is deeply affected by the various forms of bullying.
- It is important for counsellors to establish the following:
  - Which forms of bullying was the child exposed to?
  - How often did the bullying take place?
  - How has the child’s emotional, physical, creative, intellectual, behavioural and social sense of self been affected?
  - Which contact boundary disturbances have come into play?

- How assertive is the victim? How has the child handled the bullying in the past?
- Counsellors need to assess the situation correctly before beginning therapy and they need to be aware that every child is an individual who interprets the world differently and who needs to be understood as an individual.
- The counsellor should first work with the victim as an individual before allowing the bully to form part of the process. The victim should be asked if he/she is willing for the bully to get involved in the counseling sessions or not.

#### **5.5.8 Recommendations for parents**

- Parents play a vital role in the problem of bullying. Parents may have a child who is a victim of bullying or a child who is a bully to other children. The researcher believes that parents need to take positive action against bullying and be aware of their children's behaviour. If there are drastic changes in their day to day behavioural functioning then it is very important to explore this further.
- The researcher believes that parents need to keep the doors of communication open because children will only disclose that they are being bullied if they feel safe. Krige et al., (2000:16) give some excellent advice to parents not only of victims but also of bullies, the researcher chose the advice most appropriate for the parents of high school learners, please refer to Appendix E.
- It is also necessary for parents to be involved in their children's lives, to know what is going on at school and to encourage their children to be open. In the beginning the child especially the adolescent may shrug the parent off but it is important to be persistent.
- If the child suddenly doesn't want to go to school, participate in sport, attend social functions or begins to display psychosomatic illnesses (continually having stomach pains), explore this further.

#### **5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

- A similar study could be undertaken using a qualitative research approach. This would allow individual students to share how the bullying has impacted them. The research question would therefore be:

***How bullying has affected the self – from an adolescents point of view.***

- A study could be undertaken where the focus of the research is on cyber bullying. The researcher however is of the opinion that this should be more qualitative in nature. The research topic could therefore be:

***The experiences of adolescents who have been exposed to cyber bullying.***

- A study needs to be conducted where an existing programme (such as the no-blame approach) is used in South African schools and then the degree of success is measured. The research topic therefore would be:

***The effectiveness of the no-blame approach to address bullying in South African schools.***

- The researcher also deems it necessary to create an intervention programme that is specifically geared for South African schools. The research topic would be:

***An intervention programme addressing bullying for South African Schools.***

## **5.7 FINAL CONCLUSION**

Bullying is a problem in primary and high schools and needs to be handled with precision and care. It is time for people involved in the school system to stop putting ‘blinkers’ on, decide and be willing to go the extra mile to make schools the safe places they once were. If nothing is done with regard to bullying we are going to have a generation of people whose sense of self has been affected in such a way that they have not grown or felt safe enough to grow into the person they could be.

The researcher believes that the bully has had control for long enough and that it is time for schools to once again take the reign of control to ensure that the children within its boundaries are being educated and not being deterred by external factors such as bullying. This sense of security could optimize the personal growth of every high school student.

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## APPENDIX A

<b>The impact of bullying in high school</b>		
<p><b>A. Names are not needed</b></p> <p>I want to help pupils in this school who have been victimized by others and therefore I need your help to find out how this problem has affected/did affect you during your high school years. You don't need to put your name on this questionnaire and I don't want you to name other people.</p>		
<p><b>B. What is bullying?</b></p> <p>'We say that a student is being bullied when another student, or group of students, says unpleasant or hurtful things to him or her, when a student is hit, kicked or threatened. It is also bullying when a student tries to keep others from being your friend or from letting you join in what they are doing. Some forms of bullying are more subtle such as spreading rumours about you or writing hurtful notes about you. You can even be bullied via e-mail or through your cell phones. It is not bullying when you have a fight with someone of equal strength and it happens only once' (Cornell &amp; Brockenbrough, 2004:67).</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Respondent number: <input style="width: 100px; height: 20px;" type="text"/></p>		<b>For stats purposes</b>
<p><b>C. Personal information</b></p> <p>Please put a cross in the box that corresponds to the answer which applies to you (this is for statistical purposes)</p>		
<p><b>1. I am:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1. female <input type="checkbox"/>                      2. male <input type="checkbox"/></p>		C 1 <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>2. I am in:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">grade 11 <input type="checkbox"/>                      grade 12 <input type="checkbox"/></p>		C 2 <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>3. My age:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">16 <input type="checkbox"/>      17 <input type="checkbox"/>      18 <input type="checkbox"/>      19 <input type="checkbox"/>      20 <input type="checkbox"/></p>		C 3 <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>4. My ethnicity:</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1. Black <input type="checkbox"/>      2. White <input type="checkbox"/>      3. Coloured <input type="checkbox"/>          4. Asian <input type="checkbox"/>      5. Indian <input type="checkbox"/></p>		C 4 <input type="checkbox"/>
<p><b>5. Number of completed</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">3 years <input type="checkbox"/>      4 years <input type="checkbox"/>      5 years <input type="checkbox"/>  <b>years in high school</b>      6 years <input type="checkbox"/>      7 years <input type="checkbox"/>      8 or more <input type="checkbox"/></p>		C 5 <input type="checkbox"/>

For this part of the questionnaire I want you to think about a time in high school, when you were bullied/victimized by somebody or a group of people in the school and then answer section D and E.

### D. Ways in which you were bullied

This section asks you about how you have been bullied in high school. Please remember I'm focusing specifically on incidents which took place by learners of this school (even if they have left in the mean time). Please put a cross over the corresponding number. The numbers represent:

**1 = This hasn't happened to me**

**2= It lasted less than a week**

**3 = It lasted about a month**

**4=It lasted about half a year**

**5 = It lasted about a year**

**6=It lasted several years**

1. I was hit by a student/group of students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D1	
2. I received aggressive stares from one student/group of students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D2	
3. I was tripped when I walked somewhere.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D3	
4. I was physically pushed by the bully/group of bullies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D4	
5. I received violent threats.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D5	
6. Sexually offensive remarks were made to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D6	
7. I was hurt with a weapon like a stick, pair of scissors, knife or something else.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D7	
8. I was humiliated in front of others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D8	
9. Untrue, hurtful notes were written about me (including horrible graffiti).	1	2	3	4	5	6	D9	
10. I was burnt with a lighter/other object.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D10	
11. Things were stolen out my bag.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D11	
12. I was exposed to sneers, snickers or sighs by other pupils when I spoke.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D12	
13. I was teased about my body or physical appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6	D13	
14. Food was taken from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D14	
15. My limbs were sometimes twisted into painful positions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D15	
16. My clothes/sports kit was damaged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D16	
17. Rumours were spread about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D17	
18. I was treated differently because of my skin colour.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D18	
19. My character (personality traits) was attacked by the bully/bullies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D19	
20. I was threatened into giving money or other things to the bully/bullies.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D20	
21. Offensive, threatening and insulting remarks were made about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D21	
22. I was deliberately ignored by the person/group of people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D22	
23. I was forced to fight with another person/other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D23	

<b>1 = This hasn't happened to me</b>						<b>2= It lasted less than a week</b>					
<b>3 = It lasted about a month</b>						<b>4=It lasted about half a year</b>					
<b>5 = It lasted about a year</b>						<b>6=It lasted several years</b>					
24. I was slapped through the face or somewhere on my body.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D24				
25. The bully/group of bullies made faces at me/made dirty gestures (e.g. zap signs)	1	2	3	4	5	6	D25				
26. I observed hostile body language from my 'enemies'.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D26				
27. I was called terrible, hurtful names.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D27				
28. I was spat on by the people who targeted me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D28				
29. I was pulled by my hair when they tried to intimidate me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D29				
30. I was forced into doing things I did not want to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D30				
31. When I spoke or came close to the bully/bullies, they would frown.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D31				
32. I was teased and taunted during the time when I was bullied.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D32				
33. I received looks or glances which contained nasty messages (e.g. that I was unacceptable)	1	2	3	4	5	6	D33				
34. The bully/bullies would criticize me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D34				
35. My school property (e.g. school books/stationery) was damaged.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D35				
36. I was poked or bitten.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D36				
37. Racist remarks were made about me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D37				
38. My school bag was taken from me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D38				
39. I would receive untrue, often hurtful e-mail's or sms's	1	2	3	4	5	6	D39				
40. I was kicked or stamped on.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D40				
41. I was victimized through pinching/scratching.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D41				
42. I was punched by another student/group of students	1	2	3	4	5	6	D42				
43. Things were thrown at me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D43				
44. I was treated differently because of my religious beliefs.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D44				
45. I was excluded from the group or left out of things on purpose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D45				
46. I was threatened in a language which I did not understand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D46				
47. When I approached the bully/bullies they would roll their eyes	1	2	3	4	5	6	D47				
48. The bully/group of bullies touched me in a sexual manner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	D48				

### Section E

This section deals with the way the bullying affected you during that time, please think back and then answer the following questions by marking a cross over the corresponding number. The numbers stand for **1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Half of the time 4 = More often than not 5 = Always**

#### During the time when I was being bullied:

1. I became more conscious of the way I looked.	1	2	3	4	5	E1	
2. I began thinking that I was not good enough.	1	2	3	4	5	E2	
3. I began paying less attention to my school work.	1	2	3	4	5	E3	
4. I tried to cover up my body or the parts of me that people made fun of.	1	2	3	4	5	E4	

<b>1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Half of the time 4 = More often than not 5 = Always</b>						
5. I felt that I wasn't interesting enough to be with.	1	2	3	4	5	E5
6. My school work suffered during the time of bullying.	1	2	3	4	5	E6
7. I tried to change my appearance (for example changed my hairstyle).	1	2	3	4	5	E7
8. I began expecting sarcasm or hurtful words from others.	1	2	3	4	5	E8
9. I began feeling like I was ugly.	1	2	3	4	5	E9
10. My moods were affected by what was happening to me.	1	2	3	4	5	E10
11. I felt like a failure.	1	2	3	4	5	E11
12. I began to look at my appearance differently.	1	2	3	4	5	E12
13. I started to become aggressive in the way I acted.	1	2	3	4	5	E13
14. I began wishing that I looked different	1	2	3	4	5	E14
15. I felt emotional pain when exposed to the bullying.	1	2	3	4	5	E15
16. I began doubting all my abilities.	1	2	3	4	5	E16
17. I felt inferior to others.	1	2	3	4	5	E17
18. I began seeing my skills as something negative.	1	2	3	4	5	E18
19. I felt like I had to be what others expected me to be.	1	2	3	4	5	E19
20. I lost my independence as I became so dependent on the approval of others.	1	2	3	4	5	E20
21. I physically fought back when I was picked on.	1	2	3	4	5	E21
22. My behaviour at home changed during this time.	1	2	3	4	5	E22
23. I felt like I didn't belong.	1	2	3	4	5	E23
24. I thought of ways that I would like to 'pay back' the people who hurt me.	1	2	3	4	5	E24
25. My behaviour changed at school.	1	2	3	4	5	E25
26. I began thinking that I didn't have much to be proud of.	1	2	3	4	5	E26
27. I began having less respect for myself.	1	2	3	4	5	E27
28. I felt unmotivated in life.	1	2	3	4	5	E28
29. I stopped participating in sporting activities.	1	2	3	4	5	E29
30. I began staying away from groups of people.	1	2	3	4	5	E30
31. My problem solving skills were affected	1	2	3	4	5	E31
32. I stayed at home to avoid being bullied.	1	2	3	4	5	E32
33. I began thinking that I wasn't worthy of love.	1	2	3	4	5	E33
34. I often felt lonely during the times when I was bullied	1	2	3	4	5	E34
35. I began thinking that I wasn't able to deal with life's problems.	1	2	3	4	5	E35
36. I started to try and please the bullies by doing what they said I should do.	1	2	3	4	5	E36
37. My school marks dropped during the time when I was bullied.	1	2	3	4	5	E37
38. I tried to gain acceptance from the group.	1	2	3	4	5	E38
39. I began resisting (staying away) from the whole social scene.	1	2	3	4	5	E39
40. I spent a lot of my time thinking about how I had been bullied at school.	1	2	3	4	5	E40
41. I was teased because of the group that I hung out with.	1	2	3	4	5	E41
42. I tried to 'fix' the thing about me that was being teased (for example my hair).	1	2	3	4	5	E42



<b>1 = Never 2 = Sometimes 3 = Half of the time 4 = More often than not 5 = Always</b>							
43. When I was verbally insulted I reacted by insulting the bully/group of bullies back.	1	2	3	4	5	E43	
44. I began having suicidal thoughts because of the bullying that had taken place.	1	2	3	4	5	E44	
45. I treated the bullies exactly the same way that they treated me.	1	2	3	4	5	E45	

## APPENDIX B



University of Pretoria

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

**Department of Social Work and Criminology**

**Faculty of Humanities**

**Tel. +27 12 420-2325**

**Fax. +27 12 420-2093/420-5256**

2007-06-01

Our Ref:

Dear parent/guardian

As part of a Masters dissertation, I am currently exploring the problem of bullying/victimization (physical, verbal and emotional) of high school students. I specifically want to use grade 11 and 12 pupils as part of my sample as previous research has shown that bullying usually takes place within the younger grades (grade eight and nine). Therefore if they have been exposed to bullying, it would have happened by now. Your child being a minor makes it necessary for you to give your consent for her/him to participate. I have included information for your attention and ask that you review it and sign the tear off slip. Only grade 11 and 12 pupils who have returned their consent forms will participate in the study taking place in two weeks at which time they will complete an anonymous individual questionnaire. Thank you for your time in reading the following information:

**Date:** 15 May 2007

**Researcher:** Mrs G Anderson, MSD (Play therapy) student at the University of Pretoria, South Africa.

**Address:** Department of Social Work and Criminology, University of Pretoria, Lynwood Drive, 0002

**Supervisor:** Dr J.M.C. Joubert

**Informed consent:**

- 1. Title of study:** The impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self.
- 2. Purpose of study:** exploring the holistic impact of bullying on the adolescent's sense of self to enable professionals to deal with the problem more effectively.
- 3. Procedures:** In four weeks' time, all grade 11 and 12 learners will be asked to meet in the hall during their Life Orientation periods where they will be asked to fill in an anonymous questionnaire. Once they are finished they will hand the questionnaire to the researcher and return to class. The purpose of the questionnaire will be explained and any pupil may withdraw at any time during the research procedure. The child's name will NOT be written on the questionnaire and no names will be mentioned.

**4. Risks and discomforts:** There are no known medical risks or discomforts associated with this research, although my child **may** experience stress when thinking about possible past traumatic experiences. I understand that Mrs Anderson is experienced in handling traumatized adolescents and will offer my child free counselling if needed. I furthermore acknowledge that Mrs Anderson will also offer a name of an Educational Psychologist should my child wish to see somebody other than Mrs Anderson, but that the cost of an outside counsellor will be at my own cost. I may also choose to send my child to my own chosen counsellor at my own cost. I understand that I will not be present during the completion of the questionnaire.

**5. Benefits:** I understand that there are no direct benefits to my child participating in this research. However, the results of the study may help:

- Counsellors deal more effectively with victims of bullying.
- Assist my child to disclose information never shared before which may be therapeutic in its own sense.

**6. Participant's rights:** Allowing my child to participate is totally voluntary and my child is at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time.

**7. Financial compensation:** I understand that there will be no financial gain from participating in the study.

**8. Confidentiality:** All questionnaires will be kept private and confidential and will be locked away in a safe place. The results of this study may be published in professional journals or presented at professional conferences but my child's identity will be protected as respondents will not fill in their names on their questionnaires. The name of the school will also not be mentioned. This will ensure that the school is also protected.

**9. If I have any questions or concerns:** I can call Mrs G Anderson at (011) 868-1056/7 during office hours. If she is not available I can leave a message and she will return my call.

I understand my child's rights as a research subject, and I voluntarily consent to participation in this study. I understand what the study is about and how and why it is being done. I will keep the information and send back the signed tear off slip.

-Tear off slip - -----

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Parent's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Child's signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

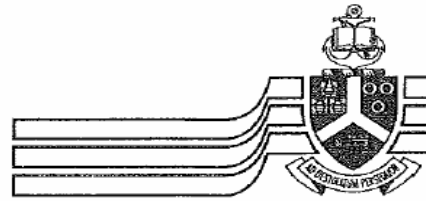
\_\_\_\_\_  
**Researcher's signature**

## APPENDIX C

Our Ref: Ms P Woest / 26297508  
Tel: 012 420 2736  
Fax: 012 420 2698  
E-mail: petru.woest@up.ac.za

03 July 2007

Ms GA Anderson  
PO Box 5392  
MEYERSDAL  
1447



University of Pretoria

Pretoria 0002 Republic of South Africa Tel 012-420-4111  
Fax 012-420-2698 <http://www.up.ac.za>

Faculty of Humanities

Dear Ms Anderson

### TITLE REGISTRATION: FIELD OF STUDY – MSD: PLAY THERAPY

I have pleasure in informing you that the following has been approved:

**TITLE:** The impact of bullying in school on the adolescent's sense of self

**DIRECTOR:** Dr JMC Joubert

**CO-DIRECTOR:**

I would like to draw your attention to the following:

1. **ENROLMENT PERIOD**
  - (a) You must be enrolled as a student for at least one academic year before submission of your dissertation/essay.
  - (b) Your enrolment as a student must be renewed annually before 31 March, until you have complied with all the requirements for the degree. You will only be able to have supervision if you provide a proof of registration to your supervisor.
2. **APPROVAL FOR SUBMISSION**

On completion of your dissertation/essay enough copies for each examiner as well as the prescribed examination enrolment form which includes a statement by your director of studies that he/she approves of the submission of your dissertation/essay, as well as a statement, signed by you in the presence of a Commissioner of Oaths, must be submitted to Student Administration.
3. **NOTIFICATION BEFORE SUBMISSION**

You are required to notify me at least three months in advance of your intention to submit your dissertation/essay.
4. **INSTRUCTIONS REGARDING THE PREPARATION OF THE DISSERTATION/ESSAY AND THE SUMMARY APPEAR ON THE REVERSE SIDE OF THIS LETTER.**

Yours sincerely

for DEAN: FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

## APPENDIX D

### The framework for a no-bullying policy

#### Sunshine Primary School

##### Principles

We the teachers, learners and parents of Sunshine Primary School

- do not tolerate bullying
- respect each others' right to human dignity
- promise to promote a safe school environment
- value and respect each person's unique personality

##### Aims

The aims of this no-bullying policy are to:

- provide for a safe learning environment
- protect children against bullying
- provide support for victims, bullies and parents
- provide guidelines on how to deal with bullying

##### Definition of bullying

For the purpose of this policy, bullying is defined as follows:

*Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt another person, who is in a less powerful position, by means of physical, psychological or verbal abuse.*

Bullying includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- kicking, hitting and punching
- teasing, taunting and mocking
- name-calling
- using threatening gestures
- spreading nasty rumours

- intentionally isolating a person from activities
- insulting family members
- damaging someone's property

##### Basic rules

- (1) We shall respect and uphold the dignity of other learners.
- (2) We shall not physically, verbally and/or psychologically bully another learner.
- (3) We shall not torture another learner in any way.
- (4) We shall not use any form of initiation to hurt, intimidate, dominate or scare another learner.
- (5) We shall help a learner who is being bullied by telling the bully to stop and not participating in the bullying.
- (6) We shall report bullying to the principal or a teacher.

##### Investigating and reporting bullying

- (1) All investigations and reports will be treated in the strictest confidence.
- (2) Teachers must make a note of the time and place of the incident and who was involved.
- (3) Teachers must report the matter to the principal, guidance teacher or designated person.
- (4) The designated person will endeavour to obtain as much relevant information as possible on the bully/bullies and the victim/s.
- (5) The bully/bullies and victim/s will be interviewed separately in order to hear their side of the story. Learners may have a representative present during the interview. Interviews/discussions should be recorded in writing.
- (6) The parents of the children concerned will be informed and requested to attend separate

meetings to discuss the matter. The children concerned should accompany their parents.

- (7) If a disciplinary hearing is required, the disciplinary committee will conduct the hearing according to the procedures as set out in the code of conduct for learners.

### Responsibility of learners

- (1) Learners are required to report bullying to the principal, a teacher, the guidance counsellor or designated person.
- (2) Information received by learners will be treated confidentially.

### Disciplinary sanctions

The following actions may be taken against a bully after a fair hearing has been conducted.

- (1) The bully/bullies may be required to sit outside the principal's office during break.
- (2) Certain privileges may be withdrawn from the bully/bullies.
- (3) The bully/bullies may be required to do community service.
- (4) The bully/bullies may be placed in another class.
- (5) The bully/bullies may be required to attend regular sessions with a school counsellor or psychologist.
- (6) In the case of very serious acts of bullying, the bully/bullies may be suspended by the school governing body or expelled by the Head of Department.

### Procedure for disciplinary hearings

- (1) When serious acts of bullying are committed the disciplinary committee will hold a disciplinary hearing before a decision is taken on what sanction should be imposed.
- (2) The hearing will be conducted according to procedurally fair rules.
- (3) The hearing will be held within a reasonable time after the event.

- (4) The learner's parents (or guardian) will be notified in writing of the offence which the learner has allegedly committed.
- (5) The learner and parents will be notified in writing of the date, time and venue of the hearing.
- (6) The learner and parents must be furnished with information relating to the charge.
- (7) During the disciplinary hearing the learner will have the right to:
  - be represented or assisted by an adult;
  - present his or her case (i.e. to be heard); and
  - call witnesses.
- (8) The disciplinary committee shall keep a record of the proceedings and of the evidence.
- (9) The disciplinary committee shall make the final decision.
- (10) The learner and his or her parents (or guardian) will be informed in writing of the decision and be furnished with the reason thereof.
- (11) If a learner or parent is dissatisfied with the disciplinary decision, excluding expulsion, he or she may appeal in writing to the principal or chairperson of the school governing body.
- (12) The principal or governing body shall appoint an appeal committee and arrange for the appeal to be heard within fourteen (14) days unless otherwise agreed to by the parties.
- (13) The learner will have the right to be represented or assisted by an adult.
- (14) No person who served on the disciplinary hearing which found the learner guilty may serve on the appeal committee.
- (15) A learner, or a parent of a learner, who has been expelled from the school may appeal to the Member of the Executive Council against the decision of the Head of Department.
- (16) The hearing of an appeal shall be conducted according to fair administrative practice.

## APPENDIX E

Table 5.1 Advice for parents of victims and bullies:

<b>Parents of victims</b>	<b>Parents of bullies</b>
Encourage children to talk about the problem.	Have a frank discussion with the child making it clear that bullying will not be tolerated
Let children write a poem or story about what happened.	Give as much praise as possible for good behaviour.
Ask children how they would like to solve the problem.	Monitor friends of the child.
Discuss the matter with the school after getting permission from the child. Be persistent; don't let the school dismiss the problem.	Encourage pursuing a hobby or sport.
Gather as much evidence of bullying incidents as possible.	Arrange for the child to see a counsellor for an assessment and therapy.
Ask the teacher to speak to the bully's parents.	If the bully continues it might also be necessary to take firm disciplinary action such as withdrawing privileges or grounding him.

Krige *et al.* (2000:20).