

A case study of girl's violence among high school learners in Durban

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November 2016

‘As the candidate’s supervisor I agree / do not agree to the submission of this dissertation.’

Signed



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Date 01 December 2016



DECLARATION

I, Virgil Eugene David declare that:

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Abstract

School-related gender violence is one of the most serious challenges in the South African education system. A Human Rights report maintained that the South African government was not doing enough to address the gender violence that had invaded the country's schools (Human Rights Watch, 2001). Yet even though gender violence, in schools, is well documented and researched, most of these studies have focused on boys as the main perpetrators and girls simply as victims. There is, however, an emerging body of literature that dispels this theory and claims that girls cannot simply be viewed as victims, as they have their own sense of agency (Bhana, 2008). This qualitative study is an investigation of the views and understandings of a group of 30 high school girls aged 13. These girls emerged from both working - and middle - class backgrounds in the former coloured suburb of Sydenham in Durban. This study looks at the roles girls play with regards to gender violence and how they resist, negotiate and perpetrate such violence in their lives.

These findings show that these girls are not only engaged in the above at school, but actively challenge existing gendered norms and compete with both boys and girls for power and dominance within the school. Through the use of interviews, participants express their growing concerns for some girls who turn to violence to protect themselves, defend their heterosexual status and develop a "bad girl" reputation desired by some young girls.

These findings also shed light on agency through which girls challenge the patriarchal norms and expectations around gender roles and identities.

Chapter One

Introduction to the study

1.1. Introduction

"The parents of a 15 - year old schoolgirl are demanding answers from the Department of Education after their daughter was knocked unconscious by a gang of girls for kissing – it is claimed – another 's boyfriend'" (Daily News, 7 June 2016).

The above extract was taken from The Daily News in Durban after a fight broke out in a girl's toilet in a school in the greater Durban area, involving a group of young girls who acted against one individual. This altercation was one of many to have taken place in schools across South Africa this year (2016) and internationally, showing that girls actively engage in various forms of violence. This study therefore aims at supporting emerging literature that demonstrates the roles some girls are now taking with regards to gender violence and their competition for power in and around schools with boys and other girls.

This study, entitled **"A case study of girls violence among high school learners in Durban"**, which is also part of a broader project called **Stop the violence**", explores the views and understanding of violence from the perspective of 30 schoolgirls aged 13 in the Sydenham area in Durban. This study looks at the roles girls play with regard to gender violence and how they resist, negotiate and perpetrate such violence in their lives. These views are vital in understanding and dealing with gender violence in schools, and helps with the understanding of how girls engage in gender violence and challenge gendered norms while also competing with other girls for heterosexual status.

1.2. Background and focus of study

"Girl beaten over kiss" – Daily News

"Shocking footage shows young girls having vicious fights on school grounds" – The Mirror.

"The shocking moment bullies attacked and killed a 16-year-old girl at school: Cell phone video captured 'fight over a boy' that ended in tragedy" – The Daily Mail.

The above headlines were taken from newspapers both locally and internationally that were published in 2016. They set the scene for what is becoming an issue of great concern. School violence is increasing both locally and internationally (Hymel & Swearer 2015; Maphalala & Mabunda 2014) and this has prompted an unprecedented surge in data on school safety in established education studies (Zuze, Reddy, Juan, Hannan, Visser & Winnaar, 2016).

1.3. Gender Violence in Schools

According to Burton (2016) one of the most important reasons for the continuation of schools is to ensure that efficient learning takes place; and that children are socially and academically prepared to become a part of society in which they actively participate, and make a positive contribution to society and the economy (Burton, 2016). Evidence from studies demonstrate that this does not seem to be the case, as high levels of violence are turning schools into places where learners feel unsafe and learn how to fear or engage in fights rather than how to make those positive contributions required by society (Bhana, 2013; Burton, 2008). Leach (2002) points out that learners are being socialised at school to tolerate high levels of violence. This form of behaviour is indicative of male dominance and still shows the power imbalances that exist between male perpetrators and female victims of gender violence (Bhana, 2005). Gender power inequalities become a powerful tool of control to sustain gender violence, which is embedded in various forms of violence, such as bullying, labelling, and other forms of physical abuse (UNESCO, 2014). Research shows that gender violence between learners continues to be a pressing issue in schools in South Africa (Bhana and Mayeza, 2016).

Leach and Humphreys (2007) and; Reilly (2014) assert that dominant groups exercise power over girls through violence, while literature adds that social construction and cultural upbringing strengthen gender inequality in and around schools (Leach & Humphreys, 2007; and Reilly, 2014). Evidence from studies demonstrates that gender violence is an inevitable hazard to the wellbeing of girls in schools and could cause physical distress (UNESCO, 2014). According to Prinsloo (2006) girls deserve equal opportunities, treatment and security in their school environment. However these elements are meant to be free from any forms of intimidation and gender violence in school. Findings from this study, which are supported by literature, will add to the existing body of knowledge that highlights issues of violence and

the roles that boys play in dominating situations and asserting power over girls in schools and the community. Extant literature also supports many of the findings of the study (Bhana, 2012; Tabane, 2014 and Leach & Mitchell, 2006).

According to Bhana (2005) the social constructions of masculinity and femininity promote gender inequality and male power, and the exercise of such power becomes evident in the everyday routine of a school. Chadwick (2010) explains that gender violence and inequality are evident and have a very high occurrence in spaces used for everyday interaction such as schools in South Africa. Research shows the dominance that boys exert over girls, using their hegemonic masculinity to place women and girls in a subordinate position (Mayeza, 2016). Girls are mostly victims of physical abuse and harassment at the hands of their male peers (Bhana, 2002; 2005). Further, boys challenge others for dominance by demonstrating violent acts of hegemonic masculinity directed at girls who are powerless to resist (Parkes, 2015). Jewkes and Morrell, (2010) suggest that in South Africa, violence is the means used by young males to assert power. This is exploited in various ways, including violence, sexual harassment, rape, assault and intimidation, which are common experiences for girls (Jewkes and Morrell, 2010; Parkes et al., 2013).

However, Morojele (2011) points out that girls exercise their own sense of agency to position themselves in complex ways so as to navigate and even challenge gender violence, resulting in a disruption to the conventional and dominant types of discourse that often portray females as victims of gender violence. Petesch, Smulovitz and Walton (2005) assert that individuals can decide what they want to do and/or how they want to behave. They did not need to base their actions on past behavioural patterns that were constructed by norms that positioned girls as victims of gender violence and subordinate to boys who exercised dominance over them. This, they argue, is regarded as human agency and girls now exercise agency in their lives and are no longer afraid to demonstrate it (Petesch, Smulovitz and Walton, 2005).

Shamu, Gevers, Mahlangu, Shai, Chirwa, & Jewkes (2016) indicate that the most common reason for girls involvement in violence is as a protective measure. Girls involvement in violence challenges gender norms that portray girls as passive and submissive to boys who use power to dominate them; this act contravenes the idealised view of 'normative'

femininity (Bright, 2005). This study demonstrates viewpoints about girls active engagement in violence and how they negotiate and question gender norms in order to protect themselves and challenge boys and other girls to gain power in schools and the wider community. This study uses participants' voices and supported by literature to demonstrate how girls actively challenge different forms of femininities by using violence to dominate situations.

The alarming newspaper headlines quoted on page 1 point to a small collection of articles that showcase growing concerns about gender violence and, more importantly, the roles girls play with regards to gender violence. These headlines show the need for more research into violence perpetrated by girls, as most of the research to date focuses on boys' dominance and girls as the passive victims of gender violence. Further, they and other like them create an awareness of violence in schools for the community but fail to highlight the reasons behind violent acts and what makes girls and boys become involved in these violent acts. It also looks at the link between violence and gender as Leach and Humphreys (2007) argue that violence is gendered because it centres on boys and girls.

Irwin and Chesney-Lind (2008) assert that from the turn of the century, society needed to view aggressive girls in the same light as their male counterparts. Their study revealed the level of girls violence over the past decade and how the media and society made reference to it. This study will therefore examine the opinions of the participants to gain a deeper insight into gendered violence and how some girls actively resist violence with violence.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This study employed the lenses of the Social Construction Theory and the Theory of Femininity to analyse the data supported by literature.

Social Construction Theory

Through interactions, with the world and our thought processes, we create our own views on gender and learn most of our routines. Patton (2005) asserts that social constructionism

theory is founded on the principle that the human world is different from that of the physical world and hence our reality is socially constructed. Thus, what is considered as knowledge is continuously being negotiated within cultures, social settings and relationships with others (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).). The theory of social constructionism and feminist theory are employed as theoretical lenses to understand how culture and lives are constructed within the Sydenham area and how this has helped to construct their gendered notions of violence.

Construction of Femininities

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) state that although researchers have made widespread use of concepts such as masculinity and femininity, the latter concept is still decidedly under theorised. Alder and Worrall (2004) observe that although numerous studies have been conducted on violence and children, boys are usually seen as perpetrators and girls as victims and not violent aggressors. With regard to the construction of femininities, Connell (2000) argues that all forms of femininities in society are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men. It is emphasised that femininity is often central to men's domination over women (Schippers, 2007) while Bhana (2008) points out that just as there are multiple forms of masculinity, so too are there myriad forms of femininity and these are important to research (Bhana, 2008). It is suggested that there is new form of femininity that expresses girls behaviour as self-confident, energetic and liberated from the chains of past views (Gonick, 2006). This theory was used as a lens in this study to assist in understanding the behaviour of women and specifically girls, and how they construct their feminine and sometimes violent identities, both at school and in the wider community, through their social and interpersonal relationships with the world. The social construction theory is employed to understand how the community and school influence the behaviour of girls as agents of violence or victims of it.

Chesney – Lind & Irwin (2013) suggest that it has been well documented that “bad” girls existed in the world, however, in the past decade, through current media reports we have been introduced to an aggressive “gangster” type of girls, who is just as threatening and violent as their male counterparts. Bhana (2008) adds that viewing schoolgirls as simply victims of

violence not only changes our views and understandings about their schooling experiences, but also gives a false description of what is really happening and lives up to the gendered stereotypes that have stained girls' lives and ignores the possibility that girls too can be more than just victims. Chesney – Lind & Irwin (2013) states that in the past, there was a different reason to be concerned about girls. Chesney – Lind & Irwin (2013) go on to add that it has become obvious that as girls fight to be treated equally and given equal opportunities, there is a risk that they will adopt the negative side of masculinity, which includes aggression and violence.

Feminist theory will be used to understand what it means to be a girl and why girls choose to behave in certain ways, particularly in relation to violence. It will also reveal how some girls resist violence, while others perpetrate and commit acts of brutality against boys and other girls. Further, the framework will be employed to show how girls do not only occupy vulnerable positions but also actively resist and challenge gender norms of violence, as well as perpetrate and take part in acts of brutality themselves.

Most of the time, femininity is associated with “feminine” things, which includes dressing in pink, being powerless against the opposite sex and having good manners (Holmes & Schnurr, 2006). Femininity is also associated with being submissive, helpless, clean and elusive (Newsweek, 2000). Johnson and Repta (2012) argue that people have relied on the standing belief that boys should be masculine and girls feminine, and this is deemed normal. Girls are brought up to be feminine and submissive and this construct in their lives is conditioned through family relationships and interactions within society. However, this research reveals that girls are challenging and resisting gender norms by either defending or protecting themselves or perpetrating violence.

Bennett (2007) suggests that many cultures view masculinity as: the ability by men to control their emotions (or be seen as sissies); to be rational (or be viewed as being feminine); and to be responsible and take care of their families because it is what is expected of them. True masculinity is a quality possessed by a man whose actions are deemed to result in success. These views show men and boys in control and with all the power, in a place that excludes

girls and women. In contrast, however, other researchers (Tolman, Impett, Tracy & Michael, 2006) observes how females cultivate suppressed recognition about who they are as women, through the way they behave, think, feel, and the responses given to them by others.

Girls growing up in particular material conditions, far from trying to be more like boys, are routinely looking for ways of claiming the “resources” of youth in order to demonstrate their difference from boys (Alder & Worrall, 2004, p11). They further state that practices resulting from this can only be conceptualised and responded to, as crime is indicative of restrictive discourses, within which girls are required to accomplish adolescent femininities. Whenever they fail to accomplish the approbated adolescent femininities of scholastic achievement and/or domestic docility, their alternative behaviours are constructed no longer in terms emotional “neediness” but in terms of “crime” and, in particular, “disorder” and “violence”. There is little tolerance of youthful female resistance and no indulgent acceptance that “girls will be girls” (Alder & Worrall, 2004).

With the employment of a social constructionism theory for one framework in this study, this research seeks to understand the different realities that are constructed by participants within their lives, be it at school, home or within their communities. This framework helps to explain how their interactions with family and community members, peers and teachers, assist in their construction of a gender identity and how these views influence their engagement with others and their involvement with violence.

Whereas looking at femininity allows the reader to see how girls interpret how they should behave through feminine views to how they are behaving at present. This message is taken from the participants as they discuss what it means to be feminine and how, by using violence to challenge boys for power, by competing with other girls for heterosexual domination and status, and by defending themselves and their families, they develop and construct their own identities.

1.5. Aims and Objectives

Much of the literature that has been reviewed and newspaper headlines, both locally and internationally, report on incidents of violence in schools that now occur more commonly among girls. In this study, however, the main objective is not only to highlight what kinds of violence take place among schoolgirls but also to understand, explore and gain a deeper insight into why girls engage in brutality and how their acts impact upon and endanger their lives as 13 year olds in society.

This research seeks to investigate the roles that some girls occupy, with regard to gender violence, and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools. It focuses in particular on the role that girls play in perpetrating violence. While many studies document the abuse and victimisation of girls in schools (Bhana, 2012), this research will explore and gain a deeper understanding of some of the ways in which girls, like boys, can display violent and aggressive behaviours not only towards other girls, but towards boys and even teachers.

My particular interest in this study was based on an experience in 2012, whereby I was verbally abused by a female learner in my school. This occurred after I attempted to confiscate her cell phone, which was not permitted according to the school rules. Subsequently my car was scratched and learners in my class were encouraged to stop completing my class work and homework. The gang of girls would pass derogatory and degrading comments as I walked past them in corridors or taught them in classrooms. They even wrote letters to each other about myself. During the half-year examination, the female learner in question wrote a descriptive and degrading creative writing piece about myself, which he was then forced to mark. He felt intimidated.

A further reason for the conducting of this research was based on my interpretations of violent incidents that occurred at, Chernova High School (a pseudonym has been used), with girls being the perpetrators. Other staff members doubted whether girls were capable of performing violent acts and their thoughts were that girls were normally victims, so it was impossible that they engaged in brutality. As a grade six teacher, over the last few years I

have witnessed an increase in girls violent behaviour and a drop in aggressive acts by boys'. Staff members thought that this was caused by an increase in the ratio of girls to boys at the school. Girls had become more vocal and intimidating in class. Boys had become afraid of the girls in school and therefore backed down from fights. I have also witnessed girls chasing boys and fighting with girls for heterosexual status.

I therefore decided to conduct this study to explore and understand girls violence. There has also been little research conducted on girls as perpetrators of gender violence in particular and this study aims to generate information on this phenomenon.

Objectives

1. To understand the roles in violent gender relationships.
2. To gain insights into the violent experiences of the girls in this study.
3. To understand how girls resist gender violence in schools.
4. To gain insights on how violence can be stopped in schools.

1.6 Critical questions

The data was presented in this study aimed to answer the critical questions outlined below:

1. How do girls experience violence at school?
2. What is their role in violent gender relations?
3. How do they resist gender violence?
4. What are ways that violence can be stopped, from the girls point of view?

1.7 Research site – Chernova High School (Sydenham, Durban)

The school, a public, co-educational high school, is located in the greater Durban area and its grades range from 8 to 12. There are 1221 learners at the school, with 678 females and 543 males. There are 45 educators, 34 of which are female. In terms of gender in management, the principal and one of the deputy principals are male, while the other deputy and all five of

the heads of department are female. Most of the learners are coloured and the rest are blacks or Indians. There are 733 coloured learners, 264 Indian learners and 224 black learners.

Chernova High School has been negatively reported in the media during the course of this year (2016) because of violent acts that have occurred in and around the school. Girls have lured other girls into toilets and violently abused them in order to defend their relationships with boys, which they felt had been threatened. These girls felt that other girls posed a threat to their heterosexual relationship by talking to their boyfriends and spending time with them, either socially or academically. These actions caused the girls to use violence to defend their heterosexual status. Their violent acts put their fellow learner in hospital and were even captured on a cell phone and the recording went viral. In another incident, a female prefect was attacked by a group of girls outside the school because she had reported an incident to the office. These occurrences have shown the public that some girls at Chernova High School have a violent side and they not only resist violence but perpetrate violent acts and engage in violent behaviours that are inconsistent with feminine behaviour and gender expectations.

1.8 An outline of each chapter

Chapter one

This chapter sets the tone for the study, through the use of various newspaper headlines. The headlines reveal the growing issue that schools are presently dealing with. It not only confirms the presence of violence in schools but also, thanks to the support of participants and emerging literature, shows the roles the girls are now playing in order to both resist brutality and actively engage in violent acts. This chapter further presents a brief discussion of the lens through which the data will be analysed. The Construction of Femininities and Social Construction Theory are also reviewed.

Chapter two

This chapter presents a thematic review of related literature. I have reviewed various local, national and international studies on gender and gender-based violence in and around

schools. These studies have been gleaned, synthesised and organised to form several broad themes that are discussed in length.

Chapter three

This is the ‘methodology’ chapter, which provides an in-depth discussion and description of the research design used for this study. It looks at the methodology, sampling, data collection methods and data analysis employed for this study. The choice of a qualitative research approach, an interpretivist paradigm and a case study methodology for this research will be discussed. Also presented in this chapter is the sampling method, interviewing techniques, limitations of research, issues of validity and reliability, ethical considerations and the data analysis process.

Chapter four

This chapter presents an analysis and in-depth discussion of the research findings and integrates documented literature on gender violence in and around schools to support data that has been presented by participants and then analysed in the study.

Chapter five

This is the concluding chapter, which summarises the other chapters of this study. It provides the main points of the study, along with recommendations suggested by the participants in this study. It further offers possible recommendations for schools and teachers to use in order to tackle the issues of gender violence in and around schools.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Research on gender violence among school-going children tends to focus on males and how they exercise power through violence over females (Bhana, 2011; Pinheiro, 2006 and Mirsky, 2001). According to studies on violence and gender violence in schools, girls are simply positioned as victims (Bhana, 2012; Tabane, 2014 and Leach & Mitchell, 2006). Girls violent behaviour is a topic that is severely under-researched, both globally and in South Africa. Against this background, this study explores some of the ways in which girls display violent behaviour towards other girls, boys and even teachers at a school in South Africa. In this chapter, this researcher reviews some literature on brutality in schools with a special interest on girls involvement in violence at this institution. This chapter begins with a definition of the term gender violence. It then discusses issues surrounding gender violence in schools and their effects on learners, teachers, teaching and learning. It examines girls aggression and constructions of femininity, as well as girls violence and factors that contribute to brutal acts by girls at school. It concludes by reflecting on the literature that addresses some of the recommendations on how to deal with girls violence.

2.1. Defining gender violence

Violence is a slippery concept (Levi & Maguire, 2002 cited in De Haan, 2008). There is no one specific definition of violence. While O'Moore (2006) shows that it is surprisingly rare to find a specific definition of violence, some research, however, reveals that there are many definitions of violence, based on the different situations, backgrounds and social constructions of individuals (De Haan, 2008). Violence is defined as 'the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation' (Krug, Mercy, Dahlberg, & Zwi, 2002, p5). In a study of violence within the home, Pells, Wilson and Hang (2015) define violence with interchangeable terms such as; domestic violence, intimate partner violence, interpersonal violence or family violence, yet no common definition exists. Despite the lack

of clear definition, however, violence is often seen as being linked with crime, but, not all crime is violent and not all violence is criminal (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

It is argued that all fighting in schools has a gender-based element to it, with boys essentially being the perpetrators and dominating girls, who are the victims, who are made to be submissive to boys (Leach, 2008 and Leach & Humphreys, 2007). Violence is gender-based because it centres on boys and girls, with it either being: boys on girls; boys on boys; girls on girls; or girls on boys (Leach & Humphreys, 2007). Maphalala (2014) adds that boys are the focus of violence in schools, but female learners pupils are still the main victims of brutal behaviour.

According to Tasca, Zatz and Rodriguez (2012), violence can manifest in various ways, such as rape, assault and verbal abuse. While the World Report on Violence against Children identifies that violence can occur in many forms such as; abuse from adults, peers and gangs, with the main forms of it being either physical or psychological. At school it is expressed as corporal punishment, harassment, sexual assault and emotional abuse from teachers and other learners (King, 2009).

For the purpose of the study, a definition of gender violence is put forward;

‘Gender-based violence, also referred to as GBV, is a global phenomenon that knows no geographical, cultural, social, economic, ethnic, or other boundaries (Leach, Dunne & Salvi, 2014, p.1). Gender violence occurs across all societies and represents a brutal violation of human rights, the worst manifestation of gender-based discrimination and a major obstacle to the achievement of gender equality’ (Leach, et al., 2014, p.1).

Two types of gender violence exist in schools: clear and obvious (explicit) and implied or contained (implicit) forms of violence (Leach, 2008). Gender violence can sometimes be aggressive and varies from rape to touching, to verbal insults that are not solicited but clear and obvious for everyone to see (Leach, 2008). However, implicit gender violence is not easy

to see, but comes from the everyday running of the school, which reconfirms gender differences and highlights male domination over females (Leach, 2008).

According to Parkes (2015, p.4), 'Violence is multidimensional, and refers not just to acts of physical, sexual and emotional force, but to everyday interactions that surround these acts, and to their roots in structural violence of inequitable and unjust socio-economic and political systems and institutions.'

2.3. Gender violence in schools

Violence in schools has developed into a serious predicament, both locally and abroad. In this section, this researcher presents an in-depth discussion on some of the key issues pertaining to gender violence in schools.

One of the major challenges in South African schools is the issue of safety of learners, as well as teachers (Burton & Leoschut, 2013). With learners spending approximately half of their lives at school, the school therefore serves as the second most important place, after the home, in which to socialise and to grow (SACE, 2011). With this in mind, all learners have the right to a safe, violence-free environment in which to learn and play (Tabane, 2014). This, however, according to Bhana (2013) and Burton (2008) is not the case, as the increased levels of violence in schools have transformed schools into sites where children learn to fear, distrust and develop distorted perceptions of their identity. In an international study conducted by Crews, Crews and Turner, (2011), it is argued that learning will be minimal if learners are uncomfortable in their environment and this will change the expectations of society regarding learners' success in the future. Their study further reveals that learners who are exposed to fighting at school and in their community, leads them to becoming stressed and emotionally unstable at school, which hinders their ability to learn (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011).

Gender violence, corporal punishment and bullying in schools and communities are some of the issues described in the World Report of Violence against Children (Pinheiro, 2006). It highlights the volume and types of violence in South African communities and countries around the world, and examines the prevalence of political and social attitudes, and socio-economic conditions and values (Pinheiro, 2006). Forster, Grigsby, Unger and Sussman (2015) argue that through practical investigation of risk behaviour, a link exists between community violence exposure and family processes, which learners witness and bring to school.

Schools are not the safe shelters for learners that they are supposed to be (Pinheiro, 2006). Violence in South African schools is obvious and compelling, and schools have become sites of violence (Morrell, 2002). According to the Human Rights Watch Report (2001), it is suggested that, in all communities and schools in South Africa, irrespective of race and economic class, girls are exposed to different types of harassment and sexual violence, which prevents and slows down their basic right to education.

A United Nations report on violence against children highlights gender as one of the reasons for children's vulnerability to violence in and around schools (Pinheiro, 2006). Pinheiro (2006) goes on to suggest that the global nature of gender violence affects most countries in the world, and that this form of violence should thus be considered a global scourge. Girls and boys learn socially constructed gender roles, which promote power over the other and, therefore, gender violence (Bhana & Pattman, 2011).

Gender violence is the outcome of gender inequality, stereotypes and sexual harassment being socially imposed on girls, and these aspects are sometimes encouraged by a desire to penalise girls because of their gender (Pinheiro, 2006). Jewkes, Levin and Penn-Kekana (2003) explain that what is happening in schools is mirrored by what takes place in society at large. This is partly due to hierarchical power structures that are common in most cultures and ethnic groups, where women or girls are positioned as subordinates to men (Morojele, 2010). Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga and Bradshaw (2002) add that cultural and ethnic beliefs relating to the positioning of women and girls in society have encouraged patriarchal thinking

and perpetuated gender stereotypes that promote women as being reliant upon men and powerless, and males as being dominant and aggressive.

According to Bhana, De Lange and Mitchell (2009) and Bhana and Pillay (2011), acts of violence go unnoticed in schools because such behaviours are often regarded as part of growing up. Schools therefore remain sites that perpetuate inequality that begins at home, with boys and girls socialised into particular roles. This is reinforced by the teachers as they themselves are often perpetrators and victims of gender violence.

Even though it is well documented that schools can be places of violence, Bhana (2013) argues that the root cause or the significance of gender in understanding school violence is often brushed aside. Schools are considered to have become more aggressive and violent (Bhana, 2002) and this is the reason why the government is experiencing difficulty in creating gender equality in schools (Bhana, 2011).

According to Mayer and Furlong (2010), gender violence in schools can be attributed to violence in the neighbourhood, which spills over into school spaces, especially in secondary schools. Therefore, when children are exposed to environments that are fraught with crime, it is likely that they will behave in the same manner.

Violence at home is taken into the school, community and workplace (Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006 and Leach, 2008). Pinheiro (2006) is of the view that a number of films, television shows, music videos and electronic games are violent and sexual in nature, and since children are consistently exposed to these, they enter into discussions about them and enact them at school and at home. Many of the victims and perpetrators of these violent acts are teenagers and young adults, which makes up the majority of South Africa's population (Leoschut & Burton, 2009).

In an international study conducted by Forster, Grigsby, Unger and Sussman (2015), statistics show that thousands of young people are treated for injuries resulting from violence and it is suggested that a great number of school learners are bullied at school. They add that “perpetration statistics indicate that between 30–40% of boys and 16–30% of girls have committed a violent offence by the time they are 17 years old” (Forster, Grigsby, Unger & Sussman, 2015, p1).

2.4. Girls violence and constructions of femininity

This section presents an in-depth look at girls violence and their construction of femininity. According to Bhana and Pattman (2011), gender is learned and performed rather than being an inherent quality. Boys and girls grow up obeying socially constructed gender roles that afford power against the other; hence they partake in the promotion of violence (Bhana & Pattman, 2011). South African attitudes towards gender are mainly about control and power, and passivity versus strength, which teaches children to learn about, behave and position themselves in gendered ways (Morrell, Bhana & Shefer, 2012). Gender is socially constructed and is systematically monitored from birth. It is further shaped to empower some and inflict violence on others (Morrell, Epstein, Bhana, Moletsane & Unterhalter, 2009). Power inequalities that exist at all levels of society reinforce patterns of gender discrimination, with most girls likely targets of violence and abuse (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

McCarry (2010) believes that children are socialised into a culture of male domination over young women and girls, which greatly impacts the ways in which they behave. It is therefore argued that men have been deemed the dominant gender and addressing this issue remains important for feminist work (Bhana, 2011; Reddy & Dunne, 2007). However, according to Bhana (2011) and Jackson (2006), there is the danger of femininities being removed from the agenda. It is argued by some that, due to the minimal levels of violence being perpetrated by women, brutality by women does not merit the attention of feminist work (Africa, 2010). However, Africa (2010) disagrees and opines that with a dearth of research into this phenomenon, the domination of males over females is simply reinforced.

There are, however, new discourses that have emerged since the early 1990s, which initially gave an indication of opposing meanings of femininity. "Girl power" today reveals a new type of girl, one that is self-confident, energetic and liberated from the feminist view of girls (Gonick, 2006). Bhana (2011) also explains that the failure to maintain the concepts of submissive femininity and physical violence is very much a part of the collection of female behaviour.

2.5. Girls violence and schooling

A variety of factors contribute to girls involvement in violence at school. These range from gangs and gang activities, poverty, unequal race relations, substance abuse and unstable family life to violence as a way of resisting boys' domination. This researcher explores these and other factors that contribute to violence among girls.

Girls: victims of gender violence

According to Ringrose and Renold (2010), cited in Bhana (2011, p.67), 'gender norms often represent violence as a domain where boys realise their masculinity and traditional girls are considered helpless and nonchalant'. There persists a great imbalance in gender equality, brought about by how society views both sexes and their roles within society (Posel, 2005). Furthermore, these power differentials exist where boys are created to be dominant, powerful and controlling and girls to be submissive and subservient (Mirsky, 2001).

It is evident, through research, that females are prone to being abused by males, which leads to females mainly being the victims of gender violence (Tabane, 2014). According to one study (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, & Watts, 2005), women and girls are at the receiving end of violent behaviour all around the world. Other scholars concur with Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna, & Shai, (2010), stating that women and girls are blamed for any form of violence inflicted upon them, as this occurs when they do not follow the correct path, that of obeying instructions given to them by males. This leads to girls feeling helpless, in comparison to what the boys feel or experience and this is a growing problem (Bhana, 2012).

It is argued that in specific areas in schools, girls are sometimes unsafe and subject to being violated there (Leach & Mitchell, 2006). Girls in South Africa and abroad are fearful at school and many do not feel free to act autonomously in given situations and learn in a safe environment (Bhana, 2012). A study conducted in Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique on the nature and challenges of girls education has identified that violence is one of the main reasons for girls not being educated (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

Some scholars argue that gender “violence originates in the imbalance of power between males and females, in the gendered hierarchy and separation of task and in the socially accepted views of what constitutes masculine and feminine behaviour with the school being a prime site for the construction of gender identity and gender relations built on socially sanctioned inequalities” (Dunne et al., 2006; and Leach, 2008, p.30). It is very important to note that power is what produces gender differences (Kimmel, 2004).

A world report by the United Nations on violence against children shows that some men and boys present a violent and aggressive disposition to girls and women, as well as homosexuals, lesbians and bisexuals by raping, assaulting and abusing them (Prinsloo, 2006). WHO (2013) statistics show that, globally, one in every three women has been a casualty of a type of violent behaviour during her life by someone they know. The report adds that this is the number one human rights violation of the present day. This type of behaviour destroys lives, breaks societies apart and prevents development. Girls are also subject to degrading language and humiliated by untrue stories that are contrived about them by boys whom they have angered (Haffejee, 2006). Hence it is said that boys are responsible for making schools unsafe for girls, having escalated their exposure to violent acts (Bhana, 2005; Bhana, 2008). Maphalala (2014) argues that more girls than boys are victims of violence.

A study by Parkes and Heslop (2011) show that various forms of violence are experienced by both boys and girls, but girls are more vulnerable than boys. The National School Violence study of 2012 concurs with the assertion that violence is a common occurrence among secondary school learners, with female learners more vulnerable to various forms of violence (Burton & Leoschut, 2012). The research further states that 70% of schoolgirls reported being

victims of unwanted touching, 6.8% were verbally abused and 4.5% were hit, punched or slapped, with 90% of the perpetrators being male. Boys often seek to strengthen their status among their peers by showing dominance over girls (Dunne, et al., 2006; Leach, 2008; Leach & Machakanja, 2000). Bhana (2011) explains that it is conditioned in girls that they should listen to boys and do what they say, thus girls often passively accept certain forms of abuse without displaying much resistance.

Another aspect of the hierarchy of dominance in schools, which highlights that of males over females, is dating rituals that encourage girls to lower their ambitions in exchange for boys' approval. Ultimately, the culture of romance places boys in the centre of girls social lives (Chesney-Lind and Irwin, 2013).

Agency: girls doing violence

In contrast to many of the findings in the previous section, some scholars argue that girls are not just passive recipients of violence and abuse by men, boys, teachers and other boys (Batchelor, Burman & Brown, 2001; Bhana, 2008).

According to Petesch, Smulovitz and Walton (2005), it is now an accepted norm that an individual possesses a degree of behavioural freedom, or agency, and is not compelled to follow outdated mores that declare females as being submissive. Dunne et al., (2003) point out that 'while a series of gender mainstreaming manuals acknowledge that both women and men can be "victims" and "perpetrators" of gender-based violence, it is emphasised that women and girls are most at risk'. Research and reports relating to aggressive male behaviour have tended to concentrate on the male, with often biased results, as they ignore important issues such as homophobia and girl violence. At times, these issues have been approached with the masculine viewpoint that they are unacceptable and many researchers have brushed them aside (Burman, Batchelor, & Brown, 2001 and Leach, 2007). Violence is perpetrated by both male and female, and is not just about male power. Brutal behaviour is on the increase among females and needs to be dealt with in South Africa (Bhana, 2008). According to another study by Batchelor, Burman & Brown, (2001), statistics prove that violence among females is on the increase. The prime focus of research can no longer remain on males as

primary offenders, due to the low statistics of female miscreants, since it is becoming evident that females are increasingly becoming involved in violent behaviour within their communities.

Snyder (2005) confirms this in his research, conducted in the US over a number of years, in which he discovered that more females were being charged and arrested due to violent acts and instigations than in previous years (Snyder 2005). It seems that some girls are acting out what they know to be the norm, based on their everyday experiences (Schaffner, 2007).

In an international study, most girls interviewed explain such behaviour as a way of life that helps them deal with conflict (Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, 2001). They are ready for all types of situations and are unafraid, as they see their potential actions as defence mechanisms (Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, 2001). Jewkes and Morrell (2012) argue that just as there are several types of masculinities, so too are there several types of femininities and we should no longer simply view girls as victims or passive recipients of male dominance and violence, although it must be noted that male violence overall impacts negatively on girls and women. However, violence perpetrated by girls is frequently less obvious and corporal than violence by boys, and more difficult to identify (Leach, 2007 & Leach, *et al.*, 2014).

Studies by Dunne, *et al.*, (2006) and Leach (2008) highlight the fact that girls are not always submissive victims of violence, but often instigate gender violence. Female violence does not always manifest physically, as it does with boys, but mental damage inflicted through intimidation and cyber bullying is sometimes more dangerous. However, this often goes unnoticed because of public interpretations of the way girls are meant to behave (Bhana, 2008 & Bright, 2005). The image that we have of girls as victims of violence is hindering our knowledge about their schooling experiences and adding to the stereotypical societal viewpoint that girls are submissive to boys (Bhana and Pillay, 2011). It is not normally a behavioural characteristic of girls to be violent. Rather, it is a female characteristic to be nurturing, so when they are violent, they are branded as pathological (Bhana, 2008).

Female aggression is linked to intimate partner violence (Shamu, Gevers, Mahlangu, Shai, Chirwa, & Jewkes, 2016). It can be explained in many different ways such as: ‘insulting their family’ (particularly their mother), ‘stealing their boyfriend’, ‘betraying their trust’, ‘showing a lack of respect’, or even ‘gossiping about them’ (Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, 2001). Normally the perpetrator lacks self-esteem and needs to feel good about herself, so she abuses others in order to show how strong she is to others within the school — and thus gains a reputation (Phillips, 2003).

Girls tend to use covert forms of violence, either by inciting rumours or making quiet threats, however, most will not overtly threaten anyone or fight. This keeps their reputation intact and creates the benefit of the doubt if they are reported, thus maintaining their status as victims and not perpetrators in the eyes of society (Bhana, 2008; Bright, 2005). However, according to Bhana (2011) and Bright (2005) liberal girls don’t necessarily worry about ‘traditional girl behaviour’ and fight like boys do, even displaying pride in their exploits. Girls tease, name call, verbally abuse, humiliate and belittle other girls, including physically assaulting them (Bhana, 2011). Girls may even use violence as a tool and think that it is acceptable in achieving an end result.

The majority of fights and violence experienced among girls is over boys and boyfriends, with girls fighting each over them (Bhana, 2011). Sex and girls involvement in sex is often used as a tool of power by girls over other girls. They compete among themselves for the attention of boys by changing their appearance to make themselves more sexually appealing than other girls (Butler, 1990 and Bhana, 2011). Bhana (2011) argues that the need to look good and stay slim, in comparison to other girls, is hard and painful work. It is loaded with the anxiety of perhaps not being accepted if you don’t look a certain way.

In research conducted by Bhana (2011, p.73), a participant states that ‘everything is about boys’ and that ‘girls actively participate in defending their sexual turf through gossip, rumour and violence’. Their ‘sexual investment in boyfriends’ is powerful and securing a boyfriend is ‘an important indicator of heterosexual success’, with ‘the “competition for boys, between girls”, resorting to physical fights to deal with a competitor’ (Bhana, 2011, p.73). In her

study, a girl physically assaulted another girl who had kissed her boyfriend. When it was reported, the perpetrator said violence was necessary in order to show authority (Tasca, Zatz and Rodriguez, 2012).

Chesney-Lind and Irwin (2013) claim that while mention has been made about young, violent girls over the past decade, we have now been made aware, through the media, of the female gangster, who has become every bit as dangerous as her male equivalent. Feminist research reveals that violent girls are regarded as being more vindictive than violent boys (Bhana, 2008). As girls seek to level the playing field with their male counterparts, in terms of gender equality, there is the risk that they will adopt the violent behavioural patterns of boys (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013).

Girls and homophobia

A study conducted by Bhana (2015) reveals that some learners are critical of homosexuals and argue that they do not belong in schools. Name calling is conducted by boys who are traditionally taught that they are the dominant gender and do not tolerate homosexuals (Birkett & Espelage, 2014). Teachers identified naming and shaming as the primary expression of homophobia within schools, with slurs deployed as a way of isolating or demeaning homosexual learners (Bhana, 2015).

Sixty-nine percent of learners who participated in their study repeatedly heard derogatory jargon from other learners about lesbians and gays (Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon, & Howell, 2009). The report stated that LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) learners were more likely than non-LGBT learners to report violence in schools, and a high percentage were victims of physical and emotional abuse because of how other learners perceived them and/or believed rumours about them (Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon, & Howell, 2009).

In the same study, learners from different public high schools, who were regarded as, or branded as, LGBT were considerably more likely than their heterosexual peers to have been

abused or hurt and were even more likely to skip school because they felt unsafe (Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon, & Howell, 2009), because of this, they were more likely to partake in fights, carry weapons or join gangs in school (Grossman, Haney, Edwards, Alessi, Ardon, & Howell, 2009).

A school survey compared gay, lesbian and bisexual learners to their peers and the results revealed that sexual minority students attempted suicide and would rather stay at home because of harassment (Gruber & Fineran, 2007, p10). It further showed that lesbian girls were more harassed than heterosexual girls (Gruber & Fineran, 2007). Some heterosexual girls attack and abuse gays and lesbians, both physically and emotionally, as this is a method used to wield power and authority over this group of learners (Renold, 2002).

Girl and gangs

Cliques or groups of young people who gather together sometimes become involved in criminal activity on a minor level. However, these groups could join more formal structures that are organised by adults, may have links with organised crime and be regarded as gangs (Ward & Cooper, 2012). This section looks at girls involvement in gangs and how this differs to that of boys.

Up until recently, there has been a lack of research carried out on girls in gangs, as most studies focused on boys' involvement with gangs. However, emerging research is beginning to look at the experiences of both boys and girls involved in gangs (Bell, 2009). Previous research found that boys and girls joined gangs for similar reasons; they grew up in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, were exposed to gangs, had gang members in their families, and/or problems within the family (Bell, 2009). Recent research conducted by Anderson (2009) reveals prevailing violent forms of behaviour by girls who also partake in gangsterism. This has been termed female masculinity. These girl gangs are dangerous and seldom have a high regard for life, as they inflict violence and sow fear within their communities (Martinez, Hilbert and Woodard-Meyers, 2013).

Tabane (2014) examines the boundaries of school violence, taking into account the influences, both inside and outside of the learning institution, that affect girls ability to learn. He notes that violence within the school includes physical attacks, while influences from outside include community violence, such as gangs and gang violence, which spill over into the school (Tabane, 2014).

According to a recent study conducted in the US (Forster, Grigsby, Unger & Sussman, 2015), a growing number of girls are involved in gangs. Other global studies also discovered that the number of girls in gangs is almost the same as boys in terms of gang membership, but girls remain in gangs for a shorter period of time compared to boys. The pinnacle time frame is the early years of high school (Zahn, et al., 2008). It has been found that gangs assist girls with protection and retaliation (Miller, 2001). Interestingly, girls involved in gangs with boys are more violent than if they were in an all-girl gang (Zahn, *et al.*, 2008).

Mean girls are a relatively new concept and they resort to violence to make a name for themselves (Chesney-Lind & Irwin, 2013). In addition, Gasa (2009) demonstrates that these acts are not only physically violent but also involve emotional abuse with verbal aggression. Leach (2007) draws attention to the negative impact that gossiping and spreading rumours may have on girls and that 'ostracising girls constitutes a subtle form of aggression' (Leach, 2007, p.5). 'Some girls are also provoked' and 'they use their bodies to demonstrate and create hierarchies of power' (Bhana, 2011, p.70). 'Some girls are also pushed in corridors and not permitted to pass; they are bumped on the stairs and pushed out of the queue in the tuck shop line, by other girls (Bhana, 2011, p.71).

It must be noted that girls are not commonly known to be violent in schools but when they are, it is to protect themselves. It has also been found that young females sometimes have to be forceful in their retaliation, to prevent further intimidation and because the school authorities have let them down (Zahn, *et al.*, 2008). A participant in a recent study (Tabane, 2014) says that she fought at school only to defend herself.

Further research (Schaffner, 2007) focuses on 'girl-on-girl violence' and the notion is freely circulating that girls aggressive behaviour is causing an epidemic of violence and generating great public concern over young women's behaviour. Schaffner (2007) states that girls being involved in fights is not new and this issue is now in the spotlight due to recent studies being carried out. 'Violence against girls provokes girls violence' (Schaffner, 2007).

Poverty, race, substance abuse and unstable family background

Despite the fact that gender violence moves across class, race and ethnicity, poorer females are more susceptible to violence than those who are financially stable (Jewkes & Wood, 1997). This section examines how factors such as poverty, race, substance abuse and family life impacts on gender violence among girls in schools.

The bullying of girls by other girls is more of a mental torture for victims than being physically beaten (Bjorkqvist et al., 1991; Talbott, 1997, cited in Bright, 2005). In separate studies, the scholars Barker (2005), Bhana (2008) and Morrell (2001) argue that violence not only occurs because of poverty but increases with clashes relating to race and class issues. It is revealed that victims of violence are usually learners who are viewed within the school and community as being different, either in appearance or status (Tabane, 2014). In an ethnographic study of low-income girls, Zahn, *et al.*, (2008) report that girls fight because they have no other alternative. However, another study conducted by Batchelor, Burman, & Brown, (2001) finds that a group of girls interviewed engage in fights so that they can establish a reputation.

Other factors that impact on girls engagement in violence include a breakdown in the family, church and/or community. This has, for many years, been responsible for violence among male youth, but it is catching up to female youth as well (Anderson, 1999). Tasca, Zatz and Rodriguez (2012) add that violence is perpetrated by the youth after they have witnessed violent behaviour in their homes or the abuse of illegal substances such as drugs and alcohol. This affects girls as well and impacts upon their participation in violent acts.

Gender violence: role of teachers and school

For years, both teachers and learners have been confronted by incidents of violent behaviour in their schools (Singh & Steyn, 2014). Learners, teachers and management staff may experience intimidation and fear at school (Bemak & Keys, 2000). According to the South African Council for Educators (SACE, 2011), a tremendously significant discovery and observation has been a rise in the number of teachers attacked by learners.

Teaching time becomes limited and decreases when teachers spend most of allocated lesson times trying to control situations that include violence, both inside and outside of the classroom. This has led to some parents taking their children out of some schools and placing them in others (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011). It is believed that teachers and school management teams spend more time dealing with issues of violence and trying to prevent fights in school than actually teaching (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011).

However, some authorities and governments are aware of the non-reporting by schools of violence at their institutions (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011). Educational leaders may be subscribing to deceitful actions that place learners in danger and, if this is the case, then they have a monumental crisis on their hands (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011). This issue is not just a problem for one set of leaders but affects everyone involved in schools, education and the community that they belong to (Crews, Crews & Turner, 2011).

Furthermore, Dunne, et al., (2006) and Leach (2008) add that the actions and activities of a school day comprise unambiguous and unspoken rules, and orders that are designed to control certain behaviours and dispense unequal power. The latter refers to boys asserting dominance over girls, which further enhances gender stereotypes and inequality that begins in the home and filters through to school. Connell (2002) also argues that schools produce and reproduce gender inequalities that incite gender violence. George (2001) points out that it is the responsibility of girls to look after domestic issues in school, such as the cleaning and upholding of the classroom and the school, while teachers and boys spend their time working or playing. George (2001) adds that boys are given the freedom to sit where they want to in

class, whereas girls are allocated their seats. This, along with being given domestic chores in school and specific teaching materials, reconfirms the position of girls as inferior to boys and this has a deleterious effect on their confidence at school (George, 2001). Studies have revealed similarities in South African schools and that deeply rooted gender roles and power dynamics in given social settings are replicated at school (Bhana, 2012 and Leach & Humphreys, 2007). Gender violence in schools is multifaceted and may take different forms that display power imbalances between males and females (Ivinson & Renold, 2013).

2.6. What can be done to address girls violence in school?

Many projects and programmes at schools in South Africa and elsewhere are geared towards increasing and promoting gender equality and awareness among learners. This is achieved by reducing or preventing violence. However, while it appears that many of these school initiatives target both girls and boys as participants of such intervention work, not many programmes are directed specifically at girls.

South Africa has become internationally known for its fairly superior performance with regard to gender equality (UN, 2013). Since 1994, the country has introduced laws that deal directly with and aim to tackle issues of gender, and approved international policies that focus on gender issues (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013). While it is evident that government continues to work towards gender equity; by introducing new policies aimed at dealing with gender inequality in schools, the workplace and society — it is imperative that people within society support and put into practice these policies (Millennium Development Goals Report, 2013).

A report combining studies conducted in three African countries reveals that ‘The Stop Violence Against Girls in School’ project, which is financially backed by the UK’s Big Lottery Fund for a period of five years, aims to empower girls and allow them to enjoy and participate in their education in an environment that is safe and secure for learning (Parkes & Heslop, 2011).

Another project that is in place in schools is Zero Tolerance for Violence, which metes out strict and harsh punishment for small offences, in the hopes that this will prevent the occurrence of more serious incidents (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010).

2.7. Conclusion

It is clear that gender violence is of huge concern in South African schools (Bhana, 2013; Blaser, 2008; & Tabane, 2014). However, an emerging debate is who the victims are and are girls becoming more violent than their boy counterparts within the school context?

This chapter has reviewed literature on gender, girls and violence in and around schools in South Africa and globally. It highlights the fact that many young women and girls are often vulnerable and regarded as passive victims of violence by men and boys at school. However, research also reveals that many young women and girls perpetrate and engage in violence at schools, and express themselves (and display their femininity) in violent and aggressive ways (Anderson, 2009; Batchelor, Burman & Brown, 2001; Bhana & Pillay, 2011; Bhana, 2008; Dunne, Humphreys & Leach, 2006; Leach, 2008; Leach & Humphreys, 2007; Macdonald 1991; & Mirsky, 2003).

Although significant work has been done by this researcher on violence in schools, where it was found that some boys dominate and some girls are subordinate to them, and new literature is emerging about girls displaying violent behaviours in schools, there is still the need for continued research in this matter, so as to breach the gender gap in schools. This study aims to add to the emerging body of literature.

In theme one of this chapter, I explain that violence is a slippery concept and although it has no specific definition, it is clear that violence takes so many different forms and always has negative effects on the individual or victim. In theme two of this chapter, a definition of gender violence is provided. Theme three presents an in-depth discussion on gender violence

in schools and its effects on boys, girls and teachers. Research on such gender violence must include studies of aggressive behaviour in learners' homes and communities, as there is a link between the two, which makes them interchangeable. This has been acknowledged in different studies in various timeframes.

Theme four provides a discussion on girls violence and constructions of femininity, by highlighting the necessity of more research centred on girls (Bhana, 2008; & Africa, 2010). 'Girl power' focuses on the modern girl as being different. She is self-confident, lively and liberated from old views on how girls should behave (Gonick, 2006).

In theme five, issues surrounding girls violence and schooling are examined. They include: girls as victims (showing the dominance of males over females and the subordination of girls to males); girls as agents (the new type of girls, as stated by Gonick, 2006, enact acts of self-agency, by perpetrating or performing violent acts, particularly in the school context); girls and homophobia (the relationship between girls and lesbians or gays in schools and how learners with different sexual orientations are treated and accepted in schools); girl gangs (the involvement of girls in gangs and their experiences, as compared to boys); and poverty, race, substance abuse and family life and how teachers and schools are involved in addressing the issue of gender violence in schools.

Then in theme six, this study examines what can be done to address girls violence in schools and looks at different programmes being employed around the world to assist with violence in schools. Violence has an impact on schools and learners' lives, and since most children spend a great deal of time at school, where they are educated and learn to socialise, the institution has a vital role in combating violence (SACE, 2011). Yet research has shown that some teachers spend more time dealing with violence within the classroom and not enough time on teaching, while other studies reveal that some schools ignore the violence within and even reinforce gender violence at schools.

In most of the literature to date, it has become clear that even though men and boys can also be victims of gender violence, girls are most at risk (Dunne, *et al.*, 2003). However, current research shows that girls are not just passive victims of violence but beginning to perpetrate violence themselves (Gonick, 2006). Although some researchers indicate that female violence cannot be compared to aggressive male behaviour, as both often take different forms, ignoring it is detrimental and helps to reinforce stereotypes of gendered violence (Africa, 2010; Bhana, 2011; & Jackson, 2006).

The next chapter looks at the research design, methodology and methods used to analyse the data obtained from the participants in this study.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the roles that some girls occupy, with regards to gender violence and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools. The previous chapter reviewed literature, both local and international, and it became evident that schools were sites of gender related violence (Morrell, 2002). Violence is perpetrated by both male and female learners and it needs to be dealt with in South Africa (Bhana, 2008). We should no longer simply view girls as victims or passive recipients of male dominance and violence, although it must be noted that male violence overall impacts negatively on girls and women (Bhana, 2008; Bhana & Pillay 2011). This chapter presents the research design and methodology that was used, in order to gather data for the study and highlight and understand the diverse views and experiences of girls violence in a high school in Durban. This chapter will at first discuss the research approach utilised. Thereafter, the research paradigm in which the study is positioned is described and discussed. The next section examines the research style employed in the study. The research site is then discussed and then the sampling methods used to select the participants. Thereafter, the methods used to collect the data are examined, as well as the data analysis. Lastly ethical considerations, issues of trustworthiness and credibility and limitations of this study are discussed.

3.2. Qualitative Research Approach:

This section discusses the research approach used for the study. A qualitative approach was utilised in order to find out why girls react to violence in the way that they do and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools and in the community. 'All research is different and has its own precise intention. Research could be looked at as trying to: gain awareness with a phenomenon, portray accurately the characteristics of a particular individual, situation or group, to decide the regularity with which something occurs or with which it is associated with something else and to test a hypothesis of a causal relationship between variables' (Kothari, 2004, p2).

Methodology refers to ways of gathering, organising and studying the data closely (Polit & Hungler, 2004). Methodology is used when a researcher sets out to probe a variety of realities that may open up during a study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). According to Johnson and Christensen (2004, p1): 'There are currently three major research paradigms in education; they are quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed research.'

This study is located within a qualitative framework. Qualitative researchers investigate the individual experiences and measures of the participants that are studied (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). According to Bryman (2012), qualitative research methods are concerned with understanding how people perceive and interpret their social reality. Hence, qualitative investigation is ideal for this study, as the investigator aims to understand how girls social interactions influence their views and understanding of gender and violence.

'Qualitative research is characterised by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which generate words, rather than numbers, as data for analysis' (Brikci, 2007 p2). Qualitative methods are more appropriate as they focus on describing and understanding the phenomena in the context where they occur (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), in this case the school context. This framework also allowed the researcher to understand how individuals within a community give meaning to their gendered and violent identities. The main aim of qualitative research is to understand, realise and comprehend the experiences, feelings and views of study participants, while trying to answer set research questions in order to gain awareness of a phenomenon, in this case gender violence (Brikci, 2007). This makes qualitative research different to quantitative research, whereby the researcher is detached from the world being studied. I am interested in the participants' views on gender violence and how they engage with it or avoid it on various levels.

Creswell (2008, p. 82) states that 'qualitative research is defined as an enquiry process of understanding social relationships by focusing on their meanings and interpretations'. This study uses a qualitative framework to investigate the experiences and views of girls with regard to gender and violence and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist violence in schools. Not only does this paradigm focus on the views of girls with regard to

violence but it first looks at understanding the phenomena of gender violence. It probes its components, which consist of violence perpetrated by girls or boys — against the opposite gender or the same sex — at school, within the community and at home. It is suggested by some that interpretivists prefer qualitative methods, such as interviews and observation, since this allows them to comprehend how people construe the world around them (Willis, 2007). With this in mind and the use of the paradigm chosen, this research sets out to understand and interpret how girls view the world around them, in light of gender and violence. This approach is ideally suited to this study, since it is small scale, with just 30 participants.

3.3. Interpretivist Paradigm:

The interpretivist paradigm focuses on the perspective of human beings and how participants construct and deal with situations and understand and interpret various situations (Cohen, et al., 2007). This paradigm afforded this researcher an understanding of the gendered and violent realities of girls selected for the study. Interpretivism also focuses on understanding the world of the research participants, in order to make sense of what they say, feel and experience (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). The paradigm therefore provided me with an opportunity to explore and understand how some girls became victims of gender violence and how others both perpetrated and resisted violence at school, by being active agents who challenged harmful and unequal gender norms.

By using the interpretivism paradigm, which states that research is not only based on the ability to test something but rather aims to understand the issue or problem, this study set out to understand whether the participants' social realities impacted on their views of and involvement with violence. I aimed to understand if their upbringing influenced their decision to fight or be fought with. Further, by using this paradigm, this study attempted to interpret how the participants felt and what they experienced with regard to violence at home, in their community and, more specifically, at school.

3.4. Case Study Research Style:

This study is a methodical and detailed examination of a meticulous event in its circumstances in order to produce information (Rule & John, 2011). Case studies can be used to investigate a universal dilemma, crisis or concern within a restricted and focused background and can be used to produce notional awareness, either in the form of grounded theory that arises from the case study itself or in developing and testing existing theory with reference to the case (Rule & John, 2011). I used a case study methodology in order to investigate issues of vulnerability and agency among a group of high school girls, particularly with regard to gender violence in schools. Furthermore, a case study approach also allows the researcher to scrutinise a meticulous occurrence in immense detail, instead of looking at numerous events on the surface (Rule & John, 2011). This methodology will also allow the study to demonstrate how some girls challenge and refute unequal power relations and harmful gender norms, by being active agents (Gopaldass, 2012). Rich and vivid descriptions of events related (Cohen *et al.*, 2011) to gender violence will also be obtained and analysed.

3.5. Research Site: Chernova High School (pseudonym), Sydenham, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

The research site is situated in the province of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), South Africa. It is one of nine provinces and was known as Natal until its name was changed in the post-apartheid era. When a Portuguese expedition, led by the explorer Vasco da Gama, was sailing to the East in search of spices in the late 1400s, they anchored off the KZN coast on Christmas Day and named the territory Natal, after the Portuguese word for Christmas (Social Sciences, grade 5). Natal became a province on May 31, 1910. KZN's capital city is Pietermaritzburg and the largest city in the province is Durban. South Africa is governed by the African National Congress (ANC).



Fig 1: Map of South Africa highlighting KwaZulu-Natal

The research site is located in Sydenham, KZN. In January, 1850, David Sparks, accompanied by his wife, arrived at Port Natal from England. He was around 20 years old, energetic and determined to start a new life in a new country. He soon found work, but was not well paid and it was only thanks to the inexpensive food prices that he managed so well in his early years.



Fig 2: Map of Durban highlighting Sydenham

Sparks and his wife settled in the area now known as Sydenham. After selling his property, Sparks built them a seven-roomed brick house with a slate roof — a home thought of at the time as one of the best and most modern in the colony. After it was complete, Sparks threw a housewarming party and people came from all parts of Natal. It was at this party that

Sydenham got its name. George Spearman suggested three names: Sparksville, Parkville and Sydenham. Sparks chose Sydenham and the homestead was called Sydenham House (Wikipedia, Retrieved 18:23, May 18, 2016).

At that time, Sydenham was not experiencing problems of drug and alcohol abuse. This is now of growing concern in the area, with bottle stores on many corners. Drug use is, further, a cause for alarm at many schools in the area, with learners having easy access to illegal substances, both in the community and in school. This issue was highlighted in the Crime Stats SA of 2015, which indicated that Sydenham was ranked sixth out of the 10 worst areas in KwaZulu-Natal for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Drug related crimes increased by 590 cases between 2005 to 2015 (Crime Stats SA, 2015), with 329 drug related crimes dealt with by police in 2005, compared to 919 in 2015 (Crime Stats SA, 2015). Crime is also an issue of concern, with Sydenham ranking high on the Crime Stats for SA in 2015 (seventh in KZN for carjacking and second for public violence) (Crime Stats SA, 2015).

Sydenham, a once predominantly coloured area, is now regarded or identified as a diverse community in that; coloureds, Indians, Africans and Muslims currently reside here (Gopaldass, 2012). Within the area are a variety of schools (for all educational levels), business ventures and eating houses. Anderson (2009) points out in her study that Sydenham has been associated with a more elite group of coloureds as compared to Wentworth, a former and still predominantly coloured area in the South Durban basin. She also highlights that Sydenham residents are predominantly home owners who occupy permanent, stable and professional jobs (Anderson, 2009). The participants in this study live in different parts of Sydenham but attend the same high school.

3.6. Sampling Method: Purposive Sampling and Snowball Sampling

In purposive sampling, Bernard (2002) and Tongco (2007) highlight that data gathering is a vital activity, as information gathered is destined to add to the understanding of a set problem. In the case of this study, it is girls views and experiences of gender and violence.

With the aim of investigating how girls accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist violence in schools and in their community, 30 girls were selected from the Sydenham community. They were all aged 13 and attend the same high school. Thus the sampling was purposive, as I knew what I was looking for — girls aged 13 in a high school in the community, and a sample size of 30. 30 learners were chosen from Chernova High School. There were coloured and black learners at the school. Race was not a criteria in selecting the participants and the girls came from a mixed – class background of both working and middle class families. There were girls of all races that attended the high school. However, only coloured and black girls were willing participants as the Indian girls were reluctant to get involved. Reasons for this was unknown. When participants agreed to become involved in the study, only black and coloured girls came forward through the use of the snowball technique. Indian girls did not accept the invitation.

Some of the participants lived in single-parent households. The breakdown of my participants was 21 coloureds and 9 black participants. Refer to the table on page 41 – 43.

Although the research site for this investigation is the community of Sydenham and not the school itself, all 30 participants attended the same school. Before any of the girls were approached as potential participants, I set up an appointment with the Chernova High School principal, in order to obtain his permission and inform him of the intentions of the study and what was required. After obtaining approval from the governing body, the principal allowed me to speak to each of the grade 8 classes to inform them of the study. Ten participants expressed interest in participating in the investigation. Eight were past students of mine in primary school and one had a parent who currently worked with me. This was only a third of the number of participants required, yet I began with the individual interview process, while continuing in my quest to obtain the other 20 participants required for the study. I then decided to use a different technique —*snowballing or chain referral sampling* — to obtain the remaining 20 participants.

Biernacki & Waldorf (1981) state that this type of sampling obtains participants for the study through referrals made to others, who are of interest to the research, by existing participants. Due to the lack of contact time with the girls during the day, I was not able to contact the

remaining 20 participants directly. Therefore, the snowball sampling technique was employed to obtain the rest of the participants. With this sampling method in mind, I used eight of the 10 participants that had volunteered and asked them to help recruit 20 more participants. The participants spoke to their friends, informing them of the purpose of the interviews and participant numbers gradually increased until the target of 30 was reached. I personally knew the eight participants who recruited the remaining 20, as I had been their teacher in primary school the previous year, in Grade 7. They also walked past the primary school, which I work in, each day to get to and from their high school. These girls, further, either had a parent working with me (one participant) or their siblings (five participants) were currently attending the primary school that I taught at. These eight participants spoke to the girls in Grade 8, who lived in the community and who were aged 13. They then obtained consent forms from and gave them to the new participants. Once the forms were signed, the first participants brought these girls, with their signed consent forms, to my school and interview times were arranged.

One of my challenges was the issue of how long it took to obtain my participants. It was difficult to get 30 girls willing to participate in the study and the process was more time-consuming than anticipated. However, the snowballing method was highly advantageous for obtaining the rest of the participants needed for the investigation.

Of the 30 participants, I had taught 19 of them while they were at primary school. Of the others, four were in my primary school but had arrived at the school in Grade 7, which I do not teach, and the remaining seven girls were either new to Sydenham or had attended neighbouring primary schools.

This study was also part of a bigger project being conducted, which had its own requirements and the age criteria was one of these requirements. Another reason was that girls aged 13 had just entered Grade 8 and had their high school journey ahead of them, and might therefore have valuable insights into the phenomenon of gender and violence within their school and wider community. Further, this sample section was chosen, because although gender and violence in schools was already well documented in the literature, this age group (13 year

olds) had not been represented. This was an area that I wanted to explore, especially in relation to girls, gender and violence.

The Sydenham area was chosen, since I teach in the area at a local primary school and it would therefore make it easier for me to interview my sample group. Further, although studies have been conducted on gender and violence in schools, there was a need for an investigation in a coloured area, as not much work had been done on coloured identities in South Africa (Anderson, 2010).

I selected girls and not boys because there was often a stigma attached to gender violence that suggested that when girls or boys fought, a biological reason lay behind it. However, I was not convinced and considered their behaviour a construct that was not based on biological make-up but on interactions with other people. These arguments are also echoed by Leach (2003). I also opted to use girls as my participants because I wanted to explore and gain deep insights into girls' involvement in violence in and around school. On a personal level, as a male teacher, I had observed the behaviour of girls in my primary school and seen how some girls used violence to solve problems, and there were some who were not afraid to defend themselves, in violent ways. Further, I had witnessed that some young female learners were not afraid of challenging teachers and fellow learners. I wanted to understand their views and if their social interactions had an effect on their constructions of violent behaviour.

3.7. Participant Biographies

The table below presents the demographic background of each participant. All were girls aged 13, who attended Chernova High School (pseudonym). Girls who participated in the study were also given pseudonyms in order to protect their identity and right to privacy.

Participant	First Language	Race	Who do they live with?	Do their parents work?
1. Kelly	English	Coloured	Mother and two	Yes

			sisters	
2. Penny	English	Coloured	Mother and father	Yes
3. Jade	English	Coloured	Mother and brother	Yes
4. Daniella	English	Coloured	Mother, father and sister	No
5. Janice	English	Coloured	Mother and three sisters	Yes
6. Mandy	English	Black	Mother, father and granny	Yes
7. Melanie	English	Black	Mother, brother and granny	No
8. Nerissa	English	Coloured	Mother, father and sister	No
9. Angela	English	Black	Mother, two sisters and brother	No
10. Jenny	English	Coloured	Mother and father	Yes
11. Michelle	English	Coloured	Mother, brother and sister	Yes
12. Tatum	English	Coloured	Mother, father and sister	No
13. Kim	English	Black	Mother and three sisters	No
14. Nicole	English	Black	Mother	Yes
15. Kendell	English	Coloured	Aunt and uncle	Yes
16. Kourtney	English	Coloured	Mother, father and sister	Yes
17. Shandra	English	Coloured	Mother and granny	Yes
18. Kendra	English	Coloured	Mother and father	Yes
19. Carmen	English	Coloured	Mother and two brothers	Yes
20. La'verne	English	Coloured	Mother, father and sister	Yes
21. June	English	Coloured	Mother and granny	Yes

22. Jody	English	Coloured	Mother and father	Yes
23. Pam	English	Black	Mother and brother	Yes
24. Ann	English	Black	Mother, father, sister and granny	Yes
25. May	English	Coloured	Mother and two sisters	Yes
26. Leana	English	Coloured	Mother and father	No
27. Lauren	English	Coloured	Mother and brother	No
28. Linda	English	Black	Mother, father and sister	Yes
29. Jenna	English	Coloured	Mother and brother	Yes
30. Marese	English	Black	Mother, father and sister	No

3.8. Methods of Data Collection: Individual Interviews and Focus Group Discussions

In using qualitative methods, it means that I will be working with spoken words and language, and not statistics, when the required information is collected (Brikci, 2007). A scholar using qualitative research methods can use a variety of techniques to collect data, including field notes, interviews, telling one's personal story, observation, document analysis and audio/video recordings (Kaplan & Maxwell, 2005). Interviews and focus group discussions are some of the more popular and frequent ways of collecting data (Brikci, 2007). An interview is a conversation between two people in which one, known as the interviewer, asks the other, known as the participant, questions in the hope of gathering information on a certain topic so that they can gain an understanding from the participant of their views, experiences and understandings of the topic (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). In order to gather information and gain an understanding about the views, experiences and opinions of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007), I went into the field and conducted interviews that were semi-structured (Maree, 2007). This allowed me to spend time with the participants, as required by qualitative research (Creswell, 2008). Interviews were the main source of data for the study; therefore I conducted 30 individual interviews and 10 focus group discussions with

groups of six, and because the medium of instruction is English, both the individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in English.

Semi-Structured Individual Interviews

Interviews bear a resemblance to everyday conversations, although they are purposeful in their attempt to gather information for the researcher (Brikci, 2007). They also vary from day-to-day conversations in that researchers are concerned about carrying out these “conversations” in the most precise way possible, in order to ensure consistency and legitimacy in their studies (Brikci, 2007). Nieuwenhuis (2007) states that, regarding qualitative research, the reason for conducting interviews is to view the world from the participant’s perspective. According to Mason (2002), interviews involve an exchange of dialogue between the researcher and study participants, whereby meanings and understandings are created. Semi-structured interviews are usually conducted over a short period of time, as compared to the other methods of data collection, and employ set questions that are prepared beforehand (Maree, 2007).

Although some researchers employ semi-structured or individual interviews to authenticate or confirm data collected while using other methods (Maree, 2007), I disagreed and used this method first. Following the individual interviews, I then placed my participants into groups for focus group discussions. However, another reason for doing this was time constraints and I had begun my individual interviews, as the first 10 participants were using the snowballing technique to recruit the remaining 20 participants for my full sample of 30.

Before I could conduct any interviews, I had to obtain consent (Nieuwenhuis, 2007) and two forms were handed to each participant; one for her parent or guardian and one for her, and both parties had to read and sign their form. Once this was achieved, the first interview was arranged and used as a pilot, in which equipment, including a dictaphone and cell phone (utilised as backup), plus my methods, were tested. I ascertained how I could probe participants for further information where necessary. Using this technique at the first interview, I discovered that participants didn’t understand the link between ‘violence’ and ‘fights’.

Interviewer: *Are there any forms of violence in your area?*

Kelly: *No, there are no fights.*

Later on during the interview, the question was asked again but the word 'violence' was changed to 'fights'.

Interviewer: *Are there any fights in your area?*

Kelly: *Yes. There are many fights in my area.*

After the pilot, some of the questions were adjusted and others added to the interview schedule (see appendix). Besides introductory personal questions, the interview schedule comprised 38 questions. It was planned that each interview would take approximately 30 minutes. Some, however, lasted just over 20 minutes and others about 45 minutes. They were all audio recorded and appeared similar to holding a conversation (Brikci, 2007). They differed in this latter aspect, however, in that I was searching for data and therefore needed to keep a record of the interview for analysis (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). The data collected was recorded on tape. The responses were not written down, as this would have taken too much time, stopped the flow of conversation between myself and participant, and possibly have led to the participant becoming distracted (Maree, 2007). By virtue of the interview being recorded, the participant received my full attention and I was able to concentrate on what she was saying. I thus played an active role in the interview process and could therefore pay full attention to my participants and probed for further information at the right time (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

With the consent of the parents and the agreement of the participants, interviews were scheduled for either after school or on Saturdays, in order to avoid interrupting teaching and lesson times. The interviews were conducted in vacant classrooms in my primary school in Sydenham. The classrooms were easily available and participants were comfortable in this space as they had been past students of the school. They were, therefore, familiar with the surroundings and this helped them to feel secure. After the interviews, participants were given a lift home. Some of them had said they were afraid to walk home and past the park at

a certain time, as boys and girls who had a reputation for interfering with learners often lurked there.

Kendra: *Sir mmmmm, would you mind dropping me off at home?*

Researcher: *Sure, no problem. Is everything okay?*

Kendra: *Yes sir, it's just that after three, the park by my house fills up with groups of boys and girls, and I don't like walking past them.*

Researcher: *Why? Do they interfere with you?*

Kendra: *Yes. The girls like to tease me and throw things at me, while the boys stand there and laugh.*

Again, time became an issue during the study, as participants sometimes cancelled their interview, as they were concerned about the time they would finish. Another challenge was the availability of the participants. Some of them did not appear for their interviews, as they had made other plans or were busy at home, with their boyfriends or their families.

The challenges that I faced varied from the uncertain to the unknown. It was the first time I had conducted interviews with such a large sample size and was unsure of whether I would be able to fulfil the schedule. Further, being a male teacher interviewing young coloured girls, I wasn't sure how they would respond to me. Would they open up about their views on violence and experiences of acts of aggression, or would they see me as merely being a male and say as little as possible. In one of the interviews, a participant clearly had a problem with the unfair treatment by males on females. It was evident that she was uneasy and may have even felt intimidated by my presence and even some what suspicious of my intentions and in some of her responses, made it known that she viewed me as just a male who could be colluding with other males against females:

Marese: You know how it is, as a male you are in charge of discipline in school.

Marese: The boys are always thinking that they are stronger than the girls. Don't you agree?

Marese: Boys can do anything and get away with it. The moment that girls do the same thing, it becomes a big issue. You see how lucky you boys are, sir?

I did not worry about the issue of race or being an Indian male who was interviewing coloured females, as I teach in a predominantly coloured area and have built rapport with learners. I am a well-established teacher, both in terms of my teaching style and race. I was however, concerned, as a male researcher, with interviewing young coloured girls and unsure about whether they would respond to me and want to participate. This also led to a major challenge faced in this study, that of the issue of power within the group, regarding both researcher and participants. It is already known, through the literature, that gender stereotypes notice differences and inequality between boys and girls, also that boys exercise power over girls, and that girls are developing power over other girls (Kimmel, 2004). Power relationships, however, are part of any research project (Whiteford & Wicks, 2006). I was already aware of the issue of power within the group, as the participants viewed me as an educator, so regarding me as an authoritative figure (Marese). In addition, he had taught them in primary school, so some of the participants were concerned that I would report back to their parents.

Kelly: Sir, whatever is discussed here, would you tell my mother?

Jade: Sir, I know you know my parents well. This would go back to them.

Mandy: Sir, this stays between us.

I knew that he had to break down the unequal power relationships that were indirectly being established or constructed. The participants either viewed me as a teacher, researcher or authority figure, so I attempted to be as non-threatening as possible and dressed in casual

clothes (jeans and a T-shirt or, on some days, shorts and flip-flops). In addition, I began sharing some low-key stories with participants, in order to gain their trust and confidence. I began the process by asking simple personal questions to illustrate his interest in them as individuals. This was effective because the participants were interested in my stories and some enthusiastically shared their own stories. This interaction established a rapport with participants (King & Horrocks, 2010).

Some of the interviews were shorter in length than the prescribed 30 minutes, as some participants did not have much to say, even after being probed and asked for clarity in certain areas. These participants were shy at the beginning of the interview and did not share much during the process. However, some of the interviews were highly engaging, as the participant had much to offer. These participants shared their thoughts, views and experiences of violence and were happy to be given this opportunity. These interviews were more like conversations, as they flowed between the researcher and participant. The order of questions set out in the interview schedule was not strictly adhered to, as unexpectedly rich data could be obtained while continuing to probe in certain areas and not following the predetermined schedule. This provided the researcher with unexpected insights, unobtainable when following a predetermined set of interview questions (Maree, 2007). By paying close attention and probing the responses of the participant, I was able to collect some rich data (Maree, 2007).

From these individual interviews, I planned my focus group discussions, based on the availability of participants and the outcome of their individual interview.

Focus Group Discussions

A focus group discussion is a type of interview with more than two members, conducted in a group setting, and the process does not follow asking questions and receiving answers (Cohen et al., 2011). The popularity of focus group interviewing is increasing in educational research (Cohen, et al., 2007). Robinson (1999) defines a focus group as an in-detail, unrestricted group conversation, which takes between one to two hours and explores a set of issues on a

predefined and limited topic. Focus groups are contrived settings that also bring together a specifically chosen sector of the population to discuss a particular topic, where the interaction with the group leads to data and outcomes being created (Cohen, *et al.*, 2007). A focus group discussion is an interaction between one or more researchers and a small number of individuals who are brought together to express their views on a specific set of open questions for the purpose of data collection (Welman *et al.*, 2005). There is the possibility that new information or different views could arise from such a discussion and these could strengthen an argument in a study Nieuwenhuis (2007).

By using focus group discussions, I can gain an understanding from a group of participants, instead of individually, as questions are answered and discussed within the group that lead to interactions by all members (Cresswell, 2013; King & Horrocks, 2010). These interactions or conversations may even elicit a response or trigger a memory about an event or incident that a participant may have forgotten about (Maree, 2007).

A focus group must consist of between six to 12 participants (Maree, 2007). With this in mind and a total in this study of 30 participants, it was decided to have 10 focus groups, comprising six participants. The key factor that determined the number of learners in each group was easy management and sustainability of discussions (King & Horrocks, 2010). Having six participants in a group held with the criteria establishing it as a focus group and allowed me to control it in terms of discussions and debates. So, due to the number of participants, certain participants were in more than one group, although each participant was in at least one group. It was estimated that each focus group discussion would be between 60 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Some, however, took less than an hour.

When deciding on the group members, I looked at individual interviews before choosing participants for each group. This was based on the following criteria:

1. Participants that felt comfortable to talk, were put in one group. They had the most to say and I felt that if put in groups where others were comfortable and confident to talk, it will help with their arguments and discussions.

2. Participants were placed in focus groups in the hope that they would get the opportunity to share more. I felt that some of these girls were intimidated by the outspoken few and were afraid to share how they felt.
3. Then after the first 5 focus groups, I selected the girls who spoke the most in each of the focus group and with them, formed a new focus group.

The first focus group discussion was also employed as a pilot and used to test the venue to ascertain whether the allocated classroom allowed participants to sit in a circle and engage in a discussion. It was also used to work out whether the focus group discussion would be able to gather sufficient data. Five out of the six girls came to this first discussion. One girl did not attend, due to personal reasons, and it was decided not to probe the matter further.

It was my first attempt at a focus group discussion and I was unsure of my approach. I was nervous and feeling overwhelmed, but did not want to reveal this to the participants. So, I prepared the venue beforehand and made it as comfortable as possible, placing the chairs at the back of the class and those for the participants were placed in a circle. Discussion kicked off with day-to-day issues, such as school and the latest film on circuit. Humour and personal stories were also used to break the ice (as in the individual interviews). This allowed the participants to settle into the discussion and get comfortable. Once the discussion began, it was noticed that two out of the five girls just sat and looked at me. They did not participate in the early stages of the discussion and kept laughing at the other participants. During the early stages, it was clear that the three other participants were happy to be part of the discussion and dominated it. They were eager to respond and helped to jog the memories of the other participants. As the interview progressed, the two quiet participants became more comfortable and when a question was asked about girls reasons for fighting, they began to share their views. This status quo continued for the rest of the discussion.

The rest of the focus group discussions went smoothly and a great deal more information was gathered than had been during the one-on-one interviews. The girls also helped each other remember certain events. From the first four focus groups, those participants who were eager and talkative were chosen to form a group of their own. Based on their own experiences and life situations, each participant understood the questions differently and answered them based

on their own personal experiences. They were also exposed to different forms of violence and this became evident, both through their responses in the individual interview and the focus group discussion.

One of the challenges of the focus group discussion was the transcribing of data, as it was difficult and time consuming. The individual interviews, were easy to transcribe, but the focus groups consisted of six people, including myself. While listening to the audio recording, I had to recognise the different voices. When I was unsure, I went back to the initial interviews to verify their voices.

Being an educator helped me with the focus group discussions. At times during the discussion, the participants went off-track or focused on one aspect for a lengthy period of time. There were moments when they felt strongly about certain issues, while others did not and this caused heated arguments between the girls, which needed to be controlled. However, if both sets of participants were making valued points, they were sometimes left to discuss their differences. I controlled the discussion by managing its flow and being neutral. I found this easy, as I achieve this on a day-to-day basis in the classroom. An educator must manage classroom discussions, yet allow pupils to be free to learn and express themselves in a safe environment.

While probing the participants, they opened up about their views on gender and violence, and the unfair treatment of girls and boys. Some of the participants felt that girls should be treated equally and, in so doing, should be allowed to fight if they wanted to, in order to defend themselves. This led to an argument between the participants as some of them felt that the status quo should remain.

Using focus group discussions allowed me to gather more data from more participants in a shorter period of time (Cohen, et al., 2007). It allowed me to ask the same questions of more participants and let them probe each other through their responses. Their responses led to arguments or debates with the group based on the question.

3.9. Data Analysis: Thematic Analysis

With qualitative research, a scholar needs to analyse the data received from participants during the collection process and look for patterns in the responses and then categorise them into themes (Cohen et al., 2011). This was derived by transcribing the interviews (focus group discussions and individual interviews) and reading the data obtained from these interviews, to recognise patterns and regularities (Maree, 2007; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The transcription of the data helped me become more involved in the study. This was done by listening to the audio tapes, transcribing them and then reading the transcripts of what the participants said (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Data analysis in qualitative research requires the organising of the data for analysis, which can only be done by putting it into themes, whereby patterns and similar information received from participants is analysed (Creswell, 2013). Thematic analysis is grouping data into themes and headings, and analysing data using different theories. A thematic analysis is a technique that considers all of the data, in order to identify common issues that recur, and identifies the main themes that summarise all the views collected (Brikci, 2007). This is the most common method for descriptive qualitative projects (Brikci, 2007). Using thematic analysis, the researcher first has to read and annotate transcripts and then identify themes (Brikci, 2007). This was done for this study and all data transcribed. The data was then grouped to form broad themes or categories. After this, it was read and re-read, and prepared for analysis.

It is important to note that in qualitative research and analysis of data, the interview transcripts should be typed word for word or verbatim style, and not rephrased to correct grammar or remove any profanity on the part of the participants (Struwig & Stead, 2013).

3.10. Issues of trustworthiness and credibility

In qualitative research, trustworthiness and credibility form the basis for conducting the study. The focus is on how credible and trustworthy the research is and if there is any truth to it (Struwig & Stead, 2013). To maintain trustworthiness in this study, the transcripts were

taken to the participants to confirm that what they said was what was transcribed, and that the researcher did not add any of his own words to change or contaminate the data. I did embark on this study having my own biases and subjectivities. However I entered the research site with an open mind and based my findings on my participants' responses and not my opinions. At first, I felt that girls are normally the victims of violence in schools and that they are picked on and beaten by boys, who exercise their power in school. However, through my studies and experiences, I have seen a change in these biases. The verification of this data helped to obtain the participants' trust. According to Cohen et al., (2011) a way to maintain trustworthiness in research is to ensure that the data received from participants and transcribed from the audio tapes, ready to be analysed, is accurate and has been obtained through either observation, discussion or interview, and not conjured up by the researcher. I tried to remain true to the verbatim data and ensured that I did not present biases interpretations of the data. Time was also a factor to ensure trustworthiness, as I gave myself enough time to collect all of the data from my interviews. This removed any pressure pertaining to the collection of the data. A timeframe of four months was set down for conducting all 30 individual interviews and the 10 focus group discussions.

Another way to maintain trustworthiness is triangulation, a process used to validate the study's findings, through the use of more than one method of data collection (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, in order to validate the data collected, both the individual, face-to-face, structured interviews and focus group discussions were employed. These were recorded, transcribed and presented to participants to validate, thus ensuring there was triangulation.

A final aspect taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the study was the personal interpretation of the researcher, based on my opinions or feelings, rather than on external facts or evidence received from participants. Being a male conducting research with females, on a topic such as girls violence, was at times difficult, as I had my own opinions and feelings about it, based on personal experiences and observations. However, in order to maintain trustworthiness and credibility in my study, I had to make sure that I was not biased towards my participants and my views did not affect my interpretation of the transcripts, or my analysis of the data. In order to achieve this, I asked my fellow peers in academia to read my interpretations of the data (with pseudonyms used to protect identities) to limit any possibly biased interpretations.

3.11. Ethical issues

Ethical issues were taken into account in order to preserve the dignity of participants and the university (Cohen et al., 2011). Therefore, firstly, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) for the larger project that this research formed a part of (see attachment). It was further required that my study obtain its own ethical clearance and this was approved by the UKZN Research Ethics committee, which guided me in terms of my research.

Once clearance was approved, I then went to a school of my choice to obtain consent from its principal to speak to the young female learners. The head was informed of the study and given a consent form to read and discuss with the school's governing body. Once permission was received, which took six months and I spoke to the girls, a select sample was identified. Then through the use of the snowballing technique, the target of 30 participants was reached. Each participant was then given a consent form to read and sign along with a form for their parent or guardian to read and sign. This informed the parent or guardian about the study and allowed them to either give their permission or not, to interview their daughter or ward. The consent forms also stated that the participants were free to withdraw from the study at any point and this would not be held against them.

With regard to confidentiality, the participants were informed that their identity and that of their school would be protected by the use of pseudonyms. It was ensured that they understood that what was discussed in the interviews would remain confidential. They were also informed that they could leave the study at any time were not forced to participate in it. They were also told at the beginning that if there were any issues that I felt required further attention, a counsellor or social worker would be informed.

Once the interviews were completed and the data transcribed, the data (both audio tapes and transcripts) would be stored for five years in a safe place.

3.12. Reflexivity

In retrospect, I found myself wanting to conduct research on the girls' views and experiences of violence, based on my own experiences of and interactions with girls as a male educator and authority figure. I grew up being exposed to stereotypes about males and females that stated that girls belonged in the kitchen and boys needed to display their strength and dominance, through the use of violence. This began to change when I started my journey in gender research and conducted this study. Gender equality is what we should be striving towards, yet it will not happen overnight. During my first year at school, gender inequalities were made known by simple things that took place every day, from the greetings of the learners to their separation during breaks. There was a space for boys to run wild and a space for girls to sit and eat. This was further portrayed at the end-of-year awards, when all of the prizes went to the boys. Yet, since then, there has been a change in academic power, with girls now taking most of the accolades.

When it came to interviewing the participants, I was unsure how they would respond to me being a male Indian teacher, although my experience of teaching in a coloured school did help in this matter, as I had built up confidence and rapport with learners throughout my teaching career. Although I was concerned that the participants would not open up to me, I wondered how I would maintain the standard of respect between educator and learner, after my research was concluded, if I did manage to achieve this.

I dealt with this matter firstly in my consent letters, by making my name known to parents and participants. Although these were formal documents, they were worded informally, with the removal of 'Mr David'. The participants appreciated this. Then, during the interviews themselves, I attempted to make the environment as informal as possible and I dressed casually, so that the participants would not associate me with the formal attire worn to school each day. I informed participants that they could call me by his first name at the interview venue, and this set the tone. The researcher and participants interacted with each other in a casual manner and this allowed the discussion to flow. This also broke down any unequal power dynamics that existed. I was also friendly and approachable and this made many of my participants feel at ease during the interviews.

Some participants, however, did not perceive me in a positive light and were not responsive or friendly towards me. I did not ignore them but did not force them to respond to questions if they did not wish to.

I attempted to make all of participants comfortable and tried to help them enjoy the interviewing process. When I conducted interviews after school, I would ensure that I provided snacks and refreshments, which the girls enjoyed and appreciated. I found that these small gestures made a difference, as many of the participants were comfortable and content, and happy to be part of the study.

3.13. Limitations

Time was a major factor and issue. I understood the reason for obtaining 30 participants. It allowed me to get thick, rich data that he was able to use in his study. However, this proved to be fairly problematic. Obtaining the required number of participants was difficult, as I was not continually in contact with the Grade 8s, as they attended high school and I was teaching at a primary school. Therefore, I was grateful for the use of the snowball technique.

Conducting the interviews was also a challenge, with regard to time, as the participants were not always available to conduct interviews, either after school or during the weekend. Concerning the focus group discussions, not all of the selected participants attended, so I either never had a complete group or had to continually change my groups. I was obliged to reschedule interviews, due to learners not attending or having requested a change.

Transcribing the individual interviews took a great deal of time as there were 30 of them, although they revealed thick, rich data. Transcribing the focus group discussions was also difficult, as I had to match the voices to the names.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined and discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. I utilised selected literature to help explain why I employed certain aspects in my study, such

as: the qualitative research approach and the paradigm for the study. I then explained my research site, with a brief history of the area of Sydenham. I then examined how I collected my data (which included interviews and focus group discussions) and how I analysed it. I finally looked at and explained the issues of trustworthiness, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The South African Schools Act (84/1996) articulates the right of every child to access quality education in an environment conducive to learning, which is safe, secure and free from violence. However there are concerns about increasing school violence, both locally and internationally (Hymel & Swearer 2015; Maphalala & Mabunda 2014). This could explain why there has been an increasing amount of research into school safety (Zuze, Reddy, Juan, Hannan, Visser & Winnaar, 2016). This is confirmed in The National Schools Violence Study, conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013:xi) in South Africa, which discovered that 22.5% of high school learners had been threatened with violence or been a victim of an assault, robbery and/or sexual assault at school during 2012. Schools are becoming unsafe zones for children and this is compromising the safety net that teachers and learners share, to allow them to work and learn in a safe environment. This sentiment is affirmed by Padaychee (2014) who expresses concern that the behaviour of schoolchildren is becoming increasingly uncontrolled and that schools are becoming incrementally more violent environments, where learners and educators alike are under attack. Schools are not the safe havens for learners that they are supposed to be (Pinheiro, 2006).

Research on gender and gender violence in schools tends to portray girls as victims of gender violence and boys as powerful and aggressive. However, emerging literature presents a different view. Current studies (Bhana, 2011; Bhana, 2008; and Batchelor, Burman & Brown, 2001) state that girls can no longer just be viewed as victims, although it must be noted that the participants involved in this study are of the opinion that male violence remains a problem, even though girls are closing the gap.

The aim of this study is to examine the ways in which some girls accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist violence in schools. Chapter three provides the key aspects of the research design and the methodology used, whilst this chapter gives an analysis of the data collected from the study participants, using focus group discussions and individual interviews

from 30 participants who are attending the same high school in Durban. The data has been analysed using feminist social constructionist theory. From this scholar's focus group discussions and individual interviews, the following themes were drawn up and discussed in this chapter through coding:

- Understanding violence.
- Girls and safety at school.
- Social pressures and expectations: Girls must be "prim and proper."
- "Certain boys they might physically harm the girl."
- Agency and resistance: Girls fight back.
- Violent girls at school: Why is this - the case?
- "Girls fight with each other over boys."
- Single-sex schooling versus co-educational schooling: The safer option.
- The girls perspectives: Stop the violence!

Throughout this chapter, insight from this study's participants is presented, verbatim style, in order to understand views on girls violence and identify if there is a change in behaviour or shift in gender power between girls and boys. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identities of participants, as well aliases for their school and the different roads in which the participants live.

The data obtained from participants and analysed in this study, backed by the literature, shows that gender violence is a problem at the girls school in Sydenham and within the local community. As most of the literature shows, boys are the perpetrators of such violence over girls and girls are the victims of power struggles, both in school and within the community (Tabane, 2014; Pinheiro, 2006; Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise & Watts, 2005; and Jewkes, Levin, Mbananga & Bradshaw, 2002). However, the analysis serves to demonstrate how the issue of gender violence in schools remains of great concern and girls can no longer just be viewed as innocent victims of such violence (Bhana, 2008), as they are now accommodating, negotiating, perpetrating and resisting violence in schools. The roles that girls play with regard to gender violence is highlighted by participants and analysed in this chapter. This is the focus of the study, as research is now emerging to validate the voices of

participants, revealing that girls are challenging gender stereotypes and power dynamics both at school and within their community.

The next section looks at violence and the participants' views and understanding of violence.

4.2. Understanding violence

O'Moore (2006) argues that it is astoundingly uncommon to unearth a definition of violence, especially when dealing with children. Hence it has become known by scholars that violence is a slippery concept (Levi & Maguire, 2002, cited in De Haan, 2008), as it does not possess a specific definition. Therefore, ambiguity prevails as to whether violence is restricted to physical abuse or includes verbal and psychological abuse (O'Moore, 2006). It is said that a clear-cut definition of violence is needed if advancement is to be made in the field of research into violence and gender violence (O'Moore, 2006).

Violence is always gendered (Bhana, 2013). Various studies have focused on gender violence in schools, with girls the most common victims of various forms of violence perpetrated by boys (Bhana, 2012; Bhana, 2011 & Pinheiro, 2006). However, through the voices of this study's participants and the supporting literature, it is emerging that girls are resisting such behaviour and not only fighting back, but initiating violence. According to a study conducted by Resko, et al., (2016, p4), participants state that "it seems like all the females I know are always fighting, always fighting about something, either some dude, or clothes, pair of shoes, what she just did, she rolled her eyes or bug you or all type of crazy stuff". This assertion is supported by Bhana (2011), as she writes that girls tease, name call, verbally abuse, humiliate and belittle other girls, including physically assaulting them.

Like the literature for this study, this research highlights the conflicting voices of the participants, with regard to the main offenders of violence. Some girls expressed the opinion that boys were still the main perpetrators of violent acts against girls and other boys, while

others said that girls offered resistance, thus indicating that not all girls were passive victims of gender violence. This becomes clear in the extracts below.

Kelly: *I will actually say both genders. Because both genders do, like ... kill and are violent in the community.*

Kim: *Boys in this sense.*

Tatum: *It could be boy and girl, but men mostly ... men mostly use violence to solve problems.*

Linda: *It's a tough one. As I said before, boys have been given the power by girls and therefore take advantage of girls. They start the fights and use their power over girls and other boys because of girls. However, there is a new force awakening. Girls are now also becoming a force to reckon with. They are no longer bowing down and allowing boys to walk all over them. They are fighting back and taking their power, and because of this they are becoming as dangerous as boys.*

Jody: *Girls and boys are the main perpetrators of these kinds of violence at ages [off] between 9 and 19. It depends on the situation. There are times when girls start the fights and there are times when boys start the fights. But I believe girls are becoming more violent and starting more fights.*

The participants point out that violence is no longer male dominated. Although it is evident, through the voices of the participants and echoed in the literature, that boys still dominate girls with regard to power and violence, girls are now resisting violent acts perpetrated by boys and are now engaging in aggressive acts themselves. Four out of the five participants mentioned in the extracts above openly acknowledge that both boys and girls perpetrate violence. This also demonstrates their awareness of the fact that girls, too, can be violent and are becoming in some cases, more dangerous than their male counterparts. This finding resonates with other studies (Bhana, 2011; Bhana, 2008; Batchelor, Burman & Brown, 2001), that argue that girls are not just passive recipients of violence and abuse by men, boys, teachers and other boys, but aggressive acts are perpetrated by both boys and girls, and violence among girls is on the increase.

Many of the participants in this study explain that not all girls occupy subordinate or inferior roles, by being victims of violence, because they are able to 'stand up' and they have 'started retaliating'.

Leana: I think girls ... are starting to realise that they are not the weak people that they were brought up to believe. Girls were brought up to believe that they belong in the kitchen and that they must serve men and also take what they dish out. I don't think that applies anymore, as girls are fighting back. They stand up and are starting to see their inner strength.

Gloria: It is 50/50 but I think it has risen. Girls are much more violent [as] they have taken in too much. They have had enough of it.

Jenny: The main perpetrator ... well, they used to be boys but now girls have started retaliating, because they are sick of always being the victims.

The participants draw on past experiences and prior stereotypical background knowledge when discussing their thoughts on girls behaviour. They reference their upbringing and socially constructed views on the roles that men and women have in their homes in general. The roles that females have in the household are analysed in detail, as one volunteer (Leana) points out that 'girls no longer "belong in the kitchen", and they no longer need to "serve men" '. The participants express their dissatisfaction about the way girls have been treated in the past and this leads to the discussion of power within the home, as it becomes evident that men dominated in the past. However, according to the participants, this is changing. This view was also expressed in a study by Wood, Lambert and Jewkes (2007), where it emerged that South African teenagers were aware of power inequalities and double standards found in their homes and schools, but found it difficult to resist, due to male violence.

With this in mind, the participants draw on their past experiences and stereotypical stories from their own homes and schools, where they have either witnessed or learned of the way women behaved and were treated, and express the opinion that this must lead to a change in behaviour. This is a life lesson for the participants, as they no longer want to be dominated by boys and made to feel like victims. The participants draw from the experiences of other

women and conclude that they do not want to be treated in this way and that this is why girls are fighting more and retaliating. There is a battle for power. These views add to the work of Mayeza (2015), who argues that women and girls are no longer simply the passive victims of violent masculinities and therefore can no longer be viewed as such.

Mirsky (2001) examines the power differentials that exist, where boys are created to be dominant, powerful and controlling, and girls to be submissive and subservient. According to de Lange, Mitchell and Bhana (2012), female teachers and girls are often victims of harassment and abuse by male teachers and boys in and around schools. The researchers (Garcia-Moreno, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, and Watts, 2005; Jewkes, Dunkle, Nduna & Shai, 2010) mention that gender violence in schools is a global issue and school is a domain in which boys dominate and girls are submissive. The participants, in this study, still view boys as a concern, as they use violence to solve problems. They express the opinion that boys start fights and kill. However, most of the participants say that girls can no longer just be viewed as victims.

Bhana (2008) argues that girls, like boys, are active in the use of violence and are not mere recipients of violence. The scholars Bhana and Pillay (2011) state that schoolgirls are sometimes directly involved in aggressive behaviour and engage in physical violence in order to protect their sexual territory. This is evident in the voices of the participants of this study, who say that girls are tired of the way they have been treated. The participants add that there is a new force awakening. This force believes that girls need no longer to bow down to boys, because they feel that they are equal and therefore have no reason to be afraid of boys. The following extract points to the power battles that take place:

That's nonsense. We are all equal and should act that way. People who do that or, should I say, girls who do that [are submissive] give all the power to boys [and] that is why they get beaten and raped. Because the boys think they have the power and, in a way, you don't blame them for thinking that.

The above extract is taken from the interview with Linda, who responds to the idea that some girls are afraid of boys. She feels angry and frustrated at girls who allow boys to exercise power and dominance over them. She believes that girls often give boys the power and this may lead to girls being raped and beaten. She draws on an important strategy or realisation on how to handle power battles and thereby ensures her safety from attack by boys and men. By standing up for herself or defending herself, she feels that girls make a statement to boys. By doing so, boys can then see that these girls are not easy targets and therefore they cannot take advantage or exercise power over them. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that violence is not simply about causing harm or damage to one another, but is also a means of asserting power over the other.

In the South African context, hegemonic masculinity is framed around ideas of heterosexual success and control of women by men, and this is believed to be one reason that connects men's use of violence against women (Jewkes, Sikweyiya, Morrell & Dunkle, 2011). With this in mind, the problem of violence among schoolchildren and in the community is closely linked to the broader issue of unequal relations of power between males and females, which continues to pervade South African society. This comes from their construction of gender stereotypes and beliefs that is formed at home. Adams and Coltrane (2005) assert that dominant constructions of masculinity revolve around the power that males exert over females and over 'other' males. This is explained in the extract below,

If all their lives they have seen their mothers or aunts bow down to their fathers and uncles, and are at their mercy and take their abuse, then these boys feel that if their fathers can do it then they can do it. But if from the start, the boys grow up in a home where they are shown that no one sex group has power or dominance over the other and that we are equal, then this is how they will go out into the world. The same goes for girls.

The view expressed in the above extract draws on the construction of participants' social lives. She draws on the knowledge that based on family situations; children follow the lessons taught at home. This underpins the fact that parents are the first point of call with regard to learning situations for children, and that youngsters construct gendered thoughts

and beliefs from lessons given by their parents. She draws on the notion that there are power struggles in the home and this comes from the construction of the dominance of one sex over another. Thus, in these homes, it is accepted that males should fight and battle for dominance. This is echoed by Wood, Lambert and Jewkes (2007), who argue that violence is accepted as an inevitable part of a relationship. However, as Mayeza (2015) argues, violence does not only characterise ways of exercising power, but also forms part of acts of resistance by marginalised groups, as they challenge the status quo and struggle for access to power. This, according to the participant, is possible if boys and girls come from homes that are gender equal. Gender violence is normally the use of violence and dominance of males over females and the participant draws on the fact that this stems from the home. If children come from either a home where fathers exercise their dominance over females or mothers exercise their emerging power over males, then children construct their lives around this behaviour.

The issue of the safety of the learners in South African schools is of great concern (Burton & Leoschut, 2013), with males and females in danger of being the subject of violent acts. The next section focuses on the safety of girls at school and, through participants' voices, where they feel the greatest threat comes from.

4.3. Girls and safety at schools

Research shows that power and control are at the centre of violence (Sundaram, 2013) and Bhana (2005) explains that all violence is gendered. South African schools are regarded as the playground for boys to exert violence as a means to use their power over the weaker sex. (Jewkes & Morrell, 2010). In this study, these scholars also add that violence is looked upon as not just causing harm and damage, but also as a means of portraying who is the stronger gender. However, many of the participants in this study said that boys use violence as a means to assert their power, power that was given to them by girls, but that this is now changing. Girls are no longer the passive recipients of boy dominance and power. Bhana (2008a) also argues that girls have self-agency and that girl-on-girl violence also occurs in schools, and is becoming more widespread and, according to the participants, young females are becoming more dangerous.

Schools are regarded as places where gender inequalities are reinforced (Bhana, 2013), thus this makes schools unsafe as this inequality often promotes violence. This is echoed by participants, who feel that schools are not always safe places for them as violence is produced and perpetuated, in these environments. This is inflicted by both boys and girls who compete within their gender for power and dominance, along with challenging others for superiority.

Researcher: *What about your school? Are you safe in your school?*

Daniella: *No.*

Researcher: *Why not?*

Daniella: *There's a lot of fights, there's a lot of arguments, teachers don't respect each other. Children don't respect teachers, some teachers don't teach us and there's very bad fights.*

Researcher: *Can you explain this?*

Daniella: *There is a lot of drug abuse and alcohol abuse and verbal abuse also. There was a recent fight that happened in our school; another girl kissed another girl's boyfriend. But this girl and her friends set up this whole thing and now that this girl kissed her boyfriend, she hit her they had a fight and only them two were fighting. So you have to also be careful who you talk to.*

The above extract was taken from the focus group discussion where Daniella expressed her views on safety at school. It is clear, through the voice of Daniella, that violence is prevalent at her school and learners are not safe there. She draws on relationships between teachers and learners as one of the reasons promoting violent behaviour. Daniella points out that behaviours displayed by teachers towards other teachers and even towards fellow learners shows learners that it is acceptable to behave in certain ways. This stems from their construction of gender from the home environment, where parents behave in certain ways towards each other and children adopt such behaviour because they think that it is acceptable. Then, when learners see teachers adopting the same behavioural patterns towards other teachers, the learners draw on past experience in their homes and believe that these behaviours are the norm. They therefore feel comfortable enough to act them out.

Daniella also refers to the moral virtue of respect and how a lack of it corresponds with violence at schools. This is a major concern, since the school, second to the home, plays such an important part in the construction of learners' social lives. Learners spend about half of their lives at school, which makes the school the second-most important place to socialise and to grow up in, after the home (SACE, 2011). With this in mind, Daniella then looks at the strategy of interactions with the opposite sex and the problems that arise from this. Schools are used as a space for learners to socialise and gain life experience through their interaction with the opposite sex. However, Daniella points to the important strategy that is required in order to ensure her safety at school, as well as be able to fully utilise the school as a socialising tool. She points out that; girls at school have to be careful about whom they talk to and interact with, because this can sometimes pose a threat of violence. This extract also shows how some girls exercise their power over other girls at school, by creating situations where girls, too, become victims of violence. Daniella clearly explains this when she describes the incident of a recent fight at her school. This is perhaps not always the case for Daniella and many other girls, although the high prevalence of violence at these learning institutions makes South African schools highly unsafe places.

Another issue clearly expressed by some of the participants is that of being popular and gaining status. The extract below shows that if learners are popular and have lots of friends, they are more likely to be protected within the school. However, if a learner is not part of a clique, then he or she has to defend him or herself.

Researcher: *Do you feel safe at school?*

Kourtney: *I know most of the boys in the school and they kind of know me, and my cousin is kind of like a big shot and some of them are scared of him and stuff, so when I am around him and my friends, I feel safe. And I must say that those who don't have friends at school, especially girls, are on their own.*

Researcher: *What do you mean?*

Kourtney: *There is no one to defend them, so they have to learn to defend themselves.*

Kourtney draws on an important strategy to ensure her safety at school. During break, she relies on friendships with boys, in particular a boy such as her cousin, as he occupies a higher ranking in the male pecking order at school. The safety Kourtney feels is thus directly related to the ability and capacity of bigger boys to dominate other boys. Her cousin's masculinity is constructed around being protective of and defending girls. Moreover, safety at school is linked to the consolidation of friendships within groups and girls without friends, as Kourtney suggests, are vulnerable to violence and abuse. As Mayeza (2016) suggests, having a friend is more than enjoying an emotional connection and being able to have fun. It is also a key to protection from gendered forms of violence, committed by both boys and girls.

With schools having been set out as safety nets for learners to utilise in order to expand knowledge and gain experience, through enjoyment and positive interaction, it has become clear that this is no longer the case. It can be seen that schools promote violence and gender inequality. Chen (2016) indicates that the relationship between gender and academic achievement has been a long-held concern within the education community. Historically, boys have been believed to be advantaged in classrooms in terms of grades and teacher preference (Weaver-Hightower, 2003). However, schools are no longer safe for learners and have become danger zones and places that promote violence. Bhana (2013) and Burton (2008) are in agreement in their research and add that schools have turned into sites at which children learn to fear, distrust and develop distorted perceptions of identity. They no longer feel safe in schools and this is echoed below, by the participants of this study:

Researcher: *Do you feel safe at school?*

Jade: *No, because there is mostly fighting in my school and I feel that if there is a fight and it is happening close enough, right there, you must mind your own business, [as] someone can get hit or hurt.*

Angela: *In my classroom, I do, because I'm in the higher grade classroom. There is not much violence [there] and we are focused on our work but the last class has the failures from the previous year so ... there [is] very bad behaviour and they are very disruptive, rude and there [are] fights which occur very often ... in that classroom.*

Angela: *I see there is more violence with the boys on the field and the girls, yes. The girls fight over silly things, as well as [with] the boys on the field.*

Kim: *I feel safe in school because most of the people in my grade have been with me from Grade R or Grade 1 and I'll say [that], maybe if a person that's new in the school starts arguing with me and the rest of the boys are playing on the ground, when [that person comes up, the boys will], what can I say, start defending me.*

Leana: *Sometimes I feel safe in school from outsiders but not necessarily from my peers. I do have a few peers that I feel safe with, but I do have quite a few that I don't feel safe or comfortable around or would want to get on their bad side.*

According to the participants, schools have become a place where learners, boys or girls, have to avoid contact with certain people in order to ensure their safety. Many of the participants mentioned above view schools as an unsafe place. The participants try to explain how academic achievement somewhat guarantees their safety from violence at school. In an attempt to explain this, the extract above demonstrates how some girls associate poor academic achievement with more frequent violent behaviour. In other words, it appears as though those learners in school who tend to perform better academically are more focused on their school work, as opposed to being violent. The participants say that those who are interested in school and learning tend to be in the higher classes and those who engage in fights and challenges for power tend to be in the lower classes. The participants also point out that learners get involved in fights that do not concern them and this makes it harder and more unsafe for them, because when they fight with one individual, they are attacked by many. This was evident in the fight that took place at Chernova High School during the year and was discussed at length during interviews with participants. Learners often gang up on other learners, which makes it difficult for them to defend themselves.

Kim: *Because sometimes when we having a fight, they'll call other people to come and join them and turn against you even if [those] people are your friends ...*

Kim feels that learners who are not part of a group or a gang are left alone to go through their days at school, always having to be vigilant of others in order to protect themselves. They have to watch who they speak to and who they cross in order to survive. Schools are places of violence and this makes the environment a difficult one for learners, as they have to not only defend themselves against another learner, but possibly against both a perpetrator and his or her friends. Kim draws on the importance of having friends who are not just there for you in social situations but also when you are involved in a fight. She points out that in these situations; a learner is not just engaged in a fight with an instigator or perpetrator but also with their friends as well.

It has been made evidently clear, both by the participants' views and literature that schools are no longer safe environments, and gendered violence is a cause of great concern. The participants add to the emerging body of literature that girls are becoming more aware of their gendered roles in society and schools. This is echoed by literature that states that children as young as six are aware of their gender roles in society, in terms of clothing, behaviour, and speech (Matthews, Ponitz, & Morrison, 2009). The participants add that:

Linda: Surprisingly, the girls are dangerous. The boys play rough but are not as bad as boys in the past. But girls nowadays are becoming increasingly dangerous and even more violent.

Ann: Boys are boys. Give them a soccer ball and they [are] gone. But girls ... They [are] sly. They [are] possessed.

Another issue that emerged from the data was that some participants felt that female teachers gave power to male teachers and this portrayed females as weaker in the eyes of these participants. Ann stated in her interview:

Researcher: How do teachers deal with fights in the classroom or school yard?

Ann: They scream for male teachers. This is sad.

Researcher: *Why sad?*

Ann: *Because they [are] showing us that we still need boys to defend us and that is not true. They are also teachers. They are also in charge. Why do they need to call for the male teachers? We as girls must do it ourselves.*

This extract shows that the participants find it hard to construct their identity in a society that is constantly promoting male dominance and privilege. In this case, male teachers are perhaps viewed as the protectors who have to handle cases of violence in school. Ann expresses her disapproval of female teachers relying or depending on male teachers to intervene and handle cases of violence at her school. This extract clearly shows that Ann is enacting a strong sense of self agency, as she explains that female teachers should be empowered and responsible for dealing with cases of violence at school, just as male teachers are. Ann also challenges harmful gender role norms that suggest that women and girls are dependent on men and boys for protection, when she states that, 'that is not true'.

The participants strongly feel that it is no longer just boys who are violent in schools; girls are now also displaying aggressive behaviour and taking on new roles within schools. This became evident during the interviews and has perhaps led to the community changing their views on how they view girls in the present day.

Emerging literature shows that girls are not just passive recipients of gender violence (Batchelor, Burman & Brown, 2001; Bhana, 2008). The next section looks at girls and how they negotiate and resist violent behaviours by boys, while challenging the gendered norms and expectations from the community around them. Society has expectations of how girls and boys should behave and, in the next section, through the voices of participants, it is revealed how girls challenge these views by showing girls as violent beings and not just passive, innocent children.

4.4. Social pressures and expectations: Girls must be 'prim and proper'

This section of this chapter seeks to demonstrate some of the ways in which girls challenge and contest gender norm expectations and social pressures that are often placed upon them. It will also demonstrate how many girls use violence as a means to do this. Gender stereotypes are among the meanings used by society in the construction of gender, and are characteristics that are generally believed to be typical of either females or of males (Courtenay, 2000). Gender norm expectations assume that girls should be prim and proper in their behaviour. Idealised forms of femininity suggest that girls should dress, act and perform in ways that fit into this mould. However, in this section, I aim to show that girls defy the norms expected of them by society, by fighting and challenging them.

Pam points this out during her individual interview, when she states that:

Nowadays people say that girls are raw because they do 'ungirly' things. You hear them swearing and screaming in the road.

This short extract highlights the many social pressures and expectations often placed upon girls, particularly in the present day. Yet some girls challenge these expectations and overcome social pressures by resisting violence. In some cases, they even perpetrate violence themselves, but risk developing negative reputations within a community.

The following extracts were taken from individual interviews with Jade, who expressed her opinions about community expectations of girls behaviour.

Jade: We are expected to behave appropriately and properly, as girls we are not supposed to fight over silly things.

Researcher: And what do you think are silly things?

Jade: Girls in the old days in high school never use to fight, especially over boys, but now in high school it has become complicated. Girls always fight over boys, like they don't sort it

out or sit down and have the issue discussed. As soon as they find out that another girl is trying to 'steal my man', they just want to fight with them.

Researcher: *Why you think girls are expected to behave in a certain manner? You said they are supposed to behave appropriately. Why do you think that they are supposed to behave that way?*

Jade: *I think they supposed to behave like that because they are girls and at the end of the day everyone is gonna have to go through a stage where people are gonna come to you and ask you if you do this, or do you fight or do you swear. All of those questions are gonna come back to you sooner or later in your life.*

Jade believes that there are set ways in which girls are expected to behave and that they have to operate within these expectations. However, girls no longer behave appropriately because they engage in violent acts, for 'silly' reasons, which include the loss of one's boyfriend through heterosexual battles. She draws on reasons such as competing for heterosexual status and possession of boys as reasons as for girls fighting and no longer behaving in the ways that are expected of them. These fights are underpinned by heterosexual competitions and they battle with other girls over boys. Bhana (2011) adds that most fights and acts of violence among girls are over boys and boyfriends.

Two of the other participants' state:

Kelly: *In my opinion.... I'll say that the community expects a girl to be ladylike, not like ... a street woman who ... [stays] up late [to] do anything on the road. They want us girls to behave like a lady.*

Angela: *... in a very ladylike manner. They are seen mainly taking care of their children doing their housework. Girls stay inside most of the time and are very focused on their work and not being aggressive ... and not being raw or too outspoken on the road or in public, in not using bad language but using appropriate language at all times, having respect and being neat [and] wearing appropriate clothes.*

These words indicate that many social pressures and expectations are often placed upon many girls in present day. The participants use words such as 'ladylike', 'prim and proper' and even 'girlylike' to describe the way their community expects girls to behave. These expectations are often difficult to fulfil. Some of the participants feel that it is unfair to put such pressure on girls and if they act in ways contrary to expectations, the community often labels them in a negative way and their reputations become tarnished and tainted.

The following extract was taken from the interview with Linda, when she was asked about expectations of the community regarding girls behaviour.

Linda: They expect us to be quiet, sweet, kind, follow rules, be cautious, [not] get up to mischief and to not be violent.

Researcher: Why do you think girls are expected to behave in such a manner?

Linda: Because of the stereotypes labelled on girls, but this is not happening as girls are no longer following the norm. They [are] not listening to or following the normal stereotypes.

Researcher: What do you mean?

Linda: The normal stereotypes portray boys as dominant and powerful, and girls as weak and needy, and submissive to boys. Although nowadays, there are some girls that are challenging those stereotypes and competing with boys.

Linda actively tackles harmful gender norm expectations in the extract above, by expressing her views on challenging male dominance and power. This indicates that many women and girls are perhaps making strides to empower themselves and exercise self-agency more freely and willingly.

Linda shows that the community expects girls to behave in ways that were common in the past. The behaviour of past generations created stereotypes of how girls should behave and this has placed undue pressure on young girls in society today. Many of the participants

mentioned in this section feel that these expectations are difficult to abide by, as society has applied this pressure upon them in order that they be kept subordinate and under control.

In the extract below, Ann confirms that these stereotypes are based on expectations that society had of girls in the past. This has caused problems for girls today, because if they do not adhere to these historical expectations and behave in ways that are different to their mothers, aunts and grandmothers, they are labelled disrespectful and believed to be displaying 'ungirly' behaviour. Ann states:

***Ann:** It is because of history. The women before us were instructed to behave in this way. They had to follow instructions and almost be like slaves to boys.*

Researcher: Like slaves? What do you mean?

***Ann:** Everything the boys said girls did. They told girls how to dress and how to speak and what to do.*

Researcher: And nowadays?

***Ann:** This has changed. Girls don't bow down anymore.*

It appears as if Ann is expressing her displeasure or concern about societal pressures that are placed on girls today. It is a gender issue, according to Ann, as girls are singled out, based on stereotypical gender beliefs that have been passed on through generations, particularly within families. However, it is evident from what Ann says that girls are no longer adhering to stereotypical beliefs and do not live up to the expectations or pressures of society. In so doing, girls are evidently challenging and contesting these idealised forms of femininity. Ann also points out that girls are 'taking back the power' that was once given to boys.

She goes on to state:

All it took is one case where a girl fought back and for this story to travel and then every girl realised that they were not as weak as boys wanted them to be and that they could fight back.

Ann believes that this is how girls started to fight back or resist violence. Adams and Coltrane (2005) assert that dominant constructions of masculinity revolve around the power that boys exert over girls. This participant, however, feels differently, as she explains how some girls are starting to fight back and construct their own violent identities, through which they compete and even challenge boys for power and dominance. In this way, girls are attempting to overturn gender norm expectations through the use of violence.

Another participant also explained that there is a need for girls to defend and protect themselves and 'stand up for themselves' in order to avoid and prevent incidents of abuse and rape.

Some people feel that fighting is for boys and girls are supposed to be lady-like. Yet, in my flat, we have to defend ourselves so that we don't end up beaten, raped or dead. We have to stand up and fight or boys will take advantage of us like in the past.

This extract is also indicative of how some girls talk about fighting to defend themselves against physical masculine domination. Girls use the same tools of violent masculinity while defending themselves against sexual coercion and male violence. Bhana's (2008) study reveals that girls use physical violence against boys in an attempt to protect themselves and avoid being dominated in schooling contexts that are based on community expectations and gender inequality perceptions regarding boys and girls.

The next section examines boys' ability to fight with girls, even though it is emerging, through literature and the voices of the participants in this study, that although girls are becoming more actively involved in preventing such violent acts, these battles still occur.

4.5. 'Certain boys might physically harm the girl'

When conducting research on boys and gendered violence, it is important to draw on Connell's (1995) understanding of hegemonic masculinity. However, according to research by Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2003), it is important to realise that masculinity is understood as meaningful only in relation to femininity and as constructed through the interaction and interplay of the different genders. Along with the influence of the community, gendered violence is also promoted and constructed through the interaction of boys and girls. This theme shows the impact that boys still have with regard to gender violence. This is voiced by the participants.

Although the participants make reference to the increasing threat of girl violence and their ability to perpetrate violence in both the school and community, either to defend themselves or to make a statement, they still acknowledge the threat that boys pose. They say that young males still have power, even though girls are starting to take it back. Studies show that gender violence in schools is frequent, with girls the most common victims of various forms of violence perpetrated by boys (Bhana, 2012). Even though girls are fighting back to regain their identity and power, some boys still dominate certain situations and in some sense nothing much has changed.

This is confirmed by Leach, Dunne and Salvi (2014), who argue that boys are at a higher risk than girls of becoming involved in different forms of violence at school, both as perpetrators and victims.

They fight with girls to get attention and to probably test their strength and to show their friends that they [are] macho and masculine. They could fight with girls also because they [are] scared to fight with other boys, 'cause they may get beaten up.

The above extract was taken from the individual interview with Linda, who offers her thoughts as to why boys fight. She draws from the fact that boys test their masculinity against girls. It is a method of displaying strength over other boys by showing their ability to overpower girls and 'weaker' boys. However, she does feel that it also displays a sense of fear from boys, as they may be unable to compete with boys of equal strength or stronger. This is not far off from the thoughts of Adams and Coltrane (2005), who believe that the constructions of masculinity centre around the dominance boys exert over girls and the power that boys have over other boys. Some of the participants say that some girls still allow boys to dominate and control situations for various reasons. The extract below was recorded in the interview between Ann and the researcher:

Researcher: *Are girls still victims of fights with boys?*

Ann: *Yes, sometimes.*

Researcher: *Can you explain this?*

Ann: *I think it's because there are some girls that because of their upbringing still believe that boys have the power so they don't challenge them.*

Researcher: *What do you mean?*

Ann: *They live in a family where boys have the power and that's how they believe it should be. So they allow boys to walk all over them.*

Ann is of the opinion that some boys still dominate situations and assert power over girls, based on their upbringing, family life and social interactions. She adds that power struggles and gender inequalities are often produced and reproduced because of the family life of the boy or the girl. Ann says that if boys come from a patriarchal home or family, then these boys

are more prone to exert power over girls, both inside and outside school. This is also perhaps the case with many girls. Ann believes that if girls live in a home where males are in charge and females are expected to be submissive then these girls are more likely to submit to male domination and less likely to resist harmful male practices. This is indicative of the way in which family backgrounds and upbringing often influence the gender roles occupied by boys and girls.

When asked about reasons for boys hitting girls, the participants replied:

May: They talk bad about them, they say something about them and they think it is a joke but they take it personally and then boys go and klap them.

Jade: Because boys don't know how to react and if a girl or a boy has to say something to a boy that he doesn't like then he would instantly come and hit, kick or punch or do something to hurt them. Even though girls are starting to fight back, I feel that boys are still stronger.

Carmen: [It's] because they want to be shown as having the greater power.

Angela: [It happens] if a girl, like, pushes a boy too far past his limits or he hears that a girl is also telling lies about him or giving him a bad name or something, and spreads rumours or tells his friends or embarrasses him. That is something that the boys hate, embarrassment with his friends or something. Certain boys ... might physically harm the girl.

The above extracts echo what the literature suggests, that violence among boys tends to involve 'fist fighting' and often results in physical harm and visible scars (Tucker & Govender, 2016). The participants reveal that boys can be violent and like to solve problems by becoming physical. They are of the opinion that boys assert power and dominance over girls and other boys because of their need to demonstrate strength and power over others. Many of the participants are in agreement that even though boys are still seen as a threat and can cause serious harm to girls, they also believe that girls are learning to assert themselves by expressing themselves more openly and freely, and giving privilege to their own voices.

Jenny: Main perpetrator? Well, they used to be boys but now girls have started retaliating.

Researcher: Why do you think that girls have started retaliating?

Jenny: Because they are sick of always being the victims.

According to many of the participants, girls are no longer afraid to challenge and resist harmful male practices, which include violence. They are challenging these gender role norms and are no longer occupying inferior and submissive positions in relation to males. They are of the opinion that girls are no longer just victims and this resonates with Bhana (2011; 2008a), who argues that girls also engage in violence, as a means to exercise their agency and power. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next theme.

4.6. Agency and resistance: Girls fight back

Gender violence in schools demonstrates the power and dominance that males have over females (Bhana, 2011; Pinheiro, 2006; Mirsky, 2001), with most researchers positioning girls simply as victims (Bhana, 2012; Tabane, 2014; Leach & Mitchell, 2006). However, it is emerging that females are no longer just victims of violence and are now challenging males for power and dominance. This section shows how young females are resisting violence and learning how to defend themselves against attack, while even perpetrating violence over other girls through fighting over heterosexual relationships.

This section also shows, through the voices of the participants, that girls need to defend themselves in order to survive. This is expressed by Kendell, who participated in this study:

When I go tell my brother something about what happens in school, he's, like, you must always fight your own battles; don't come make your problems mine.

Kendell draws reference to two social issues facing girls today. Firstly, she feels that her voice is silenced, as she is not allowed to express herself. When she has experienced fights or incidents at school, she is not allowed to share these experiences with her brother. This takes away her voice. Further, traditional gender norms look to bigger brothers to play a supportive and protective role in the lives of their younger sisters. Yet in this situation, Kendell clearly points out that she gets no support from her brother and is forced to defend herself and deal with situations on her own. However, it can be argued that this also shows tough love, with Kendell's brother forcing her to learn how to deal with situations on her own, without having to resort to him for help.

While research on school related violence has focused on boys and their violent behaviours against other boys and girls (Tucker & Govender, 2016), very little is known about the social dynamics and experiences of violence among girls. However, some participants say that this is rapidly changing and, further, literature is emerging globally on this issue.

Girls nowadays are just as dangerous as boys. They have a lot of power because they no longer give in to boys and some are no longer scared of boys, so they [are] standing up and being counted ... They [are] also fighting for power over other girls, as boys did over other boys. So, they start fights and arguments.

Mayeza (2015) believes that girls are not simply the passive victims of violent masculinities and this is consistent with the view of Linda. She echoes the words expressed by 24 out of 30 participants, who all believe that girls are no longer just victims of gendered violence in school and the wider community. They are no longer afraid of boys, because they are learning to challenge dominant male practices and other girls for power. Girls are fighting back and, in so doing, are resisting harmful gender role norms. Bhana (2008) argues that, like men and boys, girls are also active in the use of violence and are not mere recipients of violence. Many of the findings of this study resonate with this view. According to Linda, when asked if she felt safe at school and then probed by this researcher as to why not:

Surprisingly, the girls are dangerous. They [boys] play rough but are not as bad as boys in the past. But girls nowadays are becoming increasingly dangerous and even more violent.

Linda says that girls are becoming more dangerous than boys and draws a comparison between today's boys and those of the past. She adds that boys are less violent today and that this change has enabled girls to overtake boys and become more dangerous. Many of the participants say that boys are violent, and literature confirms that boys often use physical force to assert their power and domination; however, girls also display signs of aggression, even if they don't always fight physically. They are also dangerous and most of the participants see them as a greater threat. This is consistent with research conducted by Bhana (2008a), who argues that girls also possess self-agency, that girl-on-girl violence occurs in schools, and that it is visible there during their negotiations and engagement with boys and other girls. This is in line with the statement that Jody made in her individual interview:

I think girls are scared of boys but now they [are] also becoming aware of the threat that other girls pose and this scares them, because it's now becoming a competition for survival.

Jody makes reference to the fact that a new threat has emerged and current literature supports this statement. The participants point to reasons as to why girls fight and they opine that girls are worse than boys. Jody draws upon issues of survival and challenges posed by other girls that affect their survival.

They look at you and then they want to hit you. You can't even talk to boys because you need to know who is dating who. Cause if you talk to the wrong boy, his girlfriend and her friends are after you. And you can't improve yourself because this makes them mad and even upset, and they think you think you better than them.

The above extract is from the interview with Ann, who believes that girls cannot be trusted and that this is a serious problem. Girls at her school have to be mindful of what they say and who they choose to interact with, particularly in relation to boys, due to the risk and/or fear of being attacked. The study by Mncube & Harber (2013) asserts that violence among girls is often characterised by betrayal, sarcasm, teasing, name-calling and gossiping, and often results in psychological damage rather than physical pain. When participants in this study were asked if girls were afraid of boys, they said the situation had changed. This is evident in the extract above, as girls are now competing for power and status among themselves.

Jody: Not all girls are afraid. We don't let gender dictate anymore. It's not boys and girls. It's right and wrong and human against human.

Linda: Some girls are scared of boys but, nowadays, most girls prove to be stronger and do not care about the boys and when boys try to start with them or call them names, then they just fight back. I think [that] because of this, girls are now becoming more scared of girls because they [are] changing the hierarchy of dominance. They [are] standing up and fighting back and, in some cases, they [are] starting fights over silly things.

Jody: Yes. [There are] different reasons. Boys try to take advantage and then they see the real me and they get scared. I believe in every girl is a person that is pushed away. They have the strength to fight back and [this] is waiting to come out.

Most of the participants feel that girls are the bigger threat, as they are proving to be more dangerous. They draw on the fact that gender is no longer an issue. The situation no longer concerns a gender fight or a challenge of male verses female, but a battle for power. In so doing, girls are no longer allowing boys to dominate; they are challenging boys for their positions of power. However, it must be pointed out that some of participants did indicate that some girls are still afraid of boys, but that most girls are scared of young females who are dominating and powerful at school. Jewkes and Morrell (2010) argue that violence is not simply about causing harm or damage, but is also a means of asserting power. The participants further make reference to the fact that boys are also aware of the ability of some girls to resist and challenge gender stereotypes that portray girls as merely passive recipients

of violence and male dominance, and this often deters them from being violent towards these girls in school. Bhana (2008) makes reference to the fact that what is happening is a contest for power, space and social rewards at school, as girls perpetrate aggression against other girls as well as boys.

***Linda:** I feel boys take advantage of girls and this is unfair because boys force themselves on girls, and I think girls are becoming as aggressive and raw as some boys, and this is portraying girls as a bad example. I fear for the future.*

***Researcher:** Why?*

***Linda:** I see boys and girls fighting for power and competing against each other for dominance.*

The above extract reiterates the power struggles between boys and girls in society today. Girls can be just as bad as boys, according to Linda, and the other participants agree. Violence perpetrated at school, no matter by whom, provides an insight into and understanding of how schools have become the battle sites of gender power (Bhana, 2008a; Jekwes & Morrell, 2010). The participants were able to make a connection between violence in school and brutality in the community, particularly in terms of gender and the causes of violence. Some of the participants indicated that family background played a significant role with regard to gender violence, which either privileges male power or challenges males for the same power. The participants feel that, based on background and family situation, some families believe that males are dominant and in some cases the 'head of the home'. Children grow up in these homes, where males rule, and no one competes or argues with this dominance. However, in other homes, this power is challenged and males are not allowed the same freedom.

***Linda:** Well, if a girl comes from a family where she sees her mother being beaten or obeying her husband, then she may grow up thinking that that is the way. She needs to bow down and obey. It's okay to be beaten. But if she lives with a mother who stands up or challenges the*

norm, then she will take this behaviour into the world, where she will stand up and challenge everyone.

Ann: *Yes. Their family life plays a role. If you grow up bowing down, then you will always put boys on a pedestal, but if you believe that we are all equal, then we can make a difference.*

The extracts above demonstrate how the role of parents influences children in families and at home. The role that mothers and fathers occupy often has the potential to encourage, promote and reinforce certain kinds of harmful gendered practices in their families and among their sons and daughters. The two girls, whose opinions are expressed above, clearly demonstrate a strong awareness of this. Exposure and familial upbringing and/or background play an integral role in girls' and boys' engagement or involvement in violence. This is evident, based on the participants' opinions, as well as in a study (Orpinas, 2006:65) that states that types of aggressive behaviour become the norm if children's role models; including actors, educators, parents and family members set examples of such behaviour. The participants stress that this is the case as they often re-enact what they witness or experience in the home and family. Other research (Gould, Ward Kelly & Mauff, 2015) also points out that harsh, inconsistent parenting and exposure to violence in the home and community increases the risk that children will grow up to use violence, or to be victims of violence themselves.

Participants also spoke about fights that their mothers have been involved in and how these fights influenced their beliefs and views about exercising self-agency and resisting violence.

Jody: *My mother is not afraid to stand up for herself. She lets people have it. The one day this guy stole my mother's parking ... as my mother was waiting to turn into the parking. He said my mother was too slow. She jumped out her car and cornered him. She started screaming at the guy, even though the guy was twice her size. And she also knows how to party. [Laughing.] My mum also doesn't believe that guys are stronger than us. She always*

tells me that I must never bow down to a guy and give him power. She always said that guys have taken far too much from us girls and that we must put them in their place.

Jenny: *Well ... my mother and her fiancée used to fight a lot, when he was still here. She hit him over the head with a pan once.*

The participants above come from homes where their mothers actively challenge male dominance and power. They do not allow men to exert their power over them and this has perhaps influenced their daughters to behave in the same manner.

Leana speaks about a change in power dynamics:

Before, boys use to bring home the money. Girls needed boys. They felt they couldn't survive without them. They were even encouraged to remain with their partners even if they were beaten up and abused. But nowadays, it's different. Boys are now the house husband and the girls are bringing home the money, so the power dynamics have changed. Some girls have the power and they use it. My mum earns more than my dad and he at times has to listen to my mum. I see a difference between my parents and my family. My aunt and uncle are different. My uncle earns more and makes the decisions about money, while I hear my dad say [he] will check with my mum.

Leana feels that females are now getting to a point where they don't need males for financial support or even protection. Although the study was conducted among a select group of girls, it is interesting to hear their thoughts on how girls and women are resisting violent advances by boys and men, by challenging them for power. They are no longer afraid to voice their opinions and are even securing better jobs and bringing home a higher salary. The participants feel that it is getting to the point, in some households, where females are not dependent on males. This could perhaps explain why some girls and women feel free to

challenge negative gender stereotypes in ways that many of the study participants have pointed out thus far.

There are many reasons why girls fight, either with boys or other girls, and the participants say this is frightening and shocking, and results in making girls as violent and aggressive as boys.

The next theme looks at girls being violent in schools and why this is the case. The participants draw on different reasons for girls fighting and, along with media reports and literature, evidence is provided to support the claims of participants that girls have become more aggressive and dangerous than boys.

4.7. Violent girls at school: Why is this the case?

Research on violence in schools frequently presents girls as innocent victims of violence by boys (Leach, 2003). However, emerging literature (Bhana, 2008; Mayeza, 2015) and the voices of the participants present a different narrative. These attempt to show how girls are drawn into violence, from which they emerge not only as victims (as portrayed in the past), but also as active agents who compete with and challenge boys and other girls for power through the use of aggression (Bright, 2005; & Bhana, 2008). This section shows girls actively participating in violent acts and thereby challenging gender norms. Boys assert themselves as hegemonic males through the use of violence and by exercising their power over girls and other boys, whereas one of the reasons girls use violence is in self-defence.

In contrast to research (Shamu, Gevers, Mahlangu, Shai, Chirwa, & Jewkes, 2016) indicating that girls' violence is linked to reaction to provocation, rather than being mere acts of bullying, some of the participants in this study have a different opinion. They say that girls fight for various reasons, including competing for dominance among boys and even other girls. This is similar to work conducted by Jewkes and Morrell (2010), who argue that violence is not simply about causing harm or damage, but is also a means of asserting power.

In one of the focus group discussions, Nicole gave the following reasons in an attempt to explain why many girls fight or display violent behaviour towards others:

Girls start it because of gossip and about what they heard about themselves. If someone went to them and said something about them, then they'll get angry and they'll come. They won't talk to the person, they'll just hit them. They won't try to ask them to explain, they'll just hit them. Girls are gossip queens. They [are] gossip girls. They talk about each other and then they fight when they hear what the other has to say in response.

Nicole believes that there are many reasons behind girls fighting. However, the main reason, which most of the participants agree upon, is that of 'gossiping'. She draws on the fact that girls use gossiping as a tool to bring each other down. They use it to start fights and break friendships between girls. This also removes the desire to solve issues through communication, as Nicole points out that as girls hear gossip, the first thing they want to do is engage in fights about it. This also gives girls the upper hand over other girls, as girls use gossip to initiate violence and, through gossiping about others, are ready to fight. The participants reveal that girls challenge other girls more than they do boys, as boys are no longer regarded as a threat or problem at school.

Kelly: Some of the boys get scared and they run away from the girls with the biggest mouth. We [are] not the ones that can be bullied and we don't chase them away. We just telling them just because you're boys it doesn't mean that you can beat us [and] beat the girls up. We will stand up for ourselves.

Pam: Yes, girls do fight with other girls, because some people pull friends away from each other. They try to separate them and they start rumours, so that they can separate the two people, so that they can have them for themselves. It gets worse if one girl doesn't feel someone belongs in a group or if there is a girl who doesn't agree with the things the group is doing. That girl will be kicked out of the group and then even isolated by the girls in the

group. They will spread rumours and even taunt the girl, which will eventually lead to a fight. These girls will become violent and start fights among [those in] the group.

Angela: Violence is also about status. If you can hit a girl or if you are known to fight or fight properly, or also win fights, then you are known ... [as] a really popular gangster ... in our school, like, that's the aim. To be more like a guy who is so violent. The teacher, like, looks down on girls that are really violent or ... [take part] in fights and all that, for appearances, that makes you kind of popular.

Kim: ... because girls are not afraid of boys anymore, because they are stronger on the inside and they don't allow any boy to dominate them. It is their body and no other person can control them and tell them what to do, besides the people that are in high authority that are watching over you, like your parents, teachers or guardians. They can tell you what to do because they watch over you, but for another person to come and tell you not to do something, then you disagree with it. That's your business.

The above extract is taken from the focus group discussion, where the participants are in agreement that there are many different reasons behind girls engagement in violence at schools. They are therefore no longer afraid of boys and will defend themselves when needed, through the use of violence. This demonstrates how girls have progressed from having boys demonstrate their masculinity (Swain, 2004) over girls, to girls now being unafraid and even actively participating in aggression for various reasons, including name-calling and physical violence towards others (Tasca, Zatz & Rodriguez, 2012).

Status is also an issue among girls and this was highlighted by participants, who claimed that girls start fights to gain reputations at school and become known as 'popular gangsters'. This indicates that girls, as many boys do, desire to gain status and popularity at school, as a means of demonstrating their strength and dominance. Many participants say that girls are becoming more like boys and, even if they earn a bad reputation among teachers, peers and within the community, they are regarded as 'popular gangsters'. This shows the importance of status within peer groups and the school on the whole. The above extracts also confirm the

desire that some girls have to develop and earn such names and they will do whatever it takes to prove they deserve these nicknames.

This is similar to how boys sought to acquire reputations at schools, by revealing their hegemonic strength and battling anyone who challenged their ruling masculinity. This is in line with research conducted by Brijraj (2016), who confirms that girls involved in aggressive acts in school are developing femininities in the same way that boys develop their masculinity. The scholar adds that it seems as though the behaviour of adolescent boys and girls are becoming very similar as girls are no longer perceived in the stereotypical manner as in the past. Brijraj (2016) goes on to say that aggressive behaviour can result in their peers either being rejected or gaining in popularity, as both rejection and the gaining of popularity may promote aggression, which can lead to physical abuse between girls.

This idea of fighting in order to become popular resonates with research conducted by Resko, et al., (2016), which highlights that young females frequently describe how fighting can provide a measure of status and respect, as many teenagers admit that fighting in some situations is 'necessary', in order to protect their reputation and prevent them from being bullied or attacked in the future. Bender and Emslie (2010) also argue that many aggressive learners have high levels of status, popularity and admiration from their peer group at the school, which legitimises violent behaviour at school.

Friendship and competition for fellowship is another aspect that leads to female engagement in fights, as girls challenge other girls to gain friendships. As the participants mention, girls fight with each other when friends are either pulled away from one group to join another, or if a girl is rejected or removed from a group. Many girls also use violence in order to compete for dominance within the group. The participants say that girls compete for status within the group and if a member does not agree with certain methods, or challenges authority within a circle, she is ousted, isolated from the group, and even rejected from other circles. This finding has been echoed by Brijraj (2016), who argues that same-sex peers easily exclude others from their group if they do not fit in with their kind of thinking or behavioural

attributes. Further, girls in these groups at school often tend to be less tolerant of girls who annoy them, as opposed to girls who are in groups of peers of the opposite sex. This may result in a girl feeling isolated, rejected or even an outcast (Brijraj, 2016). Girls therefore also challenge each other within their social groups and among their peers in order to become dominant and popular at school.

As already highlighted earlier on in this section, gossiping has become a serious problem among girls at school. Kelly explains:

One girl will tell some other girl something and the other girl will gossip to her friends, saying this girl said this and that about me and we must go and hit her after school. They just want to fight [but] there is no reason for them fighting.

Kelly points out that gossiping may incite girls to engage in violent activities or fights in her school. She draws on the fact that girls use gossip as a tool to promote violent acts. She is also of the opinion that some girls do not like people to talk about them and, if this happens, they want to solve the problem through violent means. She further points out that girls no longer give each other the benefit of the doubt and, if they hear things said about them by others, they want to engage in aggression and develop their own violent forms of femininity, and thus create a reputation for themselves.

According to some of the participants, another reason for the use of violence by girls is the defence of family and/or friends. They add that girls perpetrate violence by either picking on another girls family, mainly their mother, or on weaker friends who are unable to defend themselves. The participants went on to say that these situations lead to fights among young females, as girls believe it's their duty to defend their families and/or friends. These are some of the views of participants who were asked if they had ever used violence against others and why. Some of the participants said they found it hard to resist girl-on-girl violence when their mothers were targeted and verbally attacked. This is evident from the extracts below:

Ann: This girl was teasing my mother, since my parents are separated and there are stories of my mother being violent. These girls called her names and then called me names. I lost it and hit her. Her friends grabbed me and then held me down, while their friend hit me. I broke free and we started "rolling" in the grass. The fight broke [up] when these boys stopped it.

Jody: Yes I have. They spread rumours about me and I hate that. This one girl picked on my mother and said that she was a raw coloured. I saw red. No one talks about my mother. No one does that. I hit her and was sent to the office. The principal told me it was wrong but I'll do it again if anyone does that.

The participants draw on the social aspect of how important a girls mother is to them and that they will use violence in order to defend their mothers' honour. They also say that there are girls who pick on other girls mothers in order to aggravate other girls and create spaces and opportunities in which to become violent. Research by Resko, et al., (2016) reveals that these situations are described as 'justified' and 'necessary' forms of aggression.

Ann also had the following to say:

I can't stand people messing with my mother. She is my best friend. And she works so hard to give me everything I have. To allow these girls to tease my mother and talk ill of her ... [this] ain't gonna happen. Also, I'm tired of people messing with girls. You see it all the time and I am not gonna allow my mother to be part of those stats.

This illustrates the extent to which some girls will go in order to defend their mothers' reputations and the love, care and appreciation that they have for them. This type of defensive violence is triggered by attacks on the bond that girls have with their mothers. Girls will use any means to defend their mothers, whom they look up to and admire. They view these acts as not only defending their mothers but also their friends, which in turn defends their position as girls and their desire to challenge for power.

Girls also defend other girls who are regarded as helpless or weak at school and feel that it is their duty to stand up for all girls. Ann comments on this in her individual interview:

There are some girls that are difficult and bad. They fight for no reason. They have attitude or tease and even bully and I don't like that. If they leave me alone, I won't interfere but they start with me and I cannot take it. I also can't handle people messing with innocent people, girls who can't fight back; girls who are vulnerable ... so I will jump for them. And I don't care which gender it's against. I will stand up for them.

Ann shares the views of other participants by pointing out that some girls are not as aggressive or violent as others and this is why she 'will jump for them'. This participant has the urge to protect and defend weaker girls at school. These girls are easy targets, according to Ann, and they need to be protected. In this way, she perhaps, like many other girls in her school, uses violence in order to resolve conflict. This theme clearly highlights some of the main reasons why girls engage in violence at school.

The next theme presents findings on the desire of some girls to fight with other girls to defend their heterosexual relationships.

4.8. "Girls fight with each other over boys"

The issue of heterosexual relationships in schools plays a large role in the lives of learners. Many of the participants are of the view that girls enter into relationships with boys to boost their reputations, brag or even obtain power over other girls at school. Kelly confirms this:

Maybe they want to be act like I'm top dog, I am only one dating and you'll don't have boyfriends. Or they wanna just be up there and make us feel low, pushing our self-esteem down, like we are slow [at] dating boys.

Kelly says that dating or having a boyfriend is a sign of popularity. This shows that girls use relationships as a form of status and dating gives girls an edge over other young females. This is a matter of competition and draws on the fact that girls do not only compete with each other on an academic front but also for heterosexual success among other girls. This competition can turn violent; however, as it is important to some learners and not to others. Bhana and Pillay (2011) argue that having a steady boyfriend serves as an important marker of heterosexual success among girls. Kelly adds that girls use dating as a way to compete with other girls. It makes them feel that they are better than others by having a boyfriend. According to the participants, girls see dating as a catalyst in their quest for dominance at school.

Leana: One of the most common reasons for verbal and physical fights is the issue of boyfriends. Girls fight with each other over boys.

Jody: [It happens] mostly because of the way girls act with other girls. Girls spread rumours about other girls and gossip about them. Girls also talk about family. Then there are boys. Girls fight for boys. My friend got into a fight because she was talking to this boy. His girlfriend came for her. I wouldn't allow it. I stopped her. My friend is sweet and friendly and she wasn't trying to steal her man. She was just talking. But this girl got scared [that] she was going to lose her man. Then you heard of the fight between Beven and the group of girls, again over a boy.

Jody is of the opinion that girls do not only compete with other girls for boys but also attempt to steal the boy from them, and this often leads to violence. She draws on the importance of heterosexual relationships and the pressures that come from girls to maintain their relationships. This issue also confirms a breakdown in gendered relationships, as boys and girls are finding it more and more difficult to communicate and be friends, as heterosexual relationships seem to trump friendships. As the participants agree, if you are in a relationship, then you need to be careful which boy you are seen talking to, as some girls are threatened by girls who talk to their boyfriends. This may force a girl to defend her heterosexual status. This is reinforced by research conducted by Bhana (2012), who argues that girls actively participate in sexual cultures, vying for power over other girls, and they often do so through

the use of violence. This is of concern, as it deters boys and girls from communicating and learning gender aspects from each other in an environment set out for gendered social learning to take place. These incidents also become violent, as in the incident with Beven, which made headlines earlier this year (2016).

Ann: Yes. Some girls in our school think they top dogs, just because they have boyfriends. Nowadays [being a girl is] all about getting boyfriends. It's amazing.

Researcher: Amazing, how?

Ann: In the past, boys looked at relationships as trophies but now girls are doing this. It's [a] huge [thing] to have boyfriends.

Ann views relationships as an important aspect in the schooling journey of girls and says that they will do whatever it takes to defend the status and power that comes with dating. It is clear that heterosexual relationships are an important factor in the lives of some girls, as it comes with a certain status, and these girls will even use violence to maintain it. It's interesting to note Ann's reference to the way things were in the past and how girls were treated as trophies or prized possessions by boys, whereas it is now girls who behave in this way. Ann also draws on the aspect of trophies, which can be regarded as accolades or rewards for hard work and normally come with the status of being the best in a field. However, according to Ann, girls now use heterosexual dating to show other girls that they are the best, because they are involved in a relationship.

The participants point out that some of these altercations can take the form of verbal abuse, as girls tend to use words to settle conflicts. As soon as a girl becomes aware of a threat to her relationship, she and her friends target the girl and isolate her, embarrass her or hurt her in order to defend their heterosexual relationship. This is echoed in a study conducted by Tasca, Zatz and Rodriguez (2012), who assert that girls actively participate in the perpetuation of violence, as they defend their heterosexual relationships through name-calling and physical violence towards the competition. The participants also mention that name-calling is not as

extreme for boys as it is for girls, because girls know exactly which words will cause the most damage. This is confirmed by research conducted by Bhana (2002), explaining that name-calling is a means through which power battles occur and inflict injury on others.

Ann: Because I was friends with this one boy, his girlfriend kept spreading rumours about me. She couldn't do it in front of her boyfriend.

Researcher: *Why not?*

Ann: Her boyfriend was friends with me.

Researcher: *So she didn't want to chance it?*

Ann: Yes. So, when he wasn't around, she would make me look bad and say bad things to everyone. She then took it so far and spread a rumour about me that made my friend stop talking to me.

Researcher: *What did she say?*

Ann: That I spread rumours about my friend. And the things they said I said was just not me. It was rude and disrespectful. Then I found out who it was and I confronted her and she denied it then said: 'So what?' I slapped her. The next day she came past and ignored me.

The excerpt above reveals how some girls manipulate situations in order to make themselves look favourable in the eyes of their boyfriends. The participants all say that girl-on-girl violence either takes place behind the scenes, where the girl is secretly trying to destroy her reputation, or publicly through humiliation and isolation. They add that some girls cannot be friends with a boy who is dating someone because, as soon as this happens, they become the property of the girl. Ann touches on issues that accompany dating and unspoken words, or terms and conditions, are part of the package. Ann says that once a boy is in a heterosexual relationship, he becomes the property of the girl and she goes on full alert in order to keep hold of her man. This, despite the fact that there a huge social advantage that comes from dating and being in a relationship. The status and power attached with heterosexual dating also comes with issues that need to be dealt with. Girls are constantly on the lookout for

threats from other girls that could endanger their heterosexual status and the dominance that they enjoy that comes from dating. Bhana and Pillay (2011) reveal that involvement in a relationship can also be a source of anxiety and conflict, due to competition.

Ann: *They look at you and then they want to hit you. You can't even talk to boys because you need to know who is dating who. Cause if you talk to the wrong boy, his girlfriend and her friends are after you.*

Ann also points out that some girls cannot even talk to boys at school, out of fear of being attacked. This also shows how possessive some girls can be over their boyfriends, and how they may resort to violence if they perceive that their relationship is being threatened. It can also be said that girls are threatened by other girls and, therefore, in order to defend their heterosexual status, they prevent their boyfriends from interacting with other girls or use violence and verbal abuse and gossip in order to deter girls from going near their boyfriends.

Since 2015, there have been many reported incidents of girls involvement in fights on school property, particularly over boys, and such a fight led to the death of a girl in the United States, in 2016. These fights have all been caused by boys, as girls compete violently to defend what they believe is their 'man'. One focus group discussion reveals the girls opinion on this:

Daniella: *... There was a recent fight that happened in our school, this one girl Beven kissed another girl's boyfriend. But Beven was set up by this girl, her friends set up this whole thing just so that they can hit her and now that Beven kissed this girl's boyfriend, she got lured into the toilet and was bashed real nicely. So you also have to be careful who you talk to.*

Researcher: *Bashed, what is that?*

Daniella: *A good hiding. Scars and marks left behind.*

Researcher: *So they hit her. How many times and what happened next?*

***Daniella:** Beven ... tried to fight back and hit the other one, but then a whole lot of girls joined in the fight and started kicking and punching Beven. Beven's friends, also piled [into] Beven, and she got ... hit so bad some of her ribs broke and they were banging her head into the sink and she ended up in hospital.*

This extract clearly shows that some girls are extremely dangerous, violent and brutal at school. This victim had to be hospitalised, due to the severity of her injuries. This incident made headlines in the community and became a great topic of discussion among the participants in my study. Daniella discussed how sly the girls were by setting up Beven (pseudonym) and then fighting with her in the school toilet, with six girls against one girl. During the individual interviews and group discussions, the participants also explained how Beven was thrown against the sink, how girls took turns kicking her and how one even took a run-up before extending her right foot to kick Beven's head. Further, this incident was recorded on an assailant's cell phone and it went viral. As a result, the Sydenham community and people in surrounding areas were made aware of the fight and, according to the participants; Beven became 'evening news' and the incident was widely discussed.

It was also spoken about during the individual interviews and the participants all viewed it as a savage attack and a case that clearly depicted how brutal and physically violent some girls could be at school. Such an incident is normally connected to male behaviour and some of the participants were horrified and even embarrassed that girls were now behaving in such a brutal manner.

***Linda:** There was that fight in the girls bathroom. It was over a boy and this girl got her friends to gang up on her in the toilet. It was vicious and something you would hear boys doing, yet girls are now ganging up on girls.*

***Ann:** There was that fight in the toilet. Again, over a boy. They tricked her to go to the toilet and then they ganged up on her and beat her up. This was vicious. Not girl-like.*

Leana: *It was bad. Beven was friends with the one girl's boyfriend and this girl and her friends lured her into the toilet, where they ganged up on her. They kicked her and hit her all over the toilet. They threw her against the wall and even videotaped the fight and the video went viral.*

Daniella: *There was this one incident when this girl kissed another girl's boyfriend but it was set up and she said to this girl: 'Let's go jogging and they went jogging and then she asked her the next day ... in school if she could go to the toilet with her. So she went to the toilet and then she had a problem with her and then she started hitting her and banging her head in the sink but not only her but a whole group of friends, and her friends with her were also hitting her; they were banging her head in the sink and they were booting her and they broke some of her ribs. It was sad.*

The participants are of the opinion that girls are taking over from boys in terms of aggressive behaviour and violent actions, and this is seen in girl-on-girl fights over heterosexual relationships. The participants indicate that, in the past, boys were vicious with other boys who threatened their relationships, tried to lure their girlfriends away, or even just communicated with their girlfriends. Now, however, it is the girls who are taking over and displaying similar behaviours. The incident involving Beven demonstrates the extent to which some girls will go to fight for their boyfriends, as well as inflict pain and injury on other girls at school. Violence among girls is therefore on the increase and becoming an issue of great concern in many schools in South Africa. The extracts highlighted above also clearly depict how girls in this study, and in society, construct their violent identities.

In addition, Kendell describes a fatal fight that took place between two girls in her community:

Kendell: *There was one an accident when both died.*

Researcher: *Both died? What happened?*

Kendell: *The boy came from a party with his girlfriend and the other girl jumped into the car and the girlfriend didn't know [it], because she didn't see her there [at first] and the girls started fighting and she cracked the window and there was the accident.*

Researcher: *So, the two girls started fighting in the car.*

Kendell: *Yes and the girlfriend was the only one that survived.*

Researcher: *Why were they fighting?*

Kendell: *Over a relationship.*

This conversation shows the extent to which girls will go to defend their heterosexual relationship. They engage in violent behaviour so that they can keep their boyfriends and thus continue proving that they are better than the rest of the females. The extract above clearly describes how violence and aggression can often lead to death, whether it is accidental or intentional. It is also evident that many girls often construct their violent and feminine identities, in ways that are harmful, not only to others, but to the girls themselves. An interesting aspect that Kendell comments on is that girls are not afraid to confront other girls in order to defend their heterosexual relationship. This shows the high levels of violence and aggression that can be displayed by girls.

Not all of the participants agree with girls engaging in violent acts over boys, as some of the participants below express their disapproval of girls fighting over boyfriends or boys. They state:

Kendra: *It is very irritating. Why waste your time over a boy, because a boy will come and go ...*

Daniella: *Because I mean girls abuse other girls over something silly such as a boy.*

These participants say that fighting over boys is not an appropriate reason to be violent. They add that there are more pressing reasons to fight other than simply over a boy, especially when Daniella refers to these incidents as being 'silly'.

The next theme will describe and discuss how girls in this study construct understandings of their safety in relation to single-sex or co-educational schools.

4.9. Single-sex schoolings versus co-educational schooling: The Safer Option

In this section, this scholar discusses how girls talk about the option of school safety, by drawing attention to single sex and co-educational school settings.

The National Schools Violence Study conducted by Burton and Leoschut (2013) found that 22.5% of high school learners had been threatened with violence or been the victim of an assault, robbery and/or sexual assault at school in 2012. Researchers (Leach, Fiscian, Kadzamira, Lamani, Machakanya, 2003) point out that girls are often the victims of violent acts perpetrated by boys showing their hegemonic strength and violence in schools is regarded as a 'boys' problem'. However, Brijraj (2016) adds that violent incidents are not limited to co-education schools but also occur at all-girl schools.

There is the assumption that single-sex schools can help free girls from the violence of boys (Bhana & Pillay, 2011). This idea is based on the argument that men and boys are largely perpetrators of violence (Bhana, 2012a; Parkes & Heslop, 2011). Research thus indicates that single-sex schools provide a more relaxed and academically centred environment for girls, who learn best in co-operative learning environments rather than competitive settings (Chen, 2016). In contrast, however, many of the views and opinions of the participants in this study have shown that girls are no longer regarded as victims of violence and are also perpetrating violence and engaging in brutal acts themselves. This prompted a change in participants'

thinking when asked which type of schooling they would prefer: single-sex or co-educational. Their responses varied, based on where they felt safer.

Researcher: *Do you think that girls would be safer in an all-girls school or would you prefer it to be a mixed school with boys?*

May: *Girls school, because there won't be any boys to fight over.*

Jenny: *All-girls school, because then there are no boys to start fights with or over them, so in an all-girls school, we are all equal.*

Angela: *I think in a girl school [it is] ... mainly cattish ... also in a co-ed school there are more things to fight over with the main cause of fights in a co-ed school being over the boys. In an all-girls school, boys are still the reason that they (girls) might fight but I think there are less fights in all-girls schools. Rumours and gossip are the cause of fights in an all-girls school.*

Gloria: *I have been in an all-girls school so I prefer to be in one. Because we girls ... get the treatment that we don't get at co-ed schools, as boys get all the attention [there].*

The above participants all chose single-sex schools as their preference, because they felt that it was the safer option. They came to this conclusion based on the impact that boys had on their safety in schools, as they viewed boys as their main threat, as girls fought against each other because of boys. This shows that boys have the power to draw girls into fights. This, once again, gives power to boys, as the participants above state that they would feel safer in an all-girl school, due to the non-appearance of boys. They add that in a single-sex school, there are no threats from boys within the school. There are incidents, reported by the study participants and in the media, which highlight the severity and violent nature of fights between girls, over boys. Therefore, many of the participants expressed the opinion that they would feel safer and more comfortable in a single-sex school.

The interview with Gloria provides an interesting insight into the reasons why single-sex schools are safer and better for girls. She says that being in such a school environment gives

girls the attention that they would not normally receive in a co-educational school. She adds that in a single-sex school, girls can develop their skills and further their academic careers. It is an environment in which girls are in control and not falling behind or neglected because of preferential attention given to male peers. This was reaffirmed in a study by Pahlke, Bigler and Patterson (2014, p. 262), who discovered that 'single-sex schooling...supports girls innately different learning styles which may be interested in outcomes concerning academic motivation and achievement'. In addition, Chen (2016) found that girls receive differential treatment, resulting in less learning support and teacher attention than their male peers in co-educational schools.

In contrast to many of the findings mentioned earlier in this section, not all of the participants said they would feel safer in a single sex-school. Some pointed out that there were dangers and negatives attached to being in a single-sex school. Girls tend to gossip more and talk about each other, and this can be dangerous, because they try to compete with each other for power and popularity at school.

The participants' state:

Leana: *Co-ed, because when you have the opposite sex involved, then you limit same-sex relationships and you try harder academic-wise to impress. But, in terms of violence, girls are not to be trusted, so a place with only girls will be hard. Before, girls in an all-girls school was nice. Now they are destroying each other. They are bringing each other down.*

Kim: *Sir, a lot of girls [are] in an all-girl school and ... I am not being with a dirty mind but girls are lesbians and they start influencing others. Ms Rust used to tell us these stories [about] when she went to London and it was in an all-girls school and these girls would just start stabbing teachers. She would say stuff in Afrikaans that they wouldn't know and they [were] wondering what ... this woman [was] saying. They [are] thinking she [is] saying that they are beautiful and in the meantime, she is saying something else. Then girls start gossiping about each other or spreading rumours and the competition is bad. Every girl wants to be better than the other.*

Nicole: *Mixed school, sir, because in an all-girl school there are more violent girls because they don't have boys around them to talk to and stuff ... and in a mixed school, the girls got the boys. Say if I get into a fight, maybe I get the boy to jump for me and then maybe I would be safer. Even though there are lots of fights for boys, they are distractions for the girls.*

Kendra: *Even though it was a half-private, half-government school, after the boys left, I wanted the boys back, because it started getting very boring. You would hear the same stories every day. People gossip about this one. Before, when we had the boys, it was equal. I am not saying it was fun. But the one girl would have this boyfriend the other girl would want that boy. There would be fights among the boys and you would expect the boys to fight and the girls would fight over boys. But in an all-girl school, the girls show their true colours.*

Jody: *In a co-educational school. Cause girls are worse than boys. They fight and gossip and are catty. I don't trust girls.*

Jenna: *I think co-ed schools, because if it is an all-girls school, it would be easier for girls to violate each other and you would find lots of 'queen bees' and 'gangster girls'.*

These participants clearly highlight that they are not in favour of attending a single-sex school. Their reasons include violence being more extreme and common in a single-sex school. The participants' opinions, highlighted in the extracts above, indicate that they provide various reasons why they would prefer to attend a co-educational school, as opposed to single-sex schools. This is echoed in studies, by Bhana and Pillay (2011), Bhana (2008) and Morash and Chesney-Lind (2006), which extends this idea by noting that girls violence is multifaceted and multidimensional.

Kim expresses her concern and disapproval or disdain about lesbianism in single-sex schools, and the strong influence that she feels lesbians have over other females in these schools. The participants also mention the issue of gossiping and how 'catty' girls tend to cause more fights at school. They would not feel safe, as girls fight with other girls in order to gain power over others in single-sex schools. Many of the girls think that single-sex schools are spaces in which girls violate and harm each other and, because of this, they expressed that they would

feel safer in a co-educational school. Many of them have heard accounts of violence in single-sex schools and this could perhaps explain why they hold this opinion. It is also interesting to note how these participants have changed their gendered thinking in terms of boys. In the past, boys were the problem and they used their strength to dominate situations. Girls were afraid of them. Now, the participants point out that boys are a safer bet, as they can be trusted and depended upon to protect them and can be a good distraction, whereas girls cannot be trusted and are becoming increasingly dangerous.

The next theme focuses on what can be done to make schools safer for girls and reduce violence from the participants' point of view.

4.10. The girls perspectives: Stop the violence!

Concerns about school violence are increasing both locally and internationally (Hymel & Swearer 2015; Maphalala & Mabunda 2014). Gender violence in South African schools is a matter of pressing concern (Bhana, 2013; Blaser, 2008; Tabane, 2014). The participants are of the opinion that schools are not safe. Some know how to defend themselves, either because of their upbringing or the location of their home and are not afraid of anyone. Other participants, however, felt that they had to be careful about whom they talked to and interacted with. This made school a dangerous place. Other research (Zuze, Reddy, Juan, Hannan, Visser and Winnaar, 2016) points out that the concerns about lack of safety in South African schools are far-reaching, and violence in these schools is often an extension of brutal behaviour in communities. This section gives the opinions of participants on how to make schools safer for girls.

Researcher: *What do you think can be done to make girls feel safer at school?*

Tatum: *Not sure, but maybe have more cameras and security.*

Linda: *I would enforce worse punishments to change them and prevent them from fighting.*

Ann: More security and cameras in areas of school that are high-risk, such as toilets or behind classrooms.

Jody: More security [and] people to look after us in school. Teachers to be more active and careful.

Leana: Separate unwanted or negative relationships. No girlfriend/boyfriend policies. Control the contact between each other.

Kendra: I would make sure that the girls get searched more properly but not in places where they shouldn't be, like when they enter the school gate. More cameras in the school

Angela: You can't change the way [most of the girls] act ... I will try to get the boys to just lay off violence with the girls at least.

Jenny: Um, security guards, teachers on duty.

These opinions all highlight the need for more security in schools. The participants want more cameras and even security guards, which draws attention to the levels of violence at schools, which they feel is epidemic at their learning institution. This is such a great problem that they feel there is the need to be "patrolled" and policed at school. The above shows the extreme nature of violence at their high school. The participants' views about security guards, cameras and the request for more searches highlight the concern that the participants have regarding the possession of weapons and/or harmful objects at school. They also suggest the need for more talks at school, to raise awareness about violence. This reveals that some girls are ready to partake in discussions about issues such as sex, drugs and violence if they help them and the school. They also suggest separating girls from boys, to put a stop to heterosexual relationships at school, although they still want boys at school with them.

These participants also say that although co-educational schooling is better, the sexes should be separated at school. This can be seen as a contradiction, because the participants want boys and girls together at school, but not all the time. However, they still stand by their opinion that girls are the problem. They are violent and perpetrate violence in schools with

boys and other girls. Leana highlights the issue of boyfriends and/or girlfriends. She believes that in order to keep girls safe in schools, these relationships should not be allowed. Once again, this statement does not mean that boys and girls should not be at the same school, but that these relationships should be prohibited there, as this could reduce violence among young female learners. However, it must be noted that violence never begins at school but, rather, filters through to school by means of outside interference and battles over gang issues or relationships. In addition, Gould and Ward (2015) argue that exposure to violence in the home and community increases the risk that children will grow up to use violence, or to be the victims of brutality themselves.

Ann indicates that certain areas in schools are of high risk and dangerous, such as the toilets and behind the classrooms, where violence occurs during the school day. She therefore suggests that schools organise more security. This was evident in the fight that took place in the toilet, early in 2016, which was broadcast in the media. If more security and cameras had been in place in this area, Beven's beating may never have occurred. Lastly, the participants also mention the role that teachers need to play, in being more visible and active during the school day, in order prevent incidents of violence at school.

However, Nicole feels differently and she states:

There is actually nothing you can do because some girls are violent in and out of school.

She highlights that there is nothing that can be done, as girls commit acts of aggression and this starts outside the school, either in the community or at home, and filters into the school. This participant adds that the situation is dire and perhaps any efforts or strides that are made to reduce brutal behaviour may be futile, because girls are violent in the present day.

4.11. Conclusion

In this chapter, the data from individual interviews and focus group discussions was analysed and coded into several broad themes. These highlighted and discussed relevant research

information, based on the research questions framing this study. In this chapter, this scholar attempted to show, by collecting the opinions of his participants, how some girls experience violence and choose to engage in acts of aggression in and around schools.

It is important to note that children need to feel safe in order to achieve their full potential at school; experiences of violence or lack of safety can have a devastating impact on their ability to learn and live healthy and productive lives (Nansel, *et al.*, 2003). Gender violence in South African schools is a matter of pressing concern (Bhana, 2013; Blaser, 2008; Tabane, 2014). In schools in this country, violence is seen as a means through which power is negotiated and manipulated in ways that perpetuate girls as victims of verbal and physical abuse by boys (Mncube & Harber, 2013; De Lange, Mitchell & Bhana, 2012). However, Bhana (2011) identifies girls self-agency and highlights that they, too, engage in violence at school. This is also evident, based on the many findings presented in this chapter.

Through recording the voices of the study participants, it became clear that these girls were aware of what violence was and that it differed depending on the community or area in which a person lived. It became evident that some schools situated in violent communities could also become sites of violence and harmful gender practices. A power struggle is always taking place and this was highlighted by the participants during many of the interviews. This also resonates with the work of Mills (2001) and Sundaram (2013), who argue that power and control, in terms of violence, is understood to be a battle. Many of the participants also explain that this battle for power and dominance is often fought by men and boys against women and girls. However, some of the findings of this study show that girls are also responsible for engaging in violent acts, both inside and outside school.

This study reveals that some girls are more dangerous than others and fight with boys to win back the power that was given to them, thus marking a changing era. This also suggests that there has been a gender shift. Girls also fight with other girls to show dominance and compete for power and status, and for many other reasons. Many participants also regard co-educational schooling as a safer choice, because they worry about the impact that some girls

have over other girls and the high incidence of violence in single-sex schools for girls. Lastly, some of the findings highlight the various ways in which violence at school can be reduced or stopped in order to create safer schools for girls, and even others.

The next chapter provides a summary of the main findings of this research and possible recommendations for reducing gender violence and creating safer schools for all learners

Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a synopsis of each chapter. Further, the main findings are considered in relation to the central research questions. This chapter goes on to provide possible recommendations, in an attempt to understand the roles girls play in resisting, accommodating and perpetrating gender violence among young girls in the Sydenham area.

This qualitative study draws data from 30 schoolgirls aged 13, of different races, who live in the Sydenham area, in Durban, and who attend Chernova High School. The participants have emerged from both working - and middle - class backgrounds. The study set out to understand the views of girls with regard to violence and how they resist, accommodate and perpetrate violence in schools and in their community. It further explores the different ways in which some girls not only challenge gendered norms but also compete with the dominant gender for power and authority. It also reveals the challenge that some girls now face, in having to deal not only with existing violent boys but also with the emerging threat of aggressive girls.

The data used in this study is drawn from individual interviews and focus group discussions in which the participants' words and opinions formed different themes that were analysed using the thematic analysis approach. Their opinions helped form an understanding on an emerging form of femininity that they feel is being developed by aggressive and violent girls who challenge the norms, while constructing their own identities.

5.2. Summary of chapters

Chapter One

In the introductory chapter, an outline of the background and focus, as well as the aims and objectives of this research, was provided. The four key research questions framing this study were listed and the research site was also described in this chapter.

- How do girls experience violence in a school?
- What is their role in violent gender relations?
- How do they resist gender violence?
- What are ways that violence can be stopped, from girls point of view?

Newspaper headlines taken from local and international newspapers were provided that set the scene to what many felt was a major issue. These showed the levels of aggression that some girls have reached in order to defend themselves and their heterosexual status. This chapter also provided a brief insight into the various theories that were employed in this study. Theory of Femininity and the Social Construction Theory were used as lenses through which the data, presented by the participants, was filtered and analysed.

Chapter Two

In this chapter a thematic review of related literature, produced both locally and abroad, was presented. Several studies conducted on the issue of gender violence in schools focused on boys as perpetrators and girls as victims, however, emerging literature showed that girls could not only be viewed simply as victims of gender violence in schools, as they express their own agency (Bhana 2008). This chapter examined a definition of violence and how it affected girls and boys in schools. It further revealed the different constructions and understandings of masculinity and femininity. This chapter documented the findings of other researchers relating to gender violence and the affect it had on girls who resisted, accommodated or perpetrated such violence. The research and literature was organised to form several broad themes that focused on gender violence and, in particular, how girls

challenged and competed with boys and other girls for power and dominance. The themes that emerged from this review included:

- Defining gender violence
- Gender violence in schools
- Girls violence and constructions of femininity
- Girls violence and schooling
- What can be done to address girls violence in school

Chapter Three

Chapter three provided an in-depth discussion and description on the methodology employed in the study. The research was conducted in Sydenham, formerly a coloured suburb in Durban. A qualitative research approach was used in this study. Interpretivist paradigm, case study methodology, purposive sampling and the snowball sampling method, as well as focus group and individual interviews were explored in this study. Biographies for each of the 30 participants were presented to provide personal backgrounds. These included their name (a pseudonym), first language, race, whom they lived with and whether any family members were employed. Lastly, the limitations of this research, issues of validity and reliability, ethical considerations and the data analysis process were also outlined and discussed.

Chapter Four

Chapter four presented an analysis and in-depth discussion of the findings through the use of verbatim data, and the main discoveries and conclusions were the focus of this chapter. From this researcher's focus group discussions and individual interviews, the following themes were drawn up and discussed in this chapter, through coding:

- Understanding violence
- Girls and safety at school
- Social pressures and expectations: Girls must be "prim and proper"
- "Certain boys, they might physically harm the girl"

- Agency and resistance: Girls fight back
- Violent girls at school: Why is this the case?
- “Girls fight with each other over boys”
- Single sex schooling versus co-educational schooling: The safer option
- The girls perspectives: Stop the violence!

5.3. Main findings

The data collected from the participants through individual interviews, as well as focus group discussions, was analysed and formed into different themes that helped to reveal the views and understanding of girls at Chernova High School. These 13-year-old girls offered various opinions as to why some girls were challenging gender norms and competing with boys and even other girls for power and dominance. This section provides a brief outline of the main findings in each theme.

Understanding violence

Participants were first asked what their understandings of violence and gender violence was and their responses noted the gendered nature of violence. Some of the participants looked at violence as physical while others included verbal and emotional aspects into it. This is aligned with literature that states that violence is a slippery concept (Levi & Maguire, 2002 cited in De Haan, 2008). It is not easy to explain. However, they expressed the opinion that some girls were now challenging this norm. They were actively resisting, accommodating and even perpetrating such violent acts. The participants said they were now becoming more aware of the threat that girls posed and the impact that they were having with regard to the balance of gendered issues.

Girls and safety at school

It is well documented and researched that violence is gendered, since it deals with boys and girls, and power and control (Bhana, 2008). The participants from Chernova High School suggested that they felt unsafe at school for reasons including boys’ attacks on girls, teacher

impact on their lives and drug and alcohol abuse. Most girls in this study felt that in order to ensure their safety at school, they needed to know how to fight or be a friend to someone who was feared and respected.

Social pressures and expectations: Girls must be “prim and proper”

The participants pointed out that society had expectations that girls had to live by. Gendered stereotypes promoted boys' behaviour as being normal and created a hidden set of rules for girls to live by. These aimed to keep girls in their place and the participants gave this as a reason for girls fighting back. They have challenged these stereotypes and actively competed with boys for the dominance that was given to males in the past. They fight against being dominated (Bhana, 2008) by boys, by dominating the boys themselves. This allows them to protect themselves.

“Certain boys, they might physically harm the girl”

It was important to note that the participants said that some boys still fought with girls and demonstrated their physical strength over them. It has been documented that boys were more notorious for being in fights (Leach, Dunne & Salvi, 2014; Bhana, 2012). Some girls, however, still allowed boys to dominate and exercise power over them and this was blamed on the girls upbringing and/or inherent fear of boys.

Agency and resistance: Girls fight back

Research by Bhana (2011), Pinheiro (2006) and Mirsky (2001) examined the dominance that boys had over girls in schools. They suggested that it was a power struggle that boys were not only involved in, but were winning. However, more recent studies, and the voices of the participants showed that girls were no longer tolerating this. They were actively fighting back and competing with boys and other girls for power. One of the participants even stated that girls had to learn to defend themselves in order to survive. This showed the levels of violence that children were exposed to, that they needed to fight in order to survive and that they could not rely on others for protection. The participants expressed their concern by stating that girls

were just as violent and aggressive as boys. Reasons were given as to why girls were displaying violent tendencies and some of these indicated a change in thinking. A change in household dynamics was noticed, whereby the mother was now the sole provider and the daughter was observing the interactions between mother and father and not witnessing the father 'putting the mother in her place'.

Violent girls at school: Why is this the case?

The participants said that girls were as dangerous as boys and could not be trusted. They gave reasons why some girls fought and one was a lack of trust between the girls. They spread rumours and gossip about each other, which the participants said caused problems. They also highlighted the issue of status as being a reason behind boys' fights but now girls battled for the same reason. Girls wanted to be popular and feared by their peers, the same power that boys pursued. Girls were now actively engaging in fights and the results were that they were developing reputations for being fighters and this made them popular. Girls also use gossip as a tool to draw out other girls and this often leads to an ambush, as these girls are not prepared for a fight. The participants voiced the opinion that there are some girls that will spread rumours and gossip about other girls just to get a reaction and this often lead to confrontations between the girls. In order to lure the girls out, they would start rumours and tell others lies and made up stories about the girls which would get back to these girls and they would confront these girls which would lead to fights and arguments. This was evident in many fights that took place in schools this year (2016).

'Girls fight with each other over boys'

The pursuit of heterosexual relationships was one of the main reasons for the involvement of girls in fights. The participants said that some girls actively engaged in fights with boys and girls in order to defend their heterosexual relationships. This, girls felt, was an important indicator of their status and reputation in schools. This was illustrated in three fights (indicated in chapter one) that occurred in schools locally and abroad, where girls became involved in fights over boys and these incidents made headlines in major newspapers across

the world. These fights, which did not only involve girls but were organised and arranged by girls, shows how girls have developed a sense of agency.

Evidently, these girls have demonstrated that they are territorial, which then made them possessive over their boyfriends. Girls were overly protective of their boyfriends and if any other girls talked to them or got close to them, the girls would victimise them, isolate them or physically abuse them. This tended to result in physical fights. This aggression was evident and was once perpetrated by boys who used to fight other boys over girls. However, girls were now taking their aggression to new heights and challenging other girls who not only interacted with their boyfriends but also befriended them. This was a challenge, as girls were unaware of who to talk to and who to avoid, which prevented them from socialising and constructing new identities.

Single-sex schooling versus co-educational schooling: The safer option

The participants expressed the opinion that co-educational schooling was better and safer for girls, as compared to single-sex schooling. It was thought that, although boys still posed a threat to girls, this was nothing compared to the impact girls were having upon each other. They were being aggressive and, in cases, more dangerous than boys. The participants added that girls gossiped, told stories and competed with other girls. Although it was discussed that girls fought with others over their heterosexual status, the participants still thought that it was safer to be attend school with boys, as they were a distraction and could also serve as protection. This was demonstrated in the video of the girls involved in the fight in the toilet, as a boy tried to stop the fight and even took a few blows from the girls in order to protect the victim. It was also important for girls and boys to work and learn together so that they could construct their identities.

The girls perspectives: Stop the violence!

The participants gave various suggestions as to ways in which violence in schools could be limited or even stopped. They suggested extra guards and cameras, although these turned

schools into prisons, where the learners were under surveillance all the time. This reiterated the work done by scholars when they painted the picture of violence in schools (Hymel & Swearer, 2015; Maphalala & Mabunda, 2014; Tabane, 2014; Bhana, 2013; and Blaser, 2008).

5.4. Possible recommendations

It has been suggested that school served as a vital tool for children to socialise and construct their identities while building identities, relationships and preparing themselves for their future, so that they could partake and improve society, due to the fact they spent most of their time in school (Burton, 2008; 2016). Yet, according to many scholars, schools were falling short of this mark, as they no longer provided a safe learning environment. Instead they promoted violence and encouraged gender inequality (Bhana, 2005) or silenced the voices of girls by ignoring their ability to possess self-agency. These matters of gender inequality and violence had become a major concern (Tabane, 2014; Bhana, 2013; Blaser, 2008). This was not only an issue at Chernova High School but affected schools both locally and abroad (Crews, et al., 2008).

As the participants stated, schools were unsafe and some learners, both boys and girls, had to defend themselves or rely on friends who, due to their upbringing, were capable of fighting. This was a problem and schools were not looking at curbing this issue of violence but encouraging gender inequalities through the day-to-day running of the school. This was echoed by (Johnson et al., 2011) who suggested that more effort should be focused on the prevention of violence rather than punishment. This section presented the recommendations that emerged from the participants' data on ways we could assist in making our schools safe for boys and girls, as violence affected both boys and girls and, as this study has highlighted, some girls had become just as dangerous and aggressive as boys.

As a primary school educator, I would like to mention that many of the changes that were recommended would be implemented at my school and within my classroom. These

recommendations were drawn from participants and included some of my personal opinions, based on my teaching experience and interactions with learners, both in and out of school.

Firstly, from an educator's point of view as well from that of the participants, I am of the opinion that religious leaders, members of the community, educators, school management and parents should talk more to children about issues of violence. Educators should discuss this issue and the importance of learning being facilitated in a safe environment. The concern is that policies and procedures are in place to deal with violence after it occurs but nothing is there to deal with learners experiencing a build-up of anger or who are being bullied or teased. So, these learners feel the only thing they can do is to engage in violence in order to solve incidents. Learners are put in positions where they feel they have no other option but to fight. This shouldn't be the case. As educators and members of society, there is a need to support learners, promote gender equality and provide safe and stress-free learning environments and living conditions if we want to encourage and prepare them to take their place in society, where they can participate and contribute towards making both it and our country a better place. Schools can also form support groups, where learners can talk to other learners in a safe environment, as some children would rather talk to each other than to educators or adults.

I am of the opinion that schools need to take responsibility for the actions that occur while learners are in their care. Schools tend to pass the blame on parents, society and even the media. Educators need to listen to children more when they bring issues to our attention and not pass them off as unimportant or make jokes about the situation, because educators think it is funny for a girl to hit a boy or impossible for a girl to be violent. Educators need to be more understanding of their situation and listen to them more, which could help us understand their position and what they are feeling. Selikow et al., (2009) suggest that by understanding adolescents' beliefs as contradictory, educators (and others) can identify spaces within these contradictions where positive intervention work can take place.

Schools also need to deal with situations more efficiently and not allow them to get out of control. With regard to the fight in the toilet at Chernova High School and in the school in the United States, both took place during school hours and this led to parents asking where the educators were. How could it occur in school during teaching time and so many learners witness the fight, yet no teachers were there to stop it. The consequences of the violent actions that occurred in both these schools resulted in one learner being admitted into hospital and the other being fatally injured. Schools need to revise their policies in order to protect the children that are in their care. This includes the use of the toilets, which is a space best suited for fights, as the participants state no educators are present there.

As a male educator, I suggest that another way to handle or curb gender violence in schools is through the hidden curriculum, which needs to be examined. Through the hidden curriculum, educators promote and reinforce gender inequalities and stereotypes. The separation of boys and girls, our greeting and the tasks we give the learners all assist in promoting male dominance at schools. Girls are shown that boys are given special privileges. They run around and come to class late and perspiring, but when a girl displays sporty attributes then educators are quick to quash these and put the girl in 'her place'. I have thus changed my greeting from: 'Good morning, boys and girls,' to: 'Good morning, class.' This; puts learners on par with each other and shows them that neither sex is better than the other.

With regard to security in schools, although participants feel the need to have more cameras and security guards in school to perform more searches, so as to prevent weapons and drugs being brought in; this will only succeed if the school authorities begin to take those incidents brought to their attention more seriously. It is no use observing fights and telling learners not to fight, as this will not solve the problem. These children will fight again. Educators need to get to the root of the problem and identify why a child turns to violence in order to solve an issue. However, I propose that there be more lighting and an adult presence in isolated areas in the school, such as toilets and behind classrooms. During lessons, if schools have more than one toilet, some of the toilets could be closed until break. Teachers can then control the environment near the toilets that are open. Educators need to be adults and not just say 'it is not my job', because ensuring child safety is a part of what we do.

The issue of boyfriends and girlfriends is more difficult to curb. Even companies are finding it problematic to prevent colleagues from dating each other. They have put policies in place, such as dismissal, if employees are found dating at the workplace. Educators need to promote and instil trust in our learners so that they don't feel threatened by everyone. Such emotions normally lead to fighting and this is what educators need to prevent. The participants feel that they are safer at a co-educational school, so educators need to utilise this fact in order to curb violence in schools.

5.5. Conclusion

This dissertation concludes by arguing that gender is the key to how violence is formed and negotiated. Therefore, any attempt to address violence must also examine gender inequalities, unequal power relations and the local setting in which the relations of power are accommodated, resisted and enacted. Gender violence in schools remains of huge concern (Tabane, 2014; Bhana, 2013; Blaser, 2008), however, it is no longer an issue of powerful, superior boys taking advantage of weak and defenceless girls (Mncube & Harber, 2013; De Lange, Mitchell & Bhana, 2012). It needs to be understood that girls also have self-agency (Bhana, 2011) and are becoming as aggressive and violent as their male counterparts.

The findings in this chapter and this study on the whole supports emerging literature on girls agency and their ability to resist, negotiate and even perpetrate gender violence in order to challenge gendered norms and compete for power and dominance, while protecting themselves, and their feminine identities and heterosexual status.

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Appendices



22 January 2016

Mr Virgil Eugene David (203514200)
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr David,

Protocol reference number: HSS/1634/015M (Linked to HSS/1197/013)
Project title: A case of girls' violence among high school learners in Durban

Full Approval – Expedited Application

With regards to your application received on 03 November 2015, The documents submitted have been accepted by the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and **FULL APPROVAL** for the protocol has been granted.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

Please note: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Professor Deeyla Bhana
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor P. Morojele
Cc School Administrator: Ms Tyzer Khumalo

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

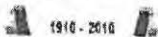
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Appendix Two (a)

Consent letters



Informed Consent Letter to Parents/Guardians

Dear parent/guardian of

I am writing to request your permission for your daughter/ward to participate in a research study entitled:

A case study of girls violence among high school learners in Durban

My name is Virgil Eugene David and I am currently studying towards my Masters in Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). As part of the requirements of this degree, I am required to conduct research that will be used in my thesis. This study seeks to investigate the roles that some girls occupy, with regard to gender violence and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools. It also aims to demonstrate how some girls challenge and refute unequal power relations and harmful gender norms. This study will also explore the ways in which factors such as substance abuse, poverty, media, gangs, race and class perhaps impact of girls involvement in violence, both in school and in the wider community.

I require grade eight primary school girls to participate in this research. I would be very grateful if you would consent to your daughter/ward participating in this study.

If you allow your daughter/ward to participate in this research, she will be interviewed both as part of a focus group and individually. The interviews will be audio-taped and these tapes will be transcribed.

All the interviews will be recorded and then transcribed. This will be used for the analysis of data and completion of the actual write up of the thesis. The interviews (both focus groups and individual interviews) will take place on the school property with the permission of the school principal.

I will conduct these interviews in a quiet and vacant venue, such as an empty classroom. If the interviews cannot take place during the week or during school hours, I will make arrangements with your consent, to conduct these interviews after school hours or during weekends. I will then, with your consent, provide transport for your daughter/ward.

Please note:

- * Participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your daughter/ward (and your daughter/ward has the right to withdraw himself) from this study at any time. She will not be penalised if she chooses to do so.

- * Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Your daughter's/ward's identity and the identity of her school will not be revealed at any time, as pseudonyms (different names) will be used to protect their rights to privacy. Your daughter's/ward's identity will not be revealed in writing or otherwise.

- * The interviews will be between 45 minutes to an hour long.

- * Anything discussed during these interviews will not be used against your daughter/ward.

- * This project will not be a cost to you, as I will provide transport when needed.

- * The interviews recorded and then transcribed will be stored in secure storage on campus and then destroyed after 5 years.

* You and your daughter/ward will be offered to read or view the outcome or results of my study.

* This study does not intend to harm your daughter/ward in any way. It also does not intend to create any stress or anxiety for your daughter/ward. However, you are free to contact a psychologist, should the need arise. She is based at the Edgewood campus: Ms Lindi Ngubane. Her telephone number is 031 2603653 and email address is ngubanel@ukzn.ac.za

I may also be contacted at:

virgil_david@yahoo.com

Tel: 0798719518

My supervisor's contact details are:

Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD

School of Education

College of Humanities

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South Africa

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Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793

email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Mariette Snyman

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 8350 E-mail: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION

I (full name/s of parent/guardian)
of (full name/s of daughter/ward) hereby confirm
that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project, and I
consent to my daughter/ward participating in this research project. I understand that my
daughter/ward is at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should she so desire

Additional consent,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES /NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES/ NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes YES /NO

Kindly discuss your daughters'/son's/wards' participation with him/her, and if you both agree and
you give his/her permission, fill the form below and return to me.

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix Two (b)

Consent letters



Informed Consent Letter to Participants

Dear participant

I am writing to request your permission to participate in a research study entitled:

A case study of girls violence among high school learners in Durban

My name is Virgil Eugene David and I am currently studying towards my Masters in Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). As part of the requirements of this degree, I am required to conduct research that will be used in my thesis. This study seeks to investigate the roles that some girls occupy, with regard to gender violence and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools. It also aims to demonstrate how some girls challenge and refute unequal power relations and harmful gender norms. This study will also explore the ways in which factors such as substance abuse, poverty, media, gangs, race and class perhaps impact of girls involvement in violence, both in school and in the wider community.

I require grade eight high school girls to participate in this research. I would be very grateful if you would consent to your daughter/ward participating in this study.

If you agree to do so, you will be part of a focus group interview (group interview) discussion and individual interview. With your permission, the interview will be audio-taped and these tapes will be transcribed. This is aimed at gaining an understanding of your views and experiences of school violence.

All the interviews will be audio – taped and then transcribed. This will be used for the analysis of data and completion of the actual write up of the thesis. The interviews (both focus groups and individual interviews) will take place on the school property with the permission of the school principal.

I will conduct these interviews in a quiet and vacant venue, such as an empty classroom. If the interviews cannot take place during the week or during school hours, I will make arrangements with your consent, to conduct these interviews after school hours or during weekends. I will then, with your consent, provide transport for your daughter/ward.

Please note:

* Participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from this study at any time. You will not be penalised if you chooses to do so.

* Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. Your identity and the identity of your school will not be revealed at any time, as pseudonyms (different names) will be used to protect the rights to privacy.

* Anything discussed during these interviews will not be used against you.

* This project will not be a cost to you.

* The interviews recorded and then transcribed will be stored in secure storage on campus and then destroyed after 5 years.

* You will be offered the chance to read or view the outcome or results of my study.

* This study does not intend to harm you in any way. It also does not intend to create any stress or anxiety for you. However, you and your parents/guardians are free to contact a psychologist, should the need arise. She is based at the Edgewood campus: Ms Lindi Ngubane. Her telephone number is 031 2603653 and email address is ngubanel@ukzn.ac.za

I may also be contacted at:

virgil_david@yahoo.com

Tel: 0798719518

My supervisor's contact details are:

Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD

School of Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

Private Bag X03

Cnr Mariannhill & Richmond Roads

Ashwood

3605

South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603

Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793

email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Mariette Snyman

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 8350 E-mail: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

If you would like any further information or if you are unclear about anything, please feel free to contact me at any time. Your co-operation and participation will be greatly appreciated.

Kindly discuss your participation with your parents/guardians, and if you both agree and they give you permission, complete the form below and return to me.

DECLARATION

I (full name/s of participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project, and I consent to participating in this research project. I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire

Additional consent,

I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES /NO

Video-record my interview / focus group discussion YES/ NO

Use of my photographs for research purposes YES /NO

Kindly discuss your participation with your parent/guardian, and if you both agree and you give his/her permission, fill the form below and return to me.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix Two (c)

Consent letters



Informed Consent Letter to School Principal

Dear principal

Ms/Mrs/Mr/Dr.....

Name of school

Re: Permission to conduct a research study in your school

I am writing to request your permission to conduct a research study in your school. This research study is entitled:

A case study of girls violence among high school learners in Durban

My name is Virgil Eugene David and I am currently studying towards my Masters in Education Degree at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). As part of the requirements of this degree, I am required to conduct research that will be used in my thesis. This study seeks to investigate the roles

that some girls occupy, with regard to gender violence and how they accommodate, negotiate, perpetrate and resist such violence in schools. It also aims to demonstrate how some girls challenge and refute unequal power relations and harmful gender norms. This study will also explore the ways in which factors such as substance abuse, poverty, media, gangs, race and class perhaps impact of girls involvement in violence, both in school and in the wider community.

I require fifteen grade eight high school girls to participate in this research. I would be very grateful if you would consent to the above mentioned girls participating in this study. They will be selected from your school.

All the interviews will be audio – taped, with the permission of the parent/guardian and the participant, recorded and then transcribed. This will be used for the analysis of data and completion of the actual write up of the thesis. The interviews (both focus groups and individual interviews) will take place on the school property with the permission of the school principal.

I will conduct these interviews in a quiet and vacant venue, such as an empty classroom. If the interviews cannot take place during the week or during school hours, I will make arrangements with your consent, to conduct these interviews after school hours or during weekends. I will then, with the consent of the parents, provide transport for their daughter/ward.

Please note:

* Participation is completely voluntary and the participants have the right to withdraw from this study at any time.

* Confidentiality will be maintained at all times. The identity and the identity of the school will not be revealed at any time, as pseudonyms (different names) will be used to protect their rights to privacy.

* Anything discussed during these interviews will not be used against the participants

* This project will not be a cost to you or the participant.

* The interviews recorded and then transcribed will be stored in secure storage on campus and then destroyed after 5 years.

* the participants and their parents will be offered to read or view the outcome or results of my study.

I may also be contacted at:

virgil_david@yahoo.com

Tel: 0798719518

My supervisor's contact details are:

Professor Deevia Bhana, PhD

School of Education

College of Humanities

University of KwaZulu-Natal

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Cnr Mariannhill & Richmond Roads

Ashwood

3605

South Africa

Tel: +27 (0) 31 260 2603

Fax: +27 (0) 31 260 3793

email: bhanad1@ukzn.ac.za

You may also contact the Research Office through:

Mariette Snyman

HSSREC Research Office,

Tel: 031 260 8350 E-mail: snymanm@ukzn.ac.za

DECLARATION

I (full name/s of school principal)
of (name of school) hereby confirm that I
understand the contents of this document and the nature of this research project, and I consent
to the learners (girls) participating in this research project. I also grant permission for my
school to be used as the research site. I understand that the learners and the school are free to
withdraw from the research project at any time

SIGNATURE OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

DATE

.....

.....

Appendix 3

Interview Schedule

Focus group

- 1 How would you describe the community of Is it a violent or peaceful community? Explain.
- 2 What about your school? Is it safe? Explain.
- 3 Are there regular incidents of violence? Explain
- 4 What types of violence? Provide examples.
- 5 What explanations can be offered for the violence in your school?
- 6 Who are predominantly the perpetrators of violence?
- 7 Are girls involved in incidents of violence? What types of violent incidents?
- 8 What are some of the reasons that girls get into fights?
- 9 Do girls get into fights with other girls and/or boys? Explain.
- 10 What types of fights are girls involved in? Explain
- 11 Are girls bullies and/or get bullied? Explain
- 12 Are there any inter-racial fights in school? Explain.
- 13 Who is more violent? Girls or boys? Why?
- 14 Do girls initiate [start] fights in school? Explain.
- 15 What disciplinary measures are taken against violent learners?
16. Are these disciplinary measures successful? Explain.
17. What measures do you think should be taken to reduce the incidents of violence in your school?

Appendix 4

Individual Interview Schedule

Biographical Information

Age

Grade

Who do you live with?

Where do you live?

How many in your household?

Are there incidents of violence in your home?

Tell me about yourself (do you have a boyfriend or do you like anyone?).

Describe your family.

Do your parents work?

What type of work do they do?

What is violence?

What are the different kinds of violence?

Who is/are the main perpetrator/s of these kinds of violence?

How do you feel about it?

What do you understand about the term gender violence?

1. How would you describe the community of ...? Is it a violent or peaceful community? Explain.
2. How are girls including yourself, expected to behave inside and outside of school?
3. Why do you think girls are expected to behave in such a manner?

4. Who instructs girls or puts these expectations on girls for them to behave in such a manner.
5. What about school? Do you feel safe in school? Explain.
6. Have you ever been involved in violence in or outside of school? What were your experiences of violence? Tell me about this.
7. Have you ever been violent towards boys at school? Explain
8. Have you ever been violent towards girls at school? Explain
9. Are there many incidents of girls being violent at school? Explain
10. Do you think girls are more scared of boys or other girls in schools? Explain
12. Are girls victims of fights from boys? Explain
13. Why do boys fight with girls? Explain your answer?
14. Do girls stand up against boys when they start fights? Explain
15. Do other girls jump for girls when boys are fighting with them?
16. Are all girls afraid of boys? Explain
17. Have you or other girls in school ever been violent or aggressive towards a teacher / s at school and vice versa. Explain.
18. Have you ever been a victim of violence from either boys or girls? Tell me about this
19. Have you witnessed or observed other girls involvement in violence? Explain.
20. Do you think girls are more violent or aggressive than boys?
21. What are some of the reasons girls get into fights? Tell me about this
22. Do you think girls fight because of the background? Explain your answer
23. Do you think violence is the only way to resolve conflict? Explain
24. What about homophobia, how do you feel about it?
25. Have you heard of girls fighting with other girls because they are lesbian? Why do you think this happens?
26. What about gangs? Are there gangs in your school or community? How do you know?
27. Are girls part of gangs in your school or community? How do you know?

28. What roles do you think girls have in gangs?
29. Do you think girls belong in gangs as much as boys? Explain
30. Do gang fights in the community come into the school?
31. Do you think poverty, race, substance abuse and unstable family background causes girls to fight or become victims of fights?
32. How does your school deal with incidents of violence?
33. Do you think the forms of discipline and punishments are effective? Explain
34. How do teachers deal with fights in the classroom or school yard?
35. Do girls fight with teachers both verbally and physically?
36. What can be done to make girls feel safe in schools from boys or other girls?
37. If you were the principal or even the minister of education, what do you think should be done to curb or prevent violent incidents in school?
38. Do you think girls are safer in an all-girl school or a co – ed school? Explain your answer.

Appendix 5

Turnitin Report

11/28/2016

Turnitin Originality Report

Turnitin Originality Report

Full Dissertation by Virgil Eugene David

From Postgraduates (Gender and Education) (Postgraduates)



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