

**Aggression in high school sports:
A qualitative study of coaches' perspectives.**

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Declaration

I, Alexandra Thelma Nidd, declare that

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Dedication

For my mom and dad, who never stop believing in me,
even when I don't feel so believable...

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- The coaches who participated in my research. Thank you for giving of your time to share your valuable knowledge. Your contributions are greatly appreciated.

Abstract

This study explored the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports, focusing on the perspectives of high school coaches. The research was motivated by three research questions, namely: (1) What types of aggression are observed by coaches in high school sports? (2) What systemic factors do coaches attribute to the expression of aggressive behaviours in high school sports? (3) How do coaches encourage and/or discourage aggressive behaviour in high school sports? Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from a sample population of participant coaches, and this data was analysed with the aim of identifying common themes. The research findings suggest aggression to be a complex and dynamic phenomenon, as seen from the perspectives of high school sports coaches. These findings also offer insights into how aggression may be effectively addressed, by focusing on elements such as clarity, consistency and communication within the context of high school sports.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the chapter

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the research as a whole, and commences with an introduction of the research phenomenon and the specific problems inherent in this phenomenon. Once these have been established, information will be provided regarding the conceptual framework, purpose and significance of the study itself, and how these factors were expressed and organised in the final dissertation.

1.2 Introduction of the phenomenon

With an increase in media coverage of sporting events worldwide, sports personalities are often framed as role models for numerous teenagers who support, and often participate in, the same sports as their heroes. Along with the media promoting the wealth, fame and influence surrounding almost every aspect of professional athletes, the behaviour of certain sports personalities are frequently highlighted. Unfortunately, the sensationalism of media coverage, without necessary context, often leads to the public perceiving certain behaviours as characteristic of the sports themselves, rather than of the players involved. Among the more controversial of these behaviours is the aggression displayed by athletes in relation to high-level competition (Rascale, Coulomb-Cabagno & Delsarte, 2005).

1.3 Statement of the problem

Aggressive behaviour, both physical and verbal, are deemed by many to be a necessary component of competition, as there is evidence that aggression may contribute to improved performance in some instances (Sheldon & Aimar, 2001), and can be used as an intimidation factor against opponents. In certain instances, sports coaches will treat the construct of aggression as a valuable and necessary resource amongst the athletes they coach; a resource which they will have to manage very carefully if they are to prevent it from negatively affecting the very athletes and teams involved. As a result, the distinction between unnecessary and necessary aggression becomes blurred, even at school level sport.

1.4 Purpose of the study

1.4.1 Aims

This study aimed to highlight and explore the phenomenon of aggression as a constituent of high-school sport; and how the interaction of various factors can contribute to the manifestation of aggression. The focus of the study was on the perspectives of coaches involved in high-school sports, as they were identified as potentially instrumental in encouraging or discouraging aggression when it manifests within this context (Orr, 2012). Thus, coaches have a unique role to play, in the observation and mediation of the athletes they coach, as they have a direct reciprocal relationship with these athletes, who themselves are subject to influence from a variety of sources, including their peers, parents, other family members, spectators of their sporting events, as well as the media as a whole. The concept of mediation, as understood by this study, includes the use of communication and negotiation to facilitate agreement between individuals involved in a specific context.

When there is no clear and consistent understanding of what is deemed aggressive behaviour in the context of high school sport, there will be inherent difficulties in how to effectively identify behaviours leading to problematic and dangerous acts of aggression amongst high school athletes. These difficulties will also present themselves at times when intervention and mediation of certain aggressive behaviour is necessary; either to prevent injury to one or more athletes, or to prevent other negative consequences such as disqualification or suspension, of individuals or entire teams, from certain sporting and/or academic platforms.

1.4.2 Research questions

The following research questions were identified as being central to the purpose of the study, as well as the context within which the study takes place.

- a) What types of aggression are observed by coaches in high school sports?
- b) What systemic factors do coaches attribute to the expression of aggressive behaviours in high school sports?
- c) How do coaches encourage and/or discourage aggressive behaviour in high school sports?

1.5 Conceptual framework for the study

Considering the context of high-school sport, it is evident that any attempts to better understand, identify and mediate aggressive behaviour needs to take into account the various contributing factors, or systems, involved. This concept of the “system” refers to an organised structure containing specific components related to a specific function or functions. By this understanding, all systems interact with other systems, and this interaction affects the way each system functions over time. When looking at the individual athlete, there are various intrinsic factors, such as the individual’s genetic predisposition to aggression (Nauert, 2015), as well as interaction of various biological factors, for example, adrenalin and testosterone, which are both linked to aggressive behaviour. Other intrinsic factors include the individual’s personality traits and characteristics, which may impact on how they express their aggression. In addition to these intrinsic factors, there are a number of extrinsic factors which need to be considered. Examples of these include the athlete’s peers, teammates, coaches and parents, who all have specific expectations regarding the athlete’s performance and behaviour in the sporting arena (Woodman & Hardy, 2001; Noblet & Gifford, 2003). Further to these, there are also certain expectations put forth by the schools and sports officials involved, as well as the spectators attending the sporting events in question.

High-school athletes, as well as the schools they represent, face the constant challenge of being openly judged by any spectator who attends their sporting events. These opportunities for public evaluation give spectators the ability to potentially influence the behaviour of the athletes and coaches involved in these sporting events. These spectators are in the position to verbally express their opinions and feelings regarding the coaches and athletes. As much as spectators, acting alone or in a crowd, have the ability to affect the mindset and behaviour of athletes in a positive way, so too can they escalate aggressive behaviours to inappropriate, and possibly dangerous, levels. If not managed correctly, the behaviour of spectators in the crowd can undermine the structures already put in place by various other stakeholders, for how athletes are expected to conduct themselves in the high school sporting arena.

1.6 Significance of the study

This study explored the relationship between the abovementioned intrinsic and extrinsic factors contributing to aggression in high school sport. With a focus on the perceptions of high school coaches, the study aims to identify and highlight potential strengths and weaknesses inherent in this context, as they relate to the construct of aggression (Anderson &

Bushman, 2002). By exploring the relationship between various factors, this study highlights the importance of coaches acknowledging their athletes as individuals, rather than only as part of their team. In reality, coaches are often unaware of the actions and interactions of their players in other realms of their lives, such as at home, on the playground, or in the classroom, and as such, coaches may be unaware of any negative consequences that their specific coaching techniques may have on the behaviour of these athletes away from the field. A holistic approach to understanding aggression will better inform the coaches involved, especially in the area of mediating aggressive behaviour in the teams that they coach. This is possibly an important step in reducing the negative consequences of sports aggression, such as injury and/or suspension from certain activities.

1.7 Organisation of the dissertation

The concept of aggression will be discussed in detail; with a focus on theories that propose to explain the characteristics of aggression, and aggressive behaviour in sport (see Chapter 2). This discussion will include an overview of aggression as a construct shared by individuals, to a greater or lesser degree, and how this construct is mediated on an individual level, taking into account an individual's genetic and biological constituents.

Further to this, theories involving aggression and its susceptibility to factors that are extrinsic to the individual, will also be evaluated; specifically those highlighting the influence of one's social interactions and environmental characteristics, and how these affect the psychological, cognitive, and emotional functioning of those involved.

Following on from the relevant theories pertaining to the study, an outline of the research methodology will follow (see Chapter 3). This will include the rationale for how and why the research methodology was structured, and how this structure related to the aims and purpose of the study. Details pertaining to participants, data collection and data analysis will also be specified, as well as how each of these was informed by issues of validity, reliability and rigour in an attempt to maximise the credibility of the study.

Data collection was done in the form of interviews, and transcripts from these interviews were subjected to thematic analysis by the researcher. The subsequent findings are discussed in the form of the themes identified in the data, along with explanations of how these themes relate to each other and to the research as a whole (see Chapter 4). Further to this, these findings are then discussed in light of their relevance to the theories reviewed in the literature (see Chapter 5).

As a way of better illustrating the contributions of the data findings to understanding aggression in high-school sports, this research focuses on the general aggression model as the theoretical framework by which to effectively interpret the themes identified in the findings. Finally, the research dissertation concludes with a discussion on how the interactions within and between these themes, can play a crucial role in how aggression is manifested, expressed, and mediated across the various systems that together form the principle context of high-school sport (see Chapter 6).

1.8 Chapter summary

This chapter served to introduce the research as a whole, and provided information relating to the research phenomenon (coaches' perceptions of aggression in high school sports). The conceptual framework of the study was discussed, along with its purpose and significance. This information provides the reader with a grounding from which to approach the following chapter pertaining to literature review.

Chapter 2. Literature review

2.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter aims to identify, evaluate and discuss the relevant literary information pertaining to the research phenomenon. To facilitate a better understanding of the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports, it is essential to recognise the various factors and relational dynamics inherent in this unique context. Aggression in high school sport is multifaceted on many levels; primarily, the basic definitions of ‘aggression’ are variable, as are the theories which seek to explain the causes of this aggressive behaviour. For these reasons, the term ‘aggression’ will be unpacked and clearly defined, along with the relevant contributing theories and hypotheses identified in the available literature.

Where possible, each of the theories discussed aims to include a number of perspectives relating to the role of the individual athlete, as well as those pertaining to the broader systems of social learning. Examples of the latter include, but are not limited to, environmental cues, the influence of parents, peer dynamics, as well as coaching styles and strategies.

2.2 Defining aggression

Throughout the process of reviewing relevant literature, it became evident that the term “aggression” is conceptualised in a number of ways, and often varies depending on the context in which the term is used, as well as the individuals who are using it. As such, the specific constituents of aggression are not always explicit. Thus, it is necessary to outline a number of the definitions given to describe aggression, with the intention of identifying its key components within the sporting context.

Baron and Richardson (1994) define aggression as a behaviour, rather than an emotion or an individual personality characteristic. This behaviour is goal-driven and aimed at inflicting harm or injury on another, who in turn, is moved to avoid the negative consequences of such behaviour (Baron & Richardson, 1994). Gill and Williams (2008) focused the definition of aggression further, by proposing four criteria that characterise aggression. They emphasise the notion that aggression must be understood as a behaviour aimed at another living thing; and this behaviour must be intentional, involving harm or injury of some kind. This harm or injury need not be limited to the physical, but may include harm to the emotional or psychological well-being of another. Examples of non-physical aggressive behaviour may

include purposefully undermining someone's self-esteem and integrity, and intentionally causing someone to feel embarrassed or inadequate, through verbal assaults and intimidating behaviour.

This being said, an important contributing factor to whether certain behaviours are labelled as aggressive or not, seem to depend on the interpretation of such behaviours by others. Many behaviours in sport are incorrectly referred to as 'good' aggression, when they could actually be better described as being examples of assertive behaviour. Here it is important to highlight the features that distinguish assertive behaviour from aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour typically involves intentional harm or injury of another living thing, and is not an attitude or emotion with which one conducts him/herself in the sporting arena (Stephens, 1998).

In addition to the definition of aggression discussed above, Silva (1983), and Husman and Silva (1984) also identified two types or categories of aggression, namely instrumental aggression and hostile aggression. Although somewhat similar in the ways each are expressed and observed, one can make distinctions between these two types of aggression by examining the contexts in which the behaviours occur.

Silva (1983) proposed that hostile aggression is primarily intent on causing harm or injury to an opponent, while instrumental aggression is more goal-oriented, where the focus lies on achieving a goal within the sporting context, rather than purely causing harm to an opponent (Silva, 1983; Husman & Silva, 1984). It is here where it becomes difficult to completely separate these two types of aggression, as the inherent nature of sporting contest includes individuals and teams of individuals in opposition to each other, all of whom display behaviours that are goal-driven and reactive, to some extent. Kirker, Tenenbaum and Mattson (2000) suggested that most acts of instrumental aggression were found to occur within specific contexts, whereby a reactive response to processes and events occurring within these contexts, underlies the aggressive behaviours observed. However, a study done by Widmeyer, Dorsch, Bray and McGuire (2002) found that the context of competition increased athletes' intentions to behave aggressively. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that, from the outset, having a context of competition may in itself be enough to increase displays of reactive aggression, regardless of the specific events and processes occurring within the context (Widmeyer et al., 2002).

To better explain this relationship between hostile and instrumental aggression, Anderson and Bushman (2002) suggested that each forms one end of the same continuum. By this reasoning all aggressive behaviours involve elements of both hostile and instrumental aggression, to greater or lesser extents, depending where the behaviour lies on the continuum. However, this continuum should not be seen as a dichotomy whereby one type of aggression is viewed as better or worse than the other. Gill and William (2008) emphasise the importance of viewing aggression with the aim to understand it, rather than to classify it according to the good-bad dichotomy described above. While many examples of sporting aggression can be argued to have their roots in instrumental, goal-oriented intent (Kirker, Tenenbaum & Mattson, 2000), the fact that harm or injury to another person accompanies this intent should not be seen as acceptable, when it falls outside the rules of the sport within which it occurs.

This being said, it is important to recognise that any attempts made to prevent these unacceptable incidents of aggression from occurring, must be made with a clear understanding of how and why these behaviours take place, by identifying the contributing factors which increase the likelihood of these types of behaviour occurring.

2.3 Theories of aggression

A number of theories have been proposed that seek to explain how and why aggression manifests, and these can be applied specifically to the context of the sporting arena. These theories place importance on a variety of aspects, including the role of the individual, as well as interpersonal relations and dynamics within this unique context.

2.3.1 Instinct theory

The instinct theory is thought to be the first theory that could be applied to understanding aggression specifically in the context of sport. First proposed by Freud (1920), and continued later by Lorenz (1966), the instinct theory stems from the idea that aggression is innate, and as it is genetically inherited by an individual, its development and expression is predetermined and inevitable. According to this theory, Freud's ideas of an individual's life and death instincts are central to how aggression is manifested. In the same way that these two instincts work against each other to achieve balance, aggression is the expression of emotions built up over time (Lorenz, 1966). In essence, aggression is an individual's way of maintaining balance, acting as a catharsis for releasing the negative pressure of these accumulated thoughts and feelings. This theory suggests that an individual's aggression can

either be directed towards another person, or displaced, and that the sporting context allows the individual the opportunity to release their aggression, through catharsis.

Woods (2001) agreed with the idea that built up emotions can be cathartically vented through acts of aggression, and further extended it by suggesting that sport allows an individual the opportunity to redirect these responses, from a dangerous target to a relatively safer one (Woods, 2001).

Although various theorists have discussed instinct theory and its importance in explaining aggression in sports, there have also been a number of criticisms aimed at this theory.

Berkowitz (1973) and Widmeyer et al (2002) found that, contrary to Freud's initial suggestions, levels of aggression did not decrease in sporting contexts, but actually had the tendency to increase. This is in opposition to the idea that aggressive behaviour is a cathartic method of releasing built up emotions, as under these circumstances, there should be a decrease in aggressive behaviour in a sporting context, over time; not an increase, as found by Berkowitz (1973) and Widmeyer et al (2002).

Further criticisms to the instinct theory of aggression focus on the idea of aggression being an innate, genetically inherited characteristic, which is expressed by individuals in a predetermined manner (Lorenz, 1966). Certainly, this theory would go a long way to explain why certain individuals in a sporting context behave more aggressively than others, under very similar circumstances. However; the idea that aggression is a genetically predetermined characteristic does not explain instances involving those individuals who behave extremely aggressively in the sporting arena, while displaying little or no aggression away from the sporting context. Cases such as these add strength to the notion that aggression is, at least partly, a learnt behaviour, with links to specific cultural contexts, and is not merely an inevitable expression of an individual's innate genetic composition; as the instinct theory proposes.

Criticisms of the instinct theory to explain aggressive behaviour in the sporting context, highlighted the limitations of theories which emphasise one aspect of a situation, while neglecting to consider the importance of other aspects. As a way of addressing this, many theories of aggression do not focus on one aspect alone, but make room for interaction and relational dynamics to be considered as well. One such theory is the frustration-aggression theory.

2.3.2 Frustration-aggression theory

Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939) took a more interactionist approach, when investigating the concept of aggression. While accepting the importance of innate characteristics, Dollard et al (1939) also highlighted the role of context, and an individual's interactions with others involved in these contexts. A study done by Chow, Murray and Feltz (2009) also emphasised the importance of context in the development of aggression, as the “moral atmosphere” created by coaches, team norms, and perceptions of aggression by others impacted on how individual athletes perceived aggression themselves (Chow, Murray & Feltz, 2009).

According to the frustration-aggression theory, aggression is not a cathartic venting of various built-up emotions, but occurs as a result of one particular emotion; this being frustration. Donahue, Rip and Vallerand (2009) found that athletes who perceived a sporting failure as a personal threat to their identity, were more likely to become frustrated as a result of this failure, and in turn, are more likely to behave aggressively. The frustration-aggression theory strongly links the two concepts of aggression and frustration, going so far as to propose that each will always involve the other. Essentially, frustration will always lead to aggression, and aggression will always be caused by frustration.

When this theory is applied to the sporting context, the premise is that the inherent competitive aspects of sport elicit an individual's drive to achieve goals, and overcome obstacles to success. According to Dollard et al (1939), it is these obstacles faced by sporting individuals that will be the catalysts for frustration, which in turn will lead to aggression (Donahue, Rip & Vallerand, 2009). At this point, the aggressive behaviour can have one of two outcomes. According to the theory, the individual in question can either succeed in overcoming the particular obstacle at which the aggression was aimed, or alternatively, the individual will be reprimanded for the aggressive act, in the form of a warning or a punishment of some sort. According to the frustration-aggression theory, of these two scenarios, the former may serve as catharsis for the built-up frustration; while the latter will only add to the individual's frustration (Dollard et al, 1939).

There are a number of criticisms of the frustration-aggression theory, as it relates to the sporting context. Most prominently, there are concerns raised about the notion that frustration and aggression cannot be mutually exclusive. It can be argued that not all frustration will lead to aggression, and not all aggression will be caused by frustration. In

essence, the frustration-aggression theory does not take individual and contextual factors into consideration. Miller (1941) is one such theorist, who advocates the importance of situational differences, arguing that, for some individuals, there are a number of factors which may inhibit those who are frustrated from ultimately becoming aggressive. These factors may be related to the rules governing the particular sport, such as a fear of giving a penalty to the opposing team, or a fear of retaliation by an official or an opposition player, to name but a few (Miller, 1941).

Further to these, personality factors such as respecting the rules of the game, and the unwillingness of certain individuals to knowingly disrespect and/or cause harm to another player, are to be taken into account as examples of how the frustration-aggression theory falls short in its attempt at explaining aggressive behaviour in a sporting context (Miller, 1941). A study done by Lauer and Paielement (2009) provided evidence for the successful mediation of aggression in sports. Players were taught a variety of emotional and cognitive skills aimed at helping them to better understand their own frustrations in the sporting context, and in turn, process these frustrations in a non-aggressive way. Lauer and Paielement (2009) found a decreased amount of aggression displayed by these athletes following the skills intervention, as compared to before (Lauer & Paielement, 2009).

However; there was recognition of the potential for the frustration-aggression theory, and work was done to revise it somewhat, by maintaining certain aspects, and adding further focus to contextual importance.

2.3.3 Cue arousal theory

One such theorist who set about revising the frustration-aggression theory was Berkowitz (1969), who built his idea on the premise set by Dollard et al (1939), that frustration and aggression are indeed closely connected, when viewing them in a sporting context. However, Berkowitz (1969) chose to highlight the importance of contextual factors such as environmental and social cues, and how these play a key part in whether an individual will behave in an aggressive manner.

The cue arousal theory, also known as the aggression cue hypothesis, follows the notion that frustration increases an individual's arousal, which, in turn, increases his/her susceptibility towards aggressive behaviour. The key difference between this theory and the earlier frustration-aggression theory is that Berkowitz (1969) hypothesises that an individual's frustration will only lead to aggression if he/she receives certain contextual cues. In this way

the cue arousal theory identifies the role of arousal as well as an individual's prior learning and experience. In essence, the way in which contextual and social cues are interpreted by an individual, in light of their previous experiences and knowledge, will help determine whether said individuals will direct their frustration in the form of aggressive behaviour or not? (Berkowitz, 1969; Chow, Murray & Feltz, 2009).

In the sporting context, these cues can come from a variety of sources, either actively, in the form of coaches, other players, or fans and spectators; or more passively, in the form of venues, sporting equipment and specific competitions associated with previous experiences of aggressive behaviour (Chow, Murray & Feltz, 2009). According to Berkowitz (1969), in the sporting context, the more closely a cue is associated with the sporting context itself, the more influential it will be in increasing or decreasing aggressive behaviour. An example of cues that may increase the likelihood of aggressive behaviour, termed aggressive cues, may be a coach that reinforces such behaviour, or a sporting official that does not readily penalise acts of aggression. In these instances, individuals who, according to the theory, are already frustrated and thus predisposed to aggressive behaviour, may interpret the actions of the coach and officials to be cues that an aggressive act under those circumstances would be socially acceptable, and in turn, may act accordingly. A study done by Sheldon and Aimar (2001) lends support for this, finding that when illegal acts of aggression were not penalised, athletes use of aggression was reinforced by the sporting advantage created by the aggressive behaviour. These experiences can then be seen, by the athletes, as aggressive cues.

Essentially, the greater the perceived presence of aggressive cues in any given context, the greater the likelihood of frustration leading to aggression; with the converse also being true, whereby the smaller the presence of aggressive cues, the less the likelihood of frustration leading to aggression (Sheldon & Aimar, 2001). Another theory that places importance on the interactions between individuals and their environments is Bandura's social learning theory.

2.3.4 Social learning theory

In the context of understanding aggressive behaviour, social learning theory opposes the notion that aggression is innate, as advocated by Freud's instinct theory. Bandura (1973) proposes that behaviours such as aggression are not simply the predetermined expression of instinctual drives, but rather the result of an individual's interactions with his/her environment over time. Much like the cue arousal theory discussed earlier, social learning

theory acknowledges the power of an individual's observations and interpretations of environmental cues, in the dynamics of aggressive behaviour.

It is important to recognise that social learning theory does not dispute the suggestions made by the frustration-aggression theory, as well as the cue arousal theory, that aggressive behaviour is strongly linked to an athlete's frustration. Instead, social learning theory only rejects the plausibility of aggression as cathartic, proposing instead a more cognisant approach; whereby the individual evaluates specific contextual situations, in light of previous observations and learning (Bandura, 1973). Social learning theory highlights the concepts of modelling behaviour, and how behaviour can be conditioned by forces external to the individual. Essentially, Bandura (1973) proposes that aggressive behaviours are learnt over time, as frustrated individuals "copy" the behaviour of others who are perceived as experiencing similar frustration. If such behaviours are reinforced, they will be repeated in future situations that are contextually similar. In the sporting context, agents of this reinforcement would include coaches, teammates, spectators and opposition players, to name a few. Here, the characteristics of operant conditioning are also present, as an individual is rewarded for expressing a behaviour deemed socially acceptable in the given context (Bandura, 1973).

Specifically, in the context of sport, there is ample opportunity for individuals to be reinforced and conditioned through not only their own direct experiences, but also through the experiences of others. Emery, McKay, Campbell and Peters (2009) studied the attitude of youth ice hockey players, and their attitudes regarding aggression. The study included players from two different ice hockey leagues. The key difference between these leagues was the way in which a specific act of aggression, known as "checking" was mediated. In the context of ice hockey, as well as many other sports, "checking" refers to an individual's use of his or her own body to impede the movements of an opponent, through intentional forceful collision, or pushing (Emery et al, 2009). Emery et al (2009) found that participants who played in the league that allowed "checking", scored higher on an aggression measure than the participants who played in the "non-checking" league. This finding illustrates the effect of social learning through the observation and experiences of others, as participants' attitudes towards aggression were influenced not only by their own direct experiences, but also through observing how the aggressive behaviour of others was mediated in a similar context (Emery et al, 2009).

Termed vicarious experience (Bandura, 1973), this type of reinforcement and conditioning is very prevalent in the sporting context, which is ultimately based on the continuous observation of many others, along with continuous observable feedback by a variety of reinforcement agents, such as spectators, coaches, commentators and officials. This reinforcement through vicarious experience is even thought by some to be more successful if the person on who an individual is modelling his/her behaviour, is a significant other, or someone of a similar ability in the given context (Wiggins-James, James & Thompson, 2006). More specifically, Tenenbaum et al (1997) found that individuals were inclined to be more aggressive after observing aggression in the context of sport. In fact, Silva (1984) identified vicarious reinforcement to be one of the most instrumental forces underlying aggressive behaviour in sport; playing an important role in both encouraging and perpetuating aggression.

This being said, however, there are still a number of criticisms of social learning theory as a theory to adequately explain aggressive behaviour in the sporting context. One such criticism being that it does not account for those individuals that display aggression without having observed it in others, and in similar situations. Likewise, it does not account for those individuals that observe aggression in others, but do not display aggressive behaviour themselves.

Although the theories discussed thus far vary in their approach to how aggression manifests, a number of these contain a common aspect that plays an important role in each theory. This is the element of frustration, and how frustration in the sporting context is central to the dynamics underlying aggression. While each of these theories includes the aspect of frustration, few adequately investigate the various dynamics that lead to the frustration itself. The frustration-aggression theory (Dollard et al., 1939) and the cue arousal theory (Berkowitz, 1969) both provide brief attempts at explaining how frustration will develop, with the notion that an individual will become frustrated when presented with an obstacle that prevents him/her from achieving a specific goal. However, this type of understanding of frustration as the key aspect underlying whether aggression will be present or absent from a situation, is very linear, and gives little thought to the intricacies of aggression development, causality, and variance.

2.3.5 The general aggression model

Building on the theories discussed thus far, Anderson and Bushman (2002) continue to give focus to the importance of contextual and personality factors, while taking further steps to highlight the importance of understanding a variety of sources leading to the development of aggressive behaviour. Although Anderson and Bushman (2002) acknowledge the powerful role that frustration plays in aggressive behaviour, the general aggression model proposes that frustration is but one of many factors involved, and that the mechanism by which certain personal and contextual factors lead to aggressive behaviour is much more intricate and dynamic than previously suggested. The general aggression model provides a framework by which this process can be better understood.

Much like many of the theories discussed thus far, the essential elements contained in Anderson and Bushman's (2002) model include the contributing factors, or 'inputs', and the resultant actions and behaviours, or 'outcomes'. However, the inclusion of a third element distinguishes this model from its predecessors. This third element focuses on the routes taken between the aforementioned inputs and outcomes of situations, and highlights the importance of an individual's internal state at the time he/she is presented with a variety of personal and situational factors to process.

This inclusion of an individual's internal state makes provision for the occurrence of unique situations, which in turn provide explanation for how a very similar set of factors can elicit a variety of results by the same individual or set of individuals in the sporting context. By focusing on an individual's internal state, made up of thoughts, moods, and physical conditions such as levels of arousal, Anderson and Bushman (2002) identify the reciprocal and dynamic process of aggression development, in such a way so as to account for the variance and inconsistencies left largely unexplained by previous theories.

The framework provided by the general aggression model follows a more inclusive understanding of how aggression develops in the sporting context, thus making it the primary contributing theory informing the data analysis and discussion of the research reported in this dissertation. For this reason, a sound understanding of this model is essential in order to lay the foundation for better interpretation of the data included in the research. As has been mentioned, the general aggression model consists of the interaction of a number of elements,

namely input factors, outcome behaviours, and the intermediary routes taken by the individual.

According to this model, these input factors are made up largely of stressors, which come from a variety of sources, both personal and situational, and can result in displays of poor or negative sporting performance; including a higher prospect of injury (Blackwell & McCullagh, 1990). In addition to personal stressors such as worry, anxiety, and the constant pressure to perform at a high level, individuals may also experience stress related to their teammates, team dynamics, as well as their coaches. In fact, Fletcher and Hanton (2003) found that the tension among sporting individuals and their coaches contributed substantially to sports-related stress.

The presence of certain situational factors such as difficult playing conditions, aggressive environmental cues, and provocation, can lead to an individual's internal state being altered. Unique combinations of situational factors, physical condition, thoughts and mood, result in an individual's internal state at that particular time. At this point, personal factors such as long-term beliefs and personality traits can be undermined by an individual's internal state, as he/she appraises the information at hand, and makes decisions about how to behave in this specific situation. Studies done by Boardley and Kavussanu (2011) and Tractlet, Romand, Moret and Kavussanu (2011) explored the processes used by those individuals who display (or support) aggressive behaviour in certain contexts, even though they acknowledge this behaviour to be generally inappropriate. Boardley and Kavussanu (2011) and Tractlet et al (2011) highlighted two of these processes, namely moral disengagement, and justification. By displacing blame or responsibility of aggressive behaviour onto others, participants were able to disengage from the moral dilemma of behaving in a way that they know is wrong. In addition to moral disengagement, participants also sought to justify aggressive behaviour in terms of what they perceived to be necessary in a specific context. By including an evaluation of unique contexts, participants illustrated the power of an individual's internal state, in undermining factors such as personality traits and long-term beliefs pertaining to aggressive behaviour (Boardley & Kavussanu, 2011; Tractlet et al., 2011).

According to the general aggression model, once an individual has considered the presenting factors, within the parameters of his/her internal state, the outcome will take on one of two forms. Either the individual will partake in thoughtful aggressive action, or the aggressive action will be impulsive in nature (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Of course, in reality there

is a third option, where no aggressive action is taken, but as this model deals specifically with the presence of aggression, this third option is not explored.

2.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the phenomenon of aggression was discussed with reference to how it is presented in the relevant literature. Subsequent to this, the phenomenon of aggression was more clearly defined, by outlining the specific elements that constitute aggressive behaviour. In light of this definition, a number of theories pertaining to the development of aggression were discussed, specifically how these relate to the context of sport. Each of these theories was evaluated in terms of its core ideas, as well as the various criticisms and shortcomings identified in each. The information provided by the literature review is important in laying the foundation for how the data findings, included in the next chapter, are interpreted and understood in the context of high school sport.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Overview of chapter

Thus far, Chapters 1 and 2 have focused on introducing the research and reviewing literature relating to the research topic and questions. Building on the information presented in these previous chapters, Chapter 3 will provide details regarding research design, participants, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, limitations, as well as validity, reliability and rigour. These components will be discussed in light of their relevance to the research as a whole, as well as how they combine to form a methodological framework consistent with the aims and context of the research.

3.2 Research design

Considering the exploratory nature of the research topic, and the complex context within which it was conducted, it was necessary to follow a research design that supported these various elements. For this reason, a qualitative approach to the research was taken, as the very nature of qualitative research focuses on exploring the ways in which people interpret and understand their world through experiences (Holloway, 1997).

Within this qualitative framework, it was necessary to include both interpretive and naturalistic elements in the research design of the study. The interpretive approach, which focuses on people's interpretation of experience (Holloway, 1997), are consistent with the aim to explore coaches own perceptions of aggression in high school sport.

Essentially, the research followed an interpretivist paradigm, which assumes reality to be intersubjectively constructed. This approach supports the understanding of aggression as a complex, dynamic phenomenon which is subjectively understood and developed through experience. In order to accommodate the complex nature of the interpretivist paradigm, the research made use of semi-structured interviews as the method for data collection. This method allowed for the development of knowledge through dialogue between the researcher and the participants. In addition, the use of thematic analysis as a way of understanding the data, also allows for the development of knowledge, illustrated by combining and comparing the subjective experience of the research participants themselves.

3.3 Ethical considerations

Throughout the research, a number of ethical considerations were identified. A brief discussion on each of these is provided, along with explanations of how these ethical considerations were addressed in the research.

3.3.1 Autonomy and informed consent

The autonomy of participants themselves was protected through the use on an informed consent form (see Appendix 6), as well as an information sheet describing the research study (see Appendix 5). Participants were reminded of the fact that participation was voluntary, and that the data collected was to be treated in a confidential manner. All identifying information pertaining to participants and schools involved, were disguised or anonymised. Participants were reminded of their right to withdraw from the research process at any time, without consequence or repercussion. Further details pertaining to autonomy and informed consent is outlined in Sections 3.5 and 3.8 included in this chapter.

3.3.2 Beneficence

Participants were informed of the opportunity for them to access the research findings, in the form of the final research dissertation. Participants will also be given the opportunity to meet with the researcher, to discuss the research findings, once the dissertation has been completed, assessed, and adequately revised.

3.3.3 Non-maleficence

As a way of identifying and minimising potential harm to any individuals and organisations involved in the research, an application for ethical clearance was made to the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, regarding the intended research study. This application was successful, and the ethical clearance certificate was subsequently granted (see Appendix 2).

3.4 Sampling

The qualitative nature of this study includes an approach which is exploratory and explanatory, based on interviews as the method of data collection. For this reason, the sampling serves an idiographic aim, so as to provide a sample size that allows the data from each participant to be subjected to intense analysis (Robinson, 2014).

This study used a sample size of seven participants, to adequately allow for development of general themes across participants, while preventing an extremely large and cumbersome amount of data. For practical reasons of time and resources, an overly large amount of data would not have been given the appropriate and necessary attention in terms of analysis (Robinson & Smith, 2010).

Participants were identified using a combination of sampling techniques, including purposive sampling and snowball sampling. The non-random nature of purposive sampling was necessary to access participants who are themselves the focal point of the study; these being coaches of high school sports (Robinson, 2014). These participants were included based on the characteristic of being a coach who has in the past, or who is at the time of participation, coaching one or more high school sports. Coaches in this position are assumed to have key knowledge and perspectives directly related to the focus of the research, and so, their inclusion in the research is necessary (Mason, 2002). As was discussed in the introduction and literature review, coaches are in direct contact with many of the systems involved in the research context, including the high school athletes themselves, as well as their parents, peers, teammates and spectators. As such, coaches are in a unique position to offer insight into the dynamics of these systems, and how they impact on aggression in the high school sporting context.

Various schools in KwaZulu-Natal were identified as possible sites for sampling and recruitment of participants to take place. Bearing in mind the purposive sampling characteristics discussed above, the initial participants were also asked to recommend other coaches who were willing and able to provide important and relevant information to this study (Heckathorn, 2002). This implementation of snowball sampling reduced the chance of selection bias by the researcher.

3.5 Recruitment

As the study intended to use participants from government schools, as well as private schools, gatekeeper's permission was requested from the Department of Education, prior to any contact being made with government schools. This permission was subsequently granted (see Appendix 3), after which the principals of these schools were contacted. Once the researcher had identified a number of suitable schools from which participants could be recruited, the principals of these schools were contacted via email, and an information letter (see Appendix 4) outlining the research was sent to them, explaining and requesting the

possible inclusion of the coaches employed at their school. They were each asked to grant permission for the researcher to contact one or more coaches working in their school, and for data collection interviews to be done on school premises, if necessary.

Some of the invited schools declined the opportunity to participate in the research, and the coaches employed at these schools were thus not contacted further. However; for those schools where the principals did not decline, the coach (coaches) working at each school were then contacted individually via email, and were each sent an information letter (see Appendix 5) explaining the intended research. In addition, it was clearly communicated to each coach that participation was voluntary, and they were under no obligation from the research, or from the principal of the school at which they work, to participate.

For those coaches who wished to participate in the research, specific interview times and venues were arranged. The majority of the interviews were done in each coach's office, or alternatively, a suitable office on the relevant school premises. At these interviews, a printed information letter and consent form (see Appendix 6) were given to each participant to sign, along with the opportunity to voice any queries or concerns they had about the research.

3.6 Participants

The participants involved in the research were varied across many dimensions, including age, gender, and the sports that each coached (see table 3.1 below). This demographic variety allowed for a rich expanse of data, as each participant provided a very unique set of experiences, answers and opinions. Although public and private schools were both approached about participating in the research, the participants all ended up being from private schools.

Table 3.1 Participant details

Name	Gender	Approximate years coaching	Type of school	Sport coached
Coach 1	Female	20	Private girls school	Squash
Coach 2	Female	10	Private girls school	Squash
Coach 3	Female	20	Private girls school	Cross-country; canoeing; athletics

Coach 4	Male	8	Private girls school	Canoeing
Coach 5	Male	15	Private boys school	Basketball
Coach 6	Male	25	Private boys school	Rugby
Coach 7	Male	15	Private boys school	Soccer

3.7 Data collection

Data collection was done in the form of one-on-one interviews. Interviews were seen as suitable for this study given the exploratory nature of the study. The data collected from participants allowed for intense analysis across many themes and issues raised through the data collection process itself (Robinson, 2014). The data collection interviews were conducted face-to-face, and were recorded using a digital voice recorder. These recorded interviews were then transcribed, using Microsoft Word, a word processing software.

For the purpose of data collection in the context of high school sport, the research made use of semi-structured interviews, which allowed for greater researcher reflexivity (Bradley, Curry & Devers, 2007). This type of interview ties in well with the exploratory nature of the research, as well as the method of analysis used by the research; this being thematic analysis (Alvarez & Urla, 2002). By making use of semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to create an interview environment that addressed the initial research questions, while at the same time allowing for the introduction of new ideas and additional information that may emerge through the interview process (Bradley et al., 2007).

Initially, the interviews were to be conducted using a semi-structured interview schedule, comprised of a set of nine prompts for discussion (see Appendix 7), as well as any prompts deemed necessary to clarify the participants' responses. However; on beginning the interview process with the first participant, it became clear that there were difficulties in using the nine prompt interview schedule too rigidly, as the specific areas of interest in each of the nine prompts could not be clearly separated and individualised. As the coaches related their views on each point, the exploratory flow of the interview would have been jeopardised if they were to have been interrupted and constantly redirected to the interview schedule.

As a way of addressing this problem, the purpose and conceptualisation of the initial nine prompts was considered, and the style of questioning transformed slightly, to a less structured schedule. In this way, interview questions were not rigidly predetermined, but rather spontaneously generated, bearing in mind the three main research questions. In effect, questions were aimed at eliciting information about aggression, factors influencing aggression, as well as how the participants deal with the incidents of aggression that they observe in the teams/individuals that they coach.

The focus of the interview was on the participants' attitudes and observations surrounding aggressive behaviour amongst the children/teams that they coach, as well as how they as coaches encourage, discourage or ignore these instances of aggressive behaviour. The interview thus made use of the participant coaches' experience, opinions and knowledge of issues related to the research (Britten, 1995). This study focused on the perspectives of coaches involved in high school sports, as coaches are potentially instrumental in encouraging, discouraging and/or ignoring aggression when it manifests itself in sport (Orr, 2012).

3.8 Data transcription

The data collection interviews were audio recorded, and subsequently transcribed. To maximise the accuracy and efficiency of this process, transcription was done by a third party individual. In order to protect the confidentiality of the data in this regard, the transcriber was required to sign a confidentiality agreement. This agreement outlined the importance of correct data handling, as well as the responsibility of the transcriber to uphold the ethical principles of the research.

3.9 Data analysis

Analysis of the transcribed interview data was done in stages (Burnard, 1991). This type of systematic interpretive analysis included (but was not limited to) the processes of inducing themes, coding the transcript data, and interpreting and checking the data (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006).

For the purpose of coding, the researcher reviewed the data numerous times, both by listening to the audio recordings of the interviews, as well as reading the transcriptions of these audio recordings. Using the research questions as a guide, along with the interview prompts, interview information was highlighted and named, or coded, according to similarities in

content. Once the data was coded in this manner, the researcher examined these codes, in an attempt to find connections between the codes and the themes highlighted by the research questions (Miller & Crabtree, 1994). Where possible, codes were grouped under these themes, and examined according to their relevance to the research as a whole. In addition, there were a number of themes identified, which presented themselves throughout the data, and these are discussed in the context of their relevance to the research as a whole, as well as to the initial themes guided by the research questions. These connections, as well as the highlighted themes themselves, will serve to add to the knowledge and explanations surrounding the issue of aggressive behaviour in high school sport.

The aim of this thematic analysis was to address the three research questions that form the basis of this study. For this purpose, the data analysis outline the following areas; the types of aggression observed in high school sports, by coaches; the systemic factors that coaches perceive to contribute to aggressive behaviour in high school sports; and exploring how coaches encourage, discourage or ignore aggressive behaviour in the teams they coach.

3.10 Validity, Reliability and Rigour

The nature of this study is exploratory as well as explanatory. This approach did not seek to set up any hypotheses as ‘rival’ to one another, but rather sought to identify and understand the prevailing themes in the research data.

Kvale (1996) outlines many challenges to the validity of qualitative research. An important element of valid research is beneficence (Kvale, 1996), and this study aims to provide knowledge and explanation for aggressive behaviour in high school sports, with a view to inform coaches mediation of this type of aggressive behaviour in the future.

Kvale (1996) also emphasises the importance of trustworthy interview data. This study makes use of digitally recorded interviews which were then transcribed verbatim using word processing software, thus reducing the chances of fabricated and ‘out-of-context’ information being analysed.

The issue of trustworthy data also adds to the credibility of the research (Shenton, 2004). The fact that participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time further sought to ensure the trustworthiness and honesty of the information they were giving. Credibility was also increased by the researcher’s familiarity with the culture of the participants, in terms of

sports coaching, as the researcher was a sports coach, and has been involved in competitive sports at various levels for many years (Shenton, 2004).

The validity of the research in the data collection stage particularly, is increased by the use of a semi-structured interview schedule, as well as spontaneously generated questions relating to the information presented by the participants in each interview. These types of questions directly probed for information pertaining to the research questions, but did not contain bias in the form of leading questions. Instead, open-ended questions requesting knowledge and opinions were used.

Each interview question/probe has a purpose directly associated with the aims of the research itself. In addition, each interview question, while open-ended, is specific enough in its enquiry as to elicit the necessary categories of responses required from the participants. This purposivity and specificity add to the validity and rigour of this study (Pawson, Boaz, Grayson, Long & Barnes, 2003).

The recording of the interviews using a digital voice recorder allows for objectivity and comprehensive transcription of the data. This, coupled with the manner in which the researcher coded the data, and subsequently grouped these codes into themes, is evidence of a systematic approach to analysis.

This systematic approach adds further reliability and validity to the data collection and analysis stages of the research (Seale & Silverman, 1997).

In addition, an in-depth description of the design and methodology used in this research, as well as detailed data establishing the context in which the research will take place, allows for the study to be contextualised and repeated, adding to the transferability and dependability of the research itself (Shenton, 2004).

3.11 Limitations

A number of limitations were identified throughout the research process, and it is important to mention these, for the purpose of informing any future research of a similar nature.

Perhaps the most notable limitation in this study, as identified by the researcher, relates to the issue of participant sampling and recruitment. As mentioned in Section 3.6, the research intended to include participant coaches from both public and private schools. However, of the schools that agreed to participate in the research, all were private schools. Although a number of public schools were approached, the principals of these schools were unwilling to

participate in the research, and did not give their consent for their coaches to be contacted regarding the research. In this way, the data contributing to the research findings can be seen as coming from a particular “type” of context; that of private schooling.

Another possible limitation of the study is that of school principals acting as individual “gatekeepers” for their schools. In this way, access to potentially rich and diverse data is controlled by these principals, who have the power to accept or decline participation in the research, on the behalf of the coaches working at their schools.

3.12 Chapter summary

This chapter aimed to provide clarity about the research methodology, through descriptions of the various components included. Details regarding research design were discussed, along with explanations about how this design was implemented. Explanations were given regarding the use of participant sampling and recruitment, data handling, as well as issues pertaining to the integrity of the research itself. Further to this, information was presented regarding how the data was analysed, through the use of coding and thematic analysis.

Building on the information included in this chapter, the results of the data analysis will be the focus of the following chapter on “Findings”.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Overview of chapter

This chapter will focus on the findings generated through the analysis of the data. These findings take the form of the themes that were identified in the data, as well as their relevance to the research framework as a whole. As data collection was done by means of interviews that were audio recorded, and subsequently transcribed, explanations and reports on the data analysis will make use of excerpts from the audio transcriptions, as evidence of themes identified in the data. Each excerpt will contain reference to the participant whose interview it originated from, as well as a corresponding line number, which the reader may use to locate the excerpt within the context of the full transcription.

The process of thematic analysis, as used in this research framework, was guided somewhat by the themes inherent in the research questions themselves. This being said, however, it must be noted that any themes that surfaced through the analysis process, were included in the report, regardless of whether they were part of the initial focus of the research.

The initial research questions informed several areas for discussion in the research interviews, which yielded a number of themes for exploration. The first of these research questions deals with the participants' understanding of aggression as a concept, and the types of aggression they observe in high school sports. Secondly, the coaches' perspectives of which systemic factors contribute to this aggressive behaviour; and the third initial research question centred on identifying how coaches encourage or discourage these aggressive behaviours in the context of high school sports.

Through the process of generating the data, there were a number of themes that emerged, which were secondary to the initial areas of focus, but which recurred with a frequency that warranted further exploration, and inclusion in this report.

Each theme to follow will be presented in such a way so as to provide a brief summary of its relevance to the study, as well as examples to illustrate the various codes that were initially identified, and which were subsequently grouped to create each theme. Wherever possible, themes are presented and discussed, so as to link them to the original research questions. Any themes which do not readily tie in to one specific research question, will be grouped under the heading of 'Additional themes'.

4.2 Prevailing themes

4.2.1 Aggression

As the concept of aggression is central to this research, it was essential for each participant to provide their interpretation of what aggression is, as well as how they conceptualise certain behaviours as being aggressive or not.

4.2.1.1 Aggression as a binary construct

As each participant set about explaining their understanding of aggression, it became clear that this concept is not easily defined, as there were a number of inconsistencies present in the data, regarding the definition of aggression. At the most basic level of terminology, the concept of aggression and how to identify it, varies between participants. The most notable use of the word aggression is when it is given a binary characteristic, of including positive aggression and negative aggression. A number of examples from the data support this binary understanding; as is evident in the following excerpts;

in terms of sport there's two sides to that [aggression] because there is a side where it's focused aggression in terms of the way you are playing and being aggressive in terms of the rules of the game and then there's overly aggressive where you making it personal (Coach 5, Line 42)

I think if you really want to get to the top you have to have a certain amount of aggression; I think, well not ugly aggression but you have to have that determination that dedication to work hard. I don't know if that can be the same as aggression though. (Coach 1, Line 87)

with controlled aggression yes there's certainly an advantage. We ah, generally the guys who have a controlled aggression where they are able to know how to play on the edge (Coach 7, Line 69)

Definitely, I think harnessed and focused aggression is a positive (Coach 4, Line 318)

By making use of words such as “two sides”, Coach 5 has overtly described aggression as possessing binary characteristics, which he then distinguishes further into “focused aggression” and “overly aggressive” and “personal”. Similarly, Coach 4 describing positive aggression as being “harnessed and focused” implies that there is a negative type of

aggression that is not harnessed and focused. In some ways, there is a confidence in the way these coaches have provided explanations about aggression, and as they themselves have distinctly separated aggression into two types. However, on further scrutiny, it becomes apparent that beyond identifying these two types, there is no clear explanation of each type. Similarly, Coach 1 identifies both “ugly aggression” and the “certain amount of aggression” that she feels is necessary to achieve in the sporting context.

One of the dangers of assigning binary characteristics to something, is that the characteristics of each of the two binary components can be overlooked, leading to inconsistencies in interpretation. For example, what one coach deems “focused aggression” may be seen as “overly aggressive” to another coach, especially as the term “overly” is a relative term. As relative terms require a predetermined framework for comparison, using relative terms further adds to the potential for inconsistencies, as these predetermined frameworks can vary between individuals.

Similarly, Coach 7 makes use of a relative term, without providing the necessary parameters, in saying that children who “have controlled aggression” are the ones that “know how to play on the edge” (Line 71). While statements like these may be understood by the individuals using them, they lack conceptualisation and transferability for those who are not privy to the contextual parameters of descriptions such as “on the edge”.

In addition to the binary use of aggression illustrated above, there is also the notion that aggression is essentially a loss of control by an individual, over his or her own emotions. This manner of understanding aggression implies that certain behaviours, if controlled, are not deemed acts of aggression, and that aggression occurs due to a lack of self-control.

Sudden burst out, you know where he’s just lost all control or inabilities to control himself in a certain position, in a certain situation. (Coach 6, Line 13)

In making use of the phrase “sudden burst out”, Coach 6 is essentially limiting aggressive acts to those that occur without forethought or intent. In similar fashion, Coach 3 describes aggression as a result of ones inability to “cope with situations emotionally”, as is evident in the following excerpt;

So of course it all adds to it but still I think people also it’s depending on their age and how they can cope with situations emotionally. So at a primary school they won’t be able to manage and they will fall down on their hip and start crying, whereas high

school they might not fall down and start crying but they might be aggressive. That's how they might play out that emotional behaviour but then its two different ways; aggression and emotionally to be just breaking down. (Coach 3, Line 69)

In both these instances, the coaches understanding focuses purely on aggression as an uncontrollable impulse. However, this type of understanding fails to include the many types of aggression outlined in previous chapters, most of which highlight some degree of control, as well as components of intent, planning, malicious and goal-driven acts of aggression.

4.2.1.2 Aggression as a complex concept

From the outset of the data analysis, it became clear that aggression as a word, as well as a concept, is not clearly and consistently understood. Going beyond the binary characteristic discussed above, there is evidence to support the notion that there are inconsistencies inherent in the way different people view aggression, from one context to another. As such, these inconsistencies serve to further complicate the recognition of truly aggressive behaviour as it occurs in the context of high school sport.

These inconsistencies can be further illustrated by the way in which different participants provide specific examples of what they perceive to be aggressive behaviour.

blatant disregard for the spirit of the game and a blatant disregard of respect toward the officials which is a challenge of authority, a challenge of boundaries which that sport is actually played (Coach 7, Line 32)

It's lashing out, its language as well as physical. (Coach 6, Line16)

where yes you playing aggressively then it becomes personal and suddenly there is two schools and two players from both schools that are now in a personal situation and fighting over something that doesn't necessarily relate to the game at all. (Coach 5, Line 65)

[In] Squash you can hit [the ball] harder or you can smash your racket against the wall and you can fight with the umpire (Coach 1, Line 70)

The above examples provide further indication of how aggression, as it occurs in the context of high school sport, is an extremely complex phenomenon, which often lacks the clear,

recognisable framework necessary for individuals, in this case coaches, to consistently and correctly identify expressions of true aggression that manifests in their environments.

4.2.2 Systems involved

Bearing in mind the initial research questions, the second area of focus after aggression as a concept, was that of the various systems that could be considered as contributing to the occurrence of aggression. Within this area of focus, a number of themes were identified by the researcher, to varying degrees of complexity. Given the unique context of high school sports, there are a number of systems which potentially play an active role in whether or not aggression is manifested, and if so, to what degree. Systems that were identified include, but are not limited to, the following; parents, spectators, peers, the media, school governing bodies, and the coaches themselves.

4.2.2.1 Systemic perspectives

One of the most prominent themes that recurs throughout the data is that of perspective. Each of the systems identified above, however similar or dissimilar, operates in the given context, within the information and dynamics inherent in each system's unique perspective. Perspective, as it relates to the data, informs how each system will contribute to and relate to the central context of high school sport, as well as to the other systems involved.

There are numerous accounts in the data of how different systemic perspectives, especially those that are to some degree in opposition to each other, can lead to confusion over which decisions should be made, and which actions should be taken.

When discussing the influence of different systems on a child's behaviour, Coach 1 explained that "there are no boundaries, the parents are not giving their kids any boundaries. They do as they wish" (Line 239). Further to this, Coach 1 also explained that "parent's expectations of the kids is too high because the kid wants to get on and play the game and then the parent wants the kid to win" (Line 77). In this example, Coach 1 presents both a view of parents (a particular systemic perspective) where parents are portrayed as both not enforcing boundaries with their children, but at the same time having high expectations for their child's performance in sport.

In addition to the direct influence of particular systems, Coach 2 highlighted the difficulties with systems having the ability to affect each other indirectly, as she claims "if they (children) are being disciplined at home, then it's much easier to deal with them. They are

more responsive to um, to correction and to improvement in their behaviour.”(Line 168). Coach 3 also reflected the difficulties raised when two or more systems are working in opposition to each other, specifically regarding the concept of authority.

Umm, ah the coach’s decision is final. Umm, the boys must learn to respect that and deal with the coach one on one, not go back to mum and dad and so on. They must deal with the coach one on one. (Coach3, Line 93)

The examples above illustrate the concern that many coaches have regarding consistency between systems, and how differing systemic perspectives can affect the coach’s ability to effectively interact with the children that they coach. In addition to the system perspective of the parents already mentioned, coaches identified the influence of sporting officials, as well as the media.

sometimes the referees are biased then obviously it doesn’t help the situation
(Coach 2, Line 150)

that kid will copy because it’s [aggression is] acceptable, because they’ve seen it on TV, for them that is acceptable because that’s what they see. (Coach 1, Line 245)

The issues raised by coaches show them to have an understanding of how the various systems involved can affect a child’s behaviour. However; in many instances, this understanding is framed in such a way that coaches often feel undermined and passive in relation to these various other systems, in terms of how much power they themselves have to affect change.

so it is a tricky dynamic and ultimately I think we are looking out, we looking out for the child’s best interest not just the parents best interest, and which is a tricky dynamic because you are right we are having to balance all of these, we can’t just choose one or the other (Coach 4, Line 228)

Coach 4’s use of the word “tricky” in describing the dynamic between certain systems is indicative of the uncertainty felt by many coaches, regarding how to balance each system while remaining in the “child’s best interest”.

For those children, or high school athletes, included in the context of high school sport, being subjected to the inputs of various systems may undermine the structures put in place by individual systems. An example of this being coaches expectations about how the athlete is expected to react in certain situations within the sporting context. As a system, coaches are

often given the responsibility to directly affect change in their athletes. However, many coaches identified the underlying difficulties with this type of ownership over responsibility, as they themselves are not always at liberty to address athletes' behaviour in a manner that they feel is necessary. These difficulties could be due to the constant evaluative presence of spectators and parents, for example.

You hear the abuse from the parents behind you to you as a coach, to the players who are on the field. (Coach 7, Line 218)

In these instances, Coach 7 identifies the pressures often felt by coaches, who are subject to the “abuse” of spectators. In these situations, there is the added variable of each coach's unique personality and character, which will influence how he or she will respond to this abuse. Coach 5 gives the example of coaches who may be negatively influenced by spectators.

when you have a lot of people watching, I suppose the pressure amounts even more. So I suppose there is, there is pressure to let certain things go that you wouldn't normally let go. I think there is pressure on that coach to do things in such a way that he wouldn't normally do things. (Coach 5, Line 329)

Alternatively, certain coaches may be very aware of the pressure to change their own behaviour, but will not let this influence the manner in which he or she coaches, and the structures and boundaries that he or she has put in place. Coach 6 illustrates this sentiment with the acknowledgement that “yes I am under pressure, old boys and that, they do chirp, but water off the back anyway” (Line 159).

As these contrasting situations are based largely on the unique personal attributes of each coach, the subsequent decisions regarding how to address aggression will be inconsistent. These inconsistencies will not only vary between different coaches, but will also vary in terms of how each coach behaves between different contexts. As a result, the children/athletes themselves may find it difficult to conceptualise aggression, in terms of a clearly defined set of behaviours, leading to further confusion about the acceptability of their own behaviour.

4.2.2.2 School ethos

Following on from the above discussion on systems and perspective, one of the most prominent systems identified in the data was that of school ethos. While this system could

have formed part of the previous ‘perspective’ theme, its hierarchical standing and elevated influence requires it to be discussed as a theme on its own, so as to give adequate attention to its complexities.

The ethos of the school was highlighted throughout the data as the system which has the power to influence many others, such as parents, coaches, and the athletes themselves. This power, both real and perceived, is rooted in the understanding that there are certain levels of authority within the high-school sporting context, and each level has the ability to effect consequences, both positive and negative, on the levels beneath them.

The concept of ethos cannot be explained in terms of a single individual at any one point in time. Instead, it is the ever-developing culture that evolves over time, through the actions and reactions of those that form part of each school’s community. Ethos is maintained and moulded over time, and guides the actions and beliefs of those involved. In the schooling context, ethos is sustained and perpetuated through the actions of those who hold entrenched positions of authority and popularity within each school.

School principals and governing body members thus have the potential to shape the ethos of their schools, according to the ideals that are favoured by the majority of those deemed powerful. For these reasons, the ethos of a school will be evident in how certain behaviour, in this context aggression in sports, are conceptualised and addressed. Coach 3 illustrates this notion, commenting that “if their [the school] ethos is win at all cost, and that’s the coach’s ethos, and that’s the ethos of the school and the headmaster and everyone is behind them.” (Line 140)

Many of the research participants expressed the view that school ethos is an over-arching framework, within which certain behaviours are either accepted, or thereby assimilated, or where undesirable behaviours are expelled from the environment in which the ethos exists. In addition, when undesirable behaviours are expelled from this environment, it is done along with the individuals displaying the undesirable behaviours. Coach 5 explains that “it [the ethos] plays a big part. You know, people who don’t fit with the ethos of the school don’t generally last at the school.” (Line 395).

This further illustrates the power dynamic and hierarchy contained within schools themselves, where it is perceived as important to “fit” with the ethos in order to “last at the school.” Here, the implication is that unless an individual conforms to what is deemed acceptable by those in power at the school, that person will not form part of the school

community in the future. This process of assimilation and expulsion, if left unchecked, may result in school communities devoid of adequate diversity across many areas, of which sport is only one.

4.2.2.3 Financial resources

Throughout the data there are numerous examples of how aggression can be influenced, to varying degrees, by variables related to finance. Examples of these variables include those that directly involve the high school athletes themselves, as well as those which indirectly affect the athletes, such as parents and coaches. To better understand this theme, a number of contributing variables will be discussed, including the issues of scholarships and bursaries, parental financial investment, financial incentives for coaches, as well as the marketing of schools through the domain of sport.

The first factors to be discussed are those regarding sports scholarships and bursaries, where children are given a place at a particular high school, based on either their general sporting performance or their performance in a specified sport. According to a number of the participant coaches, these scholarships are valued for many reasons, including the opportunity for the child to attend a school that would normally not be a likely option given the socio-economic status of the family from which they come. In addition, coaches also suggest that scholarships are valued because they present the opportunity to receive a level of education and coaching that is often perceived to be higher amongst the schools that are in the position to offer financial assistance in the form of scholarships and bursaries.

However, the opportunities provided by a sports scholarship can also be contrasted with the pressure that comes with these opportunities. More specifically, the pressure felt by the children was highlighted many times in the data -

it [pressure] even starts at primary school when they have to start fighting for all these scholarships and you know and it's a lot of pressure to put on the child but unfortunately a lot of parents cannot afford to pay for all these private schools.

(Coach 2, Line 68)

Building on this sentiment, Coach 3 takes it a step further, by linking this pressure to aggression, asserting that “the two go hand in hand”, with the explanation that “they [children] need to get on a scholarship to be accepted to good high schools, so more pressure, you have more pressure.” (Line 39). While Coach 3, in this context, is referring to children

competing for scholarships, there is evidence to suggest that this pressure to consistently perform well in the sporting context remains, even amongst those who have been awarded scholarships.

I think there is always pressure on a boy like that because you know because boys like that also talk. They tell their friends around them, you know I am on a bursary I got a sport, because getting a sport bursary is quite a thing. Parents like to talk about it; boys like to talk about it. (Coach 5, Line 528)

Taking the above into consideration, there is the potential for many systems, such as parents, peers, and the individual athletes themselves, to be involved in how financial reward and incentives play a part in how much pressure is felt by these athletes. Subsequent to this, as has been discussed previously (see Chapter 4, subsection 4.2.2), this pressure can be linked to aggressive behaviour in the sporting context. .

In addition to the types of direct pressure discussed above, there are also those pressures felt directly by the coaches of high-school sports. The terms “budget” and “scouting” appear throughout the data, surrounded with descriptions of coaches receiving monetary incentives directly related to the performance of the teams they coach. Closely related to this is the concept of certain schools providing coaches with financial resources with which to scout and obtain players for their teams from other schools. This is done by coaches and schools offering specific children or their parents some form of financial assistance in return for the child attending the relevant coach’s school.

In many ways, this concept of coaches having a scouting budget ties in with the earlier discussion on scholarships, as these coaches are in the position to offer scholarships to a number of children, depending on the size of their coaching budget. However, in looking at these monetary incentives from the coaches perspectives, we can identify the systemic difficulties and challenges experienced by many coaches in these contexts. In doing so, it is important to highlight the notion that along with monetary incentives for positive performance of teams, comes the converse consequence of impaired job security for negative performance of teams.

Coach 7 highlights this concept, by explaining that, “You are given a budget as a coach, you are given a budget to find players” (Line 376), and “therefore he [the coach] would be held accountable if the results are not good” (Line 394). This sentiment is echoed by Coach 5, who acknowledges that at some schools, for particular sports, there are “cash incentives

offered to a number of the coaches in terms of doing well” (Line 303). Coach 5 elaborates on this further, adding that “there are consequences for the coaches, so they do feel the pressure because it’s their livelihoods” (Line 305).

These examples identify the added financial pressure that some coaches are under, for their teams to perform well, along with the pressure from parents and spectators, which was discussed earlier. In much the same way, this pressure has the potential to create environments in which certain aggressive behaviours are allowed to continue by those coaches who, by virtue of their employment stipulations, are financially invested in the performance of the athletes they coach.

Continuing along the lines of financial investment, and the potential role it plays in aggression, there is also the issue of parental financial investment. Throughout the data, this was identified by coaches to be a powerful influence in how various systems will allow the development of athlete aggression. Parental financial investment can come in many forms, including sending a child to a school with expensive tuition, paying for extra coaching, buying expensive sports equipment, as well as paying for their children to participate in sports tours, which can involve overseas travel.

Thirty grand to get the kids overseas. Straightaway the kid’s under pressure. The parents are paying thirty grand, okay, they now have gotta train for two months, like hectic training because there’s pressure. (Coach 3, Line 170)

I think in most private schools, they (the parents) are quite vocal. They pay a lot of money for their child to be here and they feel they have got a right to voice their opinions. (Coach 5, Line 319)

The above examples illustrate how increased financial investment can lead to increased pressure to perform well, which in turn can affect the children as well as the coaches within these contexts. As has been discussed earlier (see Chapter 4, subsections 4.1 and 4.2.2), aggression can result from a child’s inability to control himself under increased pressure, especially when the coach or coaches involved allow the increased pressure to affect if and how this aggression is addressed.

However, these dynamics are affected by a number of other systems, which are also affected by the component of finance. Perhaps one of the more powerful systems discussed earlier, is that of the school itself, and the ethos it perpetuates. That being said, in order for schools to

thrive, they must continue to maintain and provide resources, both physical and in the form of teaching and coaching services; both of which need to be financed in some way. This element of financial involvement was identified by coaches who asserted that schools advertise themselves largely through highlighting the positive performance of their sports teams.

[If] you want a full college make sure you have a good rugby season, make sure you have a good cricket season. Your first team cricket and first team rugby are winning your school is filled the next year because as much as we would like to say its academics, academics get broadcast once a year, that's when matric results are released. The rest of the year it is silent. The results from sport are weekly in the newspaper so they are extremely important and you got to try and compete. (Coach 5, 513)

maybe they'll get better intake from grade 8's because they always look at how does your rugby team do. And if your rugby team does well, oh you are a good school so then there's pressure on them to do well. (Coach 3, Line 138)

The comments of the coaches in both the above examples further illustrates the perception that schools are evaluated according to their sports performance and results, more so than their academic performance; an evaluation that is perceived by some coaches to be linked to “intake” and a school being “filled the next year”. Therefore, if one is of the understanding that a school’s financial resources include the tuition of the children that attend, it stands to reason that the school will benefit financially from maximising its capacity for attendance.

This financial element thereby has the potential to increase the pressure put on coaches and athletes, by those in power at the school; and as previously discussed, with added pressure comes the potential for aggressive behaviour to be poorly mediated, in favour of gaining an advantage in a sporting contest.

4.2.3 The mediation of aggression

4.2.3.1 Authority

The concept of authority is one that appears throughout the data, in various forms. A number of themes discussed earlier in this chapter contain elements of authority, including those regarding the various systems involved in high school sports. Specifically, the negative

effects that can occur when individual systems assert their authority through the use of power, thereby undermining the authority of other systems.

The current theme of the mediation of aggression through authority, however, will focus more on the authority that governs the sporting events specifically, and how this authority is perceived by the players, coaches, parents and spectators attending these events. Many high school sporting events are officiated by referees and umpires, whose role it is to enforce the rules and standards of the various sporting codes that they are involved in (Pizzera & Raab, 2012). For the high school athletes themselves, these officials serve as a directly observable gauge linking action and consequence, making them a potentially powerful influence shaping athletes behaviour.

However, when dealing with the concept of aggression, the information contained in the data suggests that the authority and boundaries set up by sporting officials is frequently challenged by parents, coaches, and spectators. Further to this, if these challenges take place during a sporting event, they are witnessed by the high school athletes themselves.

[V]erbally abuse the umpire, throw your racket around to hopefully instil a little bit of intimidation, unsettle, mess with concentration, so that the next 50/ 50 call goes your way... so you are trying to buy decisions. Not immediately because there's always an acknowledgement amongst the players that the official will never overturn the call but it's not about that call that has been made, it's about the call, the next call. (Coach 7, Line 127)

As illustrated above, the open undermining of authority, if not addressed correctly, has the potential to be perceived by athletes as acceptable behaviour. Subsequently, they themselves may openly target officials in similar ways. By using the phrases “verbally abuse” and “an acknowledgement amongst players”, there is an implied sense of behaviour that is planned, and aimed at harming another person in some way.

Taking into consideration the definitions of aggression discussed in earlier chapters, one could argue that the type of behaviour outlined by Coach 7 is, in itself, an example of aggressive behaviour. Coach 2 provides a further example of this type of aggressive interaction, stating that “they’ll (athletes) say that wasn’t a good call, or sometimes they use ‘useless’ and, you know, demeaning types of words to refer to the referee”. (Line 125)

In these instances, the challenging of authority can in itself be seen as aggressive behaviour, while simultaneously adding to the undermining of authority as a concept to be respected. In the context of high school sports, an official's authority is the medium by which athlete behaviour is most directly governed, through the reinforcement of rules and boundaries. By this token, one can assert that when this authority is not valued, the rules and boundaries that they enforce may not be valued either. This disregard for rules and boundaries may subsequently create situations where unacceptable behaviour, including aggression, is not appropriately addressed.

4.2.3.2 Consistency

Closely linked to the above theme discussing authority, the notion of consistency is continuously reflected in the data. In the context of high school sport, reference is made predominantly to the manner in which athlete behaviour, specifically aggression, is mediated, and the difficulties associated with inconsistent mediation.

From the perspectives of the coaches involved, the inconsistency with which athlete behaviour is addressed by parents, officials and spectators, makes it difficult for athletes to correctly identify the boundary between behaviour that is assertive, and that which is aggressive. As discussed earlier (see section 4.2.1), this distinction is often poorly understood, adding to the inconsistent manner in which aggression is perceived and mediated.

Coach 1 illustrates this point, explaining that “it’s very hard when you are the teacher and you’ve got to try and control the kid when you don’t have the support from the parents” (Line 115). This particular example is further contextualised by Coach 1, in the following excerpt, which describes her attempts to address a child athlete’s aggressive behaviour during a sporting event;

I said to her [the child], ‘you’re not gonna play in the next tournament’. Had a long chat to the mother, next tournament she’s in, she’s there with her mother! (Coach 1, Line 112)

This direct defiance by the child’s parent is an example of the difficulties faced by coaches attempting to mediate aggressive behaviour. As a result, the disciplinary structures put in place by coaches are not consistently enforced, in many cases due to the coach’s real or perceived lack of authority. The importance of consistency in addressing aggressive behaviour is outlined by Coach 7 below;

they [high school athletes] generally test the borders and if, if the structures hold strong... then it's a good way for them to learn that there is consequences to their actions. (Coach 7, Line 57)

By making reference to “structures”, Coach 7 highlights the importance of having disciplinary procedures put in place, for how to address aggressive behaviour, stressing the importance of these structures being consistent and predictable, as they “hold strong” and are not undermined. In addition to consequences being consistent for specific behaviours, Coach 5 adds to this sentiment by highlighting the need for consequences to be consistently reinforced, regardless of who the infringing player is, and how important he may be in a specific team.

The last thing you want to do is take in your star player off the field. But I think as the coach you've got to send the message as to what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. (Coach 5, Line 252)

In the above instances, athletes are able to reflect on their own behaviour, as well as the behaviour of others, by learning to identify the specific behaviours, in these cases aggressive behaviours, which will consistently be met with consequences.

4.2.3.3 Training of coaches

As participants were discussing issues regarding the mediation of aggression by coaches, one of the themes that was evident was whether or not high school sports coaches should also be classroom teachers. While a number of participants acknowledged the decisions made by some schools to hire coaches that are not qualified classroom teachers, or who are external to the school system, they also highlighted the difficulties created when schools do so.

Coach 5 provides a general explanation for why this may create difficulties, saying that “they (external coaches) don't buy into the same values.” (Line 269). He elaborates further by asserting that “when you're [a coach] coming from the outside, generally you come with a win at all cost perspective and I think that can be dangerous” (Line 271). By making use of the phrase “win at all cost”, Coach 5 brings attention to the risks associated with coaches who value a winning team over the individual athletes involved. The issues raised by Coach 5 also build on a number of themes discussed earlier, including authority, consistency, finance and school ethos. Many of these earlier discussions highlighted the difficulties in

consistently mediating aggressive behaviour, when there are too many variables working within the high school sporting context.

In addition to the issues raised by Coach 5, some participants also felt it was necessary for schools to focus more on the teaching qualifications of the coaches that they hire, rather than just the sporting or coaching experience that they may have. In the following example, Coach 4 brings into focus the element of child development, and knowledge of teaching and child behaviour;

It's important when you have coaches, to not just get any coach off the street. You gotta have someone who has got a teaching degree behind them, who has studied the different levels of development within the child. (Coach 3, Line 188)

This concept of viewing individuals holistically, not only as athletes, but as children and students as well, is one that is echoed by a number of coaches throughout the data.

They [schools] are bringing in all these expert outside coaches and it's a problem because they don't see how the kids behave in the class, they don't know any personal background, that is a problem yah. (Coach 6, Line 160)

Here Coach 6 emphasises the importance of coaches having some background knowledge of the athletes that are in the teams they coach, as well as how these athletes behave when they are not in the sporting arena. As the examples discussed above have outlined, many coaches allude to the notion that any attempts to understand and mediate the behaviour of athletes in a high school context, cannot be effectively done without holistically viewing this behaviour as it occurs both in and away from the sporting context.

4.3 Additional themes

A number of themes were identified in the data, which could not be grouped or aligned with only one of the initial research questions. Instead, these themes seemed evident at various points throughout the data, intertwining with many of the themes already discussed. The purpose of setting these themes apart is to highlight the fact that they are, in many ways, constant themes underlying the data as a whole, and tie in with many of the themes already discussed.

4.3.1 Communication

The concept of communication was raised many times by participants, who saw it as an important factor in the development of aggression, as well as how aggression is expressed and mediated in the high school sporting context. Essentially, communication promotes transparency and co-operation, both within and between systems (Borrell-Carrio, Suchman & Epstein, 2004). Participants provided a number of examples explaining how communication is necessary to clarify a variety of issues that may otherwise be misunderstood. Firstly, open communication regarding sporting rules and boundaries, as well as consequences for infringements of these rules, can provide a clear framework outlining the parameters of the high school sporting context.

Choose your coaches well and the ethos of the school must be well defined and clear cut so that the coaches understand it and the children understand it and parents understand it. (Coach3, Line 235)

As long as everyone knows and then you stand by it [the ethos of the school] and its clear for everyone and there is no confusion. (Coach 3, Line 239)

In the above examples, Coach 3 makes use of the phrases “defined” and “clear cut” to emphasise the way in which schools could facilitate better communication. In addition, Coach 3 emphasises the importance of “no confusion” regarding school ethos, including how sport is viewed by the schools, as well as the coaches they employ. In terms of aggression, having a clearly communicated and understood framework can promote more accurate and consistent identification and mediation of aggressive behaviours, by the athletes themselves, as well as the coaches, parents and various other systems involved.

In addition to this proactive, preventative approach, communication can also strengthen the reactive and reciprocal nature of mediating aggressive behaviour amongst athletes. From a coach’s perspective, communication within and between the various system can help prevent discord between systems by minimising the confusion, frustration and dissatisfaction that may arise when the various stakeholders are not clearly informed about decisions and events occurring within the context of high school sport.

An example illustrating the above, given by Coach 6, shows a disciplinary process that he feels is effective because it is timeous and transparent, as it communicates the information and decisions made by the coach, to the athlete in question, as well as to the athlete’s parents.

I think as long as it has been dealt with adequately and effectively, efficiently, parents are notified, boy is notified, people accept that. (Coach 6, Line 409)

In terms of mediating aggressive and otherwise unacceptable behaviour, Coach 6 reasons that by ensuring consistent and predictable consequences for the athletes, through communication of these consequences to many of the other systems involved, the likelihood that these consequences will be disputed is lowered.

4.3.2 The purpose of high school sport

Closely linked to the theme of communication, a number of participants felt that conceptualising the purpose of high school sport underpinned many of the themes identified throughout the research findings. Participants explained that various factors leading to the development of aggressive behaviour in this context, can be linked to the manner in which each school promotes sport amongst their learners.

A number of participants emphasised the idea that high school is a place of learning, where children are taught values and life lessons. These lessons can be learnt through children's observations and interactions with their peers, teachers, coaches, and any other individuals included in the high school sporting context. Coach 7 describes the potential benefits of this context, in saying that "there is the acknowledgment there that they (high school athletes) are playing for their educational benefit; learn values of the team game" (Line 405).

Coach 5 relates this idea more specifically to the concept of aggression, recognising that although aggression may be mediated differently in a professional setting, the focus should remain ultimately on the teaching opportunities of sport, as it exists in the high school setting.

I think it's [aggression is] disrespectful. I understand where there is a part of it in terms of professional sport. But in terms of school boys we trying to teach them the right way to do things. (Coach 5, Line 99)

In the above example, Coach 5 is describing the use of verbal aggression, such as name-calling and insulting opponents, as an intimidation strategy. By describing this approach as "disrespectful", and not in keeping with the "right way to do things", Coach 5 is reiterating the need for coaches to keep in mind the context within which they are working. He suggests that their focus should be on teaching children acceptable behaviour, rather than teaching them the possible benefits of unacceptable behaviour.

In keeping with this sentiment, Coach 6 also makes the distinction between high school sport and club sport, which occurs outside of the schooling context.

it comes down to integrity, if you don't have the integrity, you shouldn't be coaching probably. You gotta teach, these are still school boys, coaching a club side; it might be a little bit different. (Coach 6, Line 123)

Much like Coach 5 did in the previous example, Coach 6 does not deny that there are contexts where the mediation of aggression is “a little bit different” to how he feels it should be done in a high school context. However; as with the previous example, Coach 6 is very direct in his reasoning that coaches of school children need to focus on the teaching aspect of sport. In making use of the phrase “if you don't have integrity, you shouldn't be coaching”, Coach 6 implies that a coach's lack of integrity could potentially cause him/her to lose focus on the general teaching aspect of sport, in favour of achieving success purely in the sporting arena.

This notion is echoed by Coach 3, who highlights the dangers of schools placing too much emphasis on sporting performance, resulting in environments which may neglect the overall healthy development of children.

There's too much, a lot of emphasis placed on sport as opposed to academics. But that's where the schools get their marketing from. So the schools are actually using the sport to get kids in. (Coach 3, Line 271)

prepare them and work with them emotionally and socially, don't just use them and leave them. Like schools sometimes mustn't just use the kids for the glory of the win. (Coach 3, Line 225)

In the above examples, Coach 3 describes the tendency of some schools to use sporting performance as a medium by which to market themselves. The phrases “use the kids for the glory of the win” implies a situation that is not of equal benefit to all involved; but one that serves to benefit the school as a whole, rather than the individual child athletes whose sporting performances are used to promote it.

Coach 3 argues that this type of situation, in which high school children are used as commodities, puts these children at risk of not receiving the adequate emotional and social guidance, such as may be expected from a more balanced schooling environment. Here, the term ‘balanced’ refers to a schooling environment that does not elevate sport over other areas

such as academics, and which does not value “the glory of the win” over the healthy overall development of the individual children involved.

4.4 Chapter summary

This chapter focused on the findings generated through analysis of the data. Various themes, identified in the data, were discussed with reference to their relevance to the research framework as a whole. Prevailing themes were highlighted, as well as additional themes, and each theme was discussed and illustrated using excerpts from the audio transcriptions of the data interviews. The information included in this chapter will be discussed further in Chapter 5, specifically in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Overview of the chapter

This chapter will focus on explaining the findings in relation to the theoretical framework that the study was grounded within, this being coaches' perceptions of aggression in high school sports.

As is evident in the research finding, coaches have a unique perspective in the context of high school sports, as they have direct access to the high school athletes themselves, as well as to many of the other systems involved (such as parents of athletes, sporting event spectators and sporting officials). In addition, coaches operate within the framework of the high schools that employ them, so they themselves form part of the context defined by the research.

From the outset of this discussion, it is important to maintain focus on the various elements contained within this research framework; these being aggression theories, high school sports, and a coach's perspective. Where necessary, these elements will be reiterated for clarity; however, for the purpose of critical reading, the discussion is linked to the theories and findings discussed in Chapters 2 and 4 respectively.

When reviewing the findings and literature together, a number of relationships between the two were identified. These will be discussed, in terms of how each relates to the research as a whole.

5.2 The concept of aggression

As discussed in the literature review (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2), the complexity of meaning and implication contained in the single word 'aggression' makes it a difficult concept to accurately define. This was evident in the data findings (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1), as participant coaches did not share a consistently accurate understanding of aggression. This being said, however, many coaches expressed the notion that aggression has the binary characteristics of being potentially useful and/or harmful, depending on how it is expressed.

On the one side, coaches were able to provide many examples of harmful, often violent behaviour, which they viewed as being examples of negative aggression. These examples were consistent with the parameters of hostile aggression, discussed in the literature, as the primary intent of hostile aggression is to cause harm or injury to another (Silva, 1983;

Husman & Silva, 1984). While these findings indicate a mutual understanding of hostile aggression, difficulties arise when coaches attempted to conceptualise the potential usefulness of aggression as a positive.

A number of coaches offered the explanation that aggression is useful when it provides an athlete with more focus and drive to perform well, and can also be useful as a strategy for intimidating the opposition. These instances were described by some coaches as being examples of controlled aggression, which is either actively encouraged, or at the very least, not discouraged.

Drawing from the literature that was discussed, in which aggression was clearly defined (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2), it seems probable that what these coaches are referring to in the above examples, is instrumental aggression, which was described as aggressive behaviour that is primarily focused on achieving a goal within the sporting context (Silva, 1983; Husman & Silva, 1984). Within the confines of this definition, it would appear that coaches are accurate in their understanding of aggression as a binary construct. However, what coaches fail to consider is that while instrumental aggression has a goal-oriented focus, it is simultaneously accompanied by the harming of another.

As was explained by the literature, aggression involves behaviour that is directed specifically at another living thing, with the aim of causing harm of some kind (Baron & Richardson, 1994). By this definition, it is impossible to separate the positive outcomes of aggression without acknowledging the accompanying harmful outcomes, and retain the term ‘aggression’. The essence of aggression is intentional harm, regardless of the manner in which it is expressed. At a glance it may seem pedantic to strip the concept of aggression down to mere semantics. However, in light of the research findings, it is this lack of clarity and misunderstanding of aggression as a word, which leads to the misunderstanding of aggression as a concept. This lack of clarity has far reaching consequences in the context of high school sport, as it impacts on how aggression is accurately and consistently identified, and subsequently mediated.

5.3 Theories of aggression

Building on the information presented in the previous section (see Section 5.2), which discussed the definition of aggression, it is also important to recognise the theoretical understanding of aggression. Chapter 2 included a review of a number of theories of aggression which specifically incorporated factors understood to contribute to the

development and expression of aggression. Each of these theories was evaluated in light of the research context of high school sports. Of these theories, the general aggression model was identified as incorporating elements of the other theories discussed into it, these including instinct theory, frustration-aggression theory, cue arousal theory, and social learning theory (Anderson & Bushman, 2002).

The general aggression model was set apart from these other theories through its recognition of an individual's dynamic internal state as an important component in how aggression should be understood. The findings presented in the previous chapter (see Chapter 4) are consistent with many of the elements of the general aggression model. Themes relating to systems, contexts and communication, among others, reflect the ideas presented by the general aggression model. Of particular relevance is the notion that aggression is dynamic in its development, and is impacted heavily by reciprocal interactions between a number of systems. More specifically, the themes that were discussed regarding systems, mediation of aggression, and communication highlighted the importance of continuous monitoring of aggression amongst athletes, as well as consistency in how aggressive behaviour is mediated through the communication and reinforcement of consequences. These research findings indicated the coaches' understanding of aggression in high school sport as a dynamic phenomenon; one which is constantly subject to change as a result of the various systems involved in this unique context.

As mentioned above, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the general aggression model is its emphasis on an individual's internal state, which is influenced by the individual's thoughts, moods, emotions and physical condition at a specific point in time (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). This internal state affects the way in which contributing stressors from a specific context are processed, and has the power to undermine or overrule any long standing values and principles held by the individual (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). For these reasons, aggression should not be viewed as a concrete concept, which can be addressed with preconceived frameworks of intervention. Instead, as aggression in the context of high school sport does not follow a standard, recognisable developmental pattern, it needs to be mediated in a manner that allows for continuous reciprocal communication between the systems involved in this context. Coaches are in the unique position to facilitate this continuous communication, as they are in direct contact with the various systems involved, as well as with the environmental context of sport, within which the aggressive behaviour occurs.

5.4 Selection of coaches

In the previous section, coaches were identified as instrumental in how aggression can be effectively mediated in the context of high school sport. Although the term “coach” has been used many times in the research thus far, little reference has been made to the characteristics and qualifications these coaches should possess. However, during the coding and analysis of the data, one of the themes that emerged was directly concerned with the training of coaches.

Throughout the data, participant coaches emphasised the importance of coaches being equipped to work within the context of high school sport. Participants also made the distinction between coaches who taught academic subjects as well as coaching sport, and coaches who only coached sport. These elements were discussed with specific reference to aggression, and how it is developed and mediated in the context of sport. Consistent with elements of the general aggression model, coaches highlighted the role of personal and environmental stressors, and how these influence the development of aggression. A number of participants felt that in order to effectively monitor these stressors holistically, coaches should have some interaction with athletes in contexts other than sport, such as teaching them in the classroom. Although not all participants made teaching a requirement, those that did not still conveyed the sentiment that coaches should have experience in child development and learning, so that they can recognise and understand the various stressors in the lives of the athletes that they coach. Using the framework of the general aggression model, being able to identify these personal and environmental stressors may help coaches to better understand how these stressors contribute to the internal state of their athletes during sporting events. Having this background knowledge can equip coaches with techniques to more effectively monitor aggression amongst the athletes they coach.

5.5 Communication

If coaches are able to accurately identify the personal and environmental stressors faced by the athletes they coach, they may be more equipped to facilitate effective communication between the various systems contributing to these stressors. Throughout the data, coaches provided information indicating the importance of communication in addressing the behaviour of high school sports athletes, more specifically aggression. The theme of communication was discussed in detail in Chapter 4 (see Subsection 4.3.1). Here it was illustrated how communication is needed not only between the various systems, but within each system as well. Coaches felt that discord and misunderstandings between various

systems, could be reduced if each of these systems communicated with each other in an open, transparent manner. More specifically, many coaches felt the need for these systems to have a shared, accurate understanding of elements pertaining to the high school athletes themselves, as well as the structures put in place by the coaches and school, regarding how behaviour in sport is addressed. Essentially, all the systems involved should have a clear understanding of the athlete's abilities and stressors, as well as the coaching processes and parameters being used. In this way, the rules and consequences pertaining to aggressive behaviour in the sporting context can be collectively understood and supported, or at the very least predicted.

Using communication to facilitate co-operation and mutual understanding between the various systems involved in the high school sporting context, correlates with many components in the general aggression model. This model proposes that personal and environmental stressors contribute to the development of aggression in sport, as these stressors continually impact on the individual athlete's internal state, affecting moods, thoughts and emotions. If communication can be used to reduce discord between systems, this may in turn reduce athlete stressors related to negative systemic interactions. In addition to this, open and transparent communication between coaches and athletes, regarding rules and consequences of behaviour, may also help athletes to accurately review and predict consequences of unacceptable behaviour. As a result, the internal state of athletes is continually monitored, providing ongoing opportunities for effective mediation of aggressive behaviour to occur.

5.6 The purpose of high school sport

Thus far, information has been presented and discussed according to its relevance to the research as a whole. Themes and theories have been highlighted and illustrated using findings from the research data. In the previous section (see Section 5.5), the element of communication was examined in terms of how it contributes to the mediation of aggression in high school sports. Further to this theme on communication, a closely related theme was identified as occurring throughout the data; this being the purpose of high school sport.

Although this theme was previously discussed in detail (see Chapter 4, Subsection 4.3.2), it is important to review it in light of its contribution to the themes and theories discussed thus far. The purpose of sport was referenced by many coaches, who felt that it was an important contributing factor in how aggression develops in the context of high school sport. These

coaches suggested that much of the tension and discord that occurs between the various systems involved, stems from each of these systems having differing goals and expectations of high school sport in general. As such, individuals involved in these systems were often not in agreement on how the sporting context should be managed, with particular reference to rules, processes and behavioural parameters. With reference to this, coaches emphasised the importance of all systems involved recognising and understanding the purpose of high school sport. According to these coaches, this purpose should be framed around school as primarily a place of learning, where the best interests of the children are prioritised, and sport is seen as a medium through which to facilitate and support the teaching and learning of life lessons and core values. As discussed in the previous chapter (see chapter 4, section 4.3.2), many coaches had concerns regarding the tendency for some school, coaches and parents of athletes, to lose sight of the purpose of high school sport as a teaching medium. Participants felt that the best interest of high school children are often overlooked when they are seen exclusively as athletes, rather than holistically as children. In these instances, athletes are vulnerable to exploitation, as their sporting performance and achievements are prioritised, often at the risk of their academic, social, emotional and psychological development.

As a way of addressing these concerns, coaches stressed the importance of maintaining focus on the purpose of high school sport. In addition, this purpose should be clearly stipulated by schools, maintained by coaches, and communicated to high school athletes, the parents of these athletes, as well as the spectators who attend sporting events. In this way, the integrity of the high school context can be maintained, along with the values and principles it aims to provide, with the relevant children receiving a positive, balance learning experience, of which sport is but one domain.

5.7 Chapter summary

This chapter provided a more detailed discussion on the findings presented in Chapter 4, specifically as these findings relate to the theories and literature discussed in Chapter 2. The concept of aggression, as well as theories of aggression, were further explained, as well as details pertaining to the selection of coaches, communication, and the purpose of high school sport. The following chapter will focus on how the discussions mentioned above can contribute to future research regarding the phenomenon of aggression in the high school sporting context.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Overview of the chapter

Given the exploratory nature of the research, it is difficult to make definitive conclusions that will apply indefinitely to research done within similar contexts. However, with reference to the specific context within which this research was done, a number of conclusions can be drawn from the findings, and these can be used as guidelines with which to approach any future research done within similar contexts. This chapter aims to present these conclusions as they relate to the initial purpose and significance of the research study.

6.2 Purpose and significance

From the outset, this study aimed to explore the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports, for the purpose of better understanding the various factors that contribute to how aggression develops in this context, as well as how it can be effectively mediated. Coaches were identified as being in a unique position to provide valuable data to the research, as they work within the context being studied, and have direct access to many of the systems included in this context. Through the use of semi-structured interviews, coaches provided information which elicited a number of themes regarding the identification, development and mediation of aggression in high school sports. In addition to the information provided by the coaches, various theories and ideas regarding aggression were also discussed in the literature review chapter.

Of all the theories reviewed, the general aggression model was identified as being very relevant to the findings elicited through analysis of the data. This model tied in well with the information provided by the coaches pertaining to aggression in high school sports. As explained in the general aggression model, the phenomenon of aggression is dynamic and unpredictable at times, and is heavily influenced by the interaction of the various contributing systems involved. As discussed in the previous chapter (see Chapter 5), the research findings supported this notion, as coaches highlighted many of the systems involved, as well as the difficulties caused by discord between these systems. In light of the information discussed throughout the research, the following conclusions are proposed by the researcher;

- a) Aggression as a concept is not consistently defined and understood by many individuals included in the high school sporting context, leading to difficulties in the way aggression is identified and mediated.
- b) When there is discord between the various systems involved, the structures and processes for effectively mediating aggression are undermined.
- c) When schools neglect to prioritise the purpose of sport as a teaching medium, children are at risk of being used as sporting commodities, and as a result, their holistic development is jeopardised.
- d) In many instances, coaches are under extreme pressure to adopt coaching styles that are inconsistent with their own core values and beliefs.
- e) In order to effectively reduce aggressive behaviour in high school sports, mediation strategies must be holistic in nature, supported and reinforced by all the systems involved.

6.3 Recommendations

One of the primary objectives of this study was to explore the phenomenon of aggression, and provide information aimed at reducing the incidents of aggression in high school sports. With this in mind, a number of recommendations are suggested by the researcher, for how aggression can be effectively addressed in this context. These recommendations are consistent with the themes discussed in the findings (see Chapter 4), as well as the theoretical contributions made by the general aggression model (see Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5).

In order to effectively manage the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports, the researcher proposes the following areas of focus; clarity, communication, consistency and context. Each of these elements will be discussed in more detail below, with specific reference to how coaches, together with the schools they work in, can take a proactive stance in combating the development of aggression amongst the athletes that they work with.

6.3.1 Clarity

As is evident from the research findings, the definition of aggression is not clearly understood by many individuals in the research context. For this reason, it is essential for coaches to provide athletes with accurate definitions of aggression, and how it differs from assertive behaviour. This discussion should include examples of what is considered unacceptable behaviour, and coaches should set clear behavioural boundaries and consequences for any

infringements on these boundaries. In addition, coaches should provide athletes with acceptable behaviours that can be used as alternatives to aggressive behaviour.

6.3.2 Communication

Coaches should facilitate communication between the various systems involved, such as parents, spectators, and the athletes themselves. This communication should be guided by a code of conduct which clearly explains the processes and structures put in place regarding behaviour at sporting events. In addition, coaches should use this communication to create an environment of co-operation and support between the various systems involved, all the while emphasising the importance of working towards the best interests of the athletes involved.

6.3.3 Consistency

Rules and boundaries must be consistently reinforced by coaches, at all times, regardless of the context in which the sporting event is taking place. Essentially, rules and boundaries must not be influenced by the importance of the offending athlete, the magnitude of the sporting event, the spectators contained within the sporting venue, or the identity of the opponents. Athletes should be coached on self-control and discipline, rather than on how to react to the changes in context listed above. Coaches should create a structure that facilitates the correct identification of aggressive behaviour by the athletes themselves. As a way of achieving this, any mediation provided by coaches should be done in a manner that allows for athletes to learn from the experiences of others. For this purpose, coaches can make use of clear verbal communication to identify any rule infringements and resulting consequences, specifically those relating to aggression.

6.3.4 Context

At all times, coaches should emphasise the context of school as a place of learning. School ethos should clearly define the purpose of sport as a medium through which the teaching and learning of core value and principles is supported. The school system itself should not prioritise sporting achievement over the holistic development of the child. For this reason, coaches should be supported by their relevant authorities, to maintain the integrity of the school as a place of learning. As such, coaches should be evaluated not only by the overall performance of their teams, but on their achievements in successfully improving the skills and performance of individual athletes as well.

6.4 Chapter summary

This chapter presented a number of conclusions drawn from the findings (see Chapter 4) and the discussion of these findings (see Chapter 5). Further to this, a number of recommendations were highlighted, with specific reference to how aggression can be effectively addressed in the high school sporting context. Issues of clarity, communication, consistency and context were discussed, guided by the theoretical framework of the general aggression model.

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Appendices

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Aggression in high school sports: A qualitative study of coaches' perspectives. Alexandra Thelma Nidd (200275233)

Submitted in fulfilment of the partial requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science in the School of Applied Human Sciences, College of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus)

30 November 2015 Declaration I, Alexandra Thelma Nidd,

declare that 1. The research reported in this thesis, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research. 2. This thesis has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. 3. This thesis does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons. 4. This thesis does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then: a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced. 5. This thesis does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the thesis and in the References sections. 6. A turnitin originality report for this thesis has been generated and attached as Appendix 1

Name of Supervisor _____ Date _____ Signature _____ i Dedication

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Appendix 2. HSSREC Ethical clearance certificate

 **UNIVERSITY OF
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30 June 2014

Ms Alexandra Nidd (200275233)
School of Applied Human Sciences - Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Protocol reference number: HSS/0373/014M
Project title: Aggression in high school sports: A qualitative study of coaches' perspectives

Dear Ms Nidd,

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 22 April 2014, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the above-mentioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alterations 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: Mr Nicholas Murray
Cc Academic Leader Research: Professor D McCracken
Cc School Administrator: Mr Sbonelo Duma

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
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Appendix 3. Department of Education gatekeeper's permission



education

Department:
Education
PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref: 2/4/8/82

Miss A Nidd
76 Waltdorf
771 Town Bush Road
Oak Park
Pietermaritzburg
3201

Dear Miss Nidd

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: "AGGRESSION IN HIGH SCHOOL SPORT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF COACHES PERSPECTIVES", in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 February to 30 June 2015.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (Umgungundlovu District)

Martzburg College
Girls High School

Alex High School
Carter High School

Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education
Date: 15 April 2014

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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WEBSITE: www.kzneducation.gov.za

Appendix 4. Information letter to principals

Dear Sir/Madam

Request for permission to approach and interview sports coaches at your school for the purposes of a research study on aggression in high school sports.

Introduction and background

My name is Alexandra Nidd, and I am a Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (Pietermaritzburg Campus). As part of my master's degree, I am conducting a research study on coaches' perceptions of aggression in high school sport.

Request for permission to approach and interview coaches at your school

I would like to invite coaches at your school to participate in my research study. It would be ideal if I could approach three to four coaches at your school, which you are welcome to identify. If you grant permission for me to approach coaches employed at your school, I would then invite them to participate in an interview with me at a time and place that is convenient for them (possibly on school property). The interview will involve questions about aggression in high school sports, including the different types of aggressive behaviours, factors that influence these behaviours, and ways of mediating these behaviours. The coaches will not be asked to identify specific learners in your school, and the research will not involve my interaction with any learners. The focus of the study is on coaches' perceptions of aggression in high school sport.

The interview with each coach should last about 45 - 60 minutes. With the participant's permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information they provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If participants choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If participants agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at their request. If participants feel they do not wish to continue, they can stop the interview (and participation in the study) at any time.

All study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will be making use of pseudonyms in my research, to replace any identifying details.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. Coaches are free to decline to take part in the project. They can also decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time.

Additional information and feedback

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor (Dr Nicholas Munro). I can be reached at 083 957 0456 or xands00@yahoo.com, and my research supervisor can be contacted on 033 260 5371 or munron@ukzn.ac.za.

I have attached a copy of my research proposal, which will provide a more detailed explanation of my proposed research project. In addition, on completion of my project, I will provide a brief written report of the study to you and your coaches, and/or conduct a presentation on the study at your school. Once finalized, the completed research project will be accessible in the UKZN library.

Yours sincerely

Alexandra Nidd

Appendix 5. Information letter to coaches

Participation in Research

Aggression in high school sports: A qualitative study of coaches' perspectives.

My name is Alexandra Nidd. I am a Psychology Masters student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, based in Pietermaritzburg. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about aggression in high school sports, including the different types of aggressive behaviours, factors that influence these behaviours, and ways of mediating these behaviours. The interview should last about 45 - 60 minutes. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will be making use of pseudonyms in my research, to replace your identifying details.

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time.

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor (Mr Nicholas Munro). I can be reached at 083 957 0456 or xands00@yahoo.com, and my research supervisor can be contacted on 033 260 5371 or munron@ukzn.ac.za.

Yours sincerely

Alexandra Nidd

Appendix 6. Information and consent form for coaches

Consent to Participate in Research

Aggression in high school sports: A qualitative study of coaches' perspectives.

My name is Alexandra Nidd. I am an Intern Psychologist, based in Pietermaritzburg. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns the phenomenon of aggression in high school sports

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CONSENT

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below.

Participant's Name (*please print*)

Participant's Signature

Date

CONSENT TO RECORDING THE INTERVIEW

If you agree to allow your interview to be recorded please sign and date below.

Appendix 7. Interview schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- 1) Which types of behaviours do you consider to be aggressive in a sporting context?**
*Could you elaborate on this?
- 2) Would you consider any of these aggressive behaviours to be necessary, or advantageous to an individual's sporting performance?**
*Could you give me some examples of these behaviours?
- 3) Would you consider any types of aggressive behaviour to be detrimental to an individual's sporting performance?**
*Could you give me some examples of these?
- 4) Do you think there are certain environmental factors that have an impact on an individual's aggressive behaviour?**
*Could you give me some examples of these environmental factors?
- 5) Do you think the level of competition contributes to the absence or presence of certain aggressive behaviours?**
*Could you elaborate on this?
*Could you give me some specific examples of this?
- 6) As a coach, how important do you think your role is in mediating or controlling aggressive behaviour in the teams you coach?**
- 7) Are there any instances where you would choose to ignore a display of aggressive behaviour by someone you coach?**
*Could you elaborate on this, with some examples?
- 8) Are there any instances where you would choose to discourage a display of aggressive behaviour by someone you coach?**
*Could you elaborate on this, with some examples?
- 9) Are there any instances where you would choose to encourage a display of aggressive behaviour by someone you coach?**
*Could you elaborate on this, with some examples?