THE PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE

PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

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Violence in endemic in South Africa and is plagued by many social ills and poverty. Many blame the past political history and the legacy of apartheid for the continuing lack of social cohesion, crime, violence and economic inequity. Children are often victims of this violence in all the areas of the country. Even if these children are not directly affected by the violence, they are exposed to aspects of it through the media, parents and various other sources. The purpose of this research was to ascertain how children in low-risk, middle to upper income areas perceive violence and their experience of it. It explores their exposure to violence and how this may affect their view of the future in terms of their hopes and fears. The research was framed around Frantz Fanon's theory of violence and Urie Bronfenbrenner's Systems Theory. The aims of the research was to explore children's perceptions of violence and how this affects children's sense of well-being within the context of South Africa by: i) investigating how much children know and understand about the violence that is prevalent in the country, ii) discovering how this frames their perception of violence and finally iii) explore how this affects their sense of well-being. The participants of the study were 28 male and female grade 6 children, between the ages of 10 and 12 from a private school in the Cape Town metropole. There were three focus groups consisting of 8-11 children per group. This was a qualitative study. The data collection was interpreted through Thematic Analysis. The highest standards of ethical conduct and research practice were adhered to.

DECLARATION

I declare that *The perceptions of violence and its effects on the psychological well-being of primary school children* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Claire Michelle Lund

September 2009

Signed: …………….

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The issue of violence[1] is ubiquitous in South Africa.   According to official crime statistics, the Western Cape has emerged as the country's most crime-ridden province (Legget, 2004). Current statistics show that between April 2007 and March 2008, in the Western Cape, there were 2 836 incidences of murder and 24 915 incidences of assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm (South African Police Service (SAPS), 2008). The Western Cape also reflects a recorded total of 42 376 incidences of burglary at residential premises (SAPS, 2008). There have been 978 recorded incidences of neglect and ill-treatment of children within the Western Cape which excludes the many cases that go unreported (SAPS, 2008). Although the severity of exposure to violence ranges from person to person, the effects of such prevalent violence is felt on all levels of society at a personal, political and societal level.

Although all age groups are affected by violence, children are more vulnerable to the psychological affects of violence during their formative years (Cebello, Dahl, Aretakis, Ramirez, 2001; Garbarino, Kostelney & Dubrow, 1991; Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim,

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[1] The term violence refers to any relation, process or condition by which an individual or a group violates the physical, social and psychological integrity of another individual or group (Bulhan, 1985). It is a broadly-used term, referring to many underlying meanings on a structural, institutional and personal level.

2000). Their exposure to violence is augmented by the opinions of parents and siblings, as well as those of their peers, schools, media and multimedia. Whether directly exposed to violence or not, children are affected by it. There is a great need to research how children perceive violence and how it influences their well-being[2] in terms of fear, insecurity and their need for safety. The way that individuals perceive their safety impacts on their view of the future and their sense of hope. These perceptions need to be understood in order to appreciate an individual's views, hopes and expectations for the future.

As Sharon Stevens (cited in Spilsbury, 2002) states, "…to understand children and their childhoods, researchers need to explore the participatory experiences of children in their environments" (p. 101). It is important to explore the nature of childhood environments and how this may impact their well-being and the nature of their childhood itself (Spilsbury, 2002). Stevens's own research examined how decisions and events on larger social and political levels shape the experience of children on the local level (Spilsbury, 2002). Within the South African context research needs to focus on the effects of violence from a personal, familial, community and societal perspective in order to understand how an individual perceives violence. International research has been conducted in this field of study (Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis, Ramirez, 2001; Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996; Osofsky, 1995). However, research has not been extensive in South Africa, with few researchers broaching this topic (Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007).

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[2] Well-being refers to positive and sustainable characteristics which enable an individual to thrive and flourish (Huppert, 2009).

Optimal development in children requires them to try to make sense of the environment in which they live (Spilsbury, 2002). Research has shown that within the South African context, children exposed to violence all have varied reactions to different situations (Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007). The question that needs to be answered is how these children differ from each other and the role these differences play in their personal perception of violence. Research has shown that aspects such as social support networks, individual competence, varying experiences of violence (Bal, Crombez, Van Oost & Debourdeaudhuij, 2003; Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996; Masten & Coatsworth, 1998), cognitive competence, an open educational climate, the active ability to cope with stress (Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991), as well as other risk factors and protective factors all affect a child's resilience to violence.
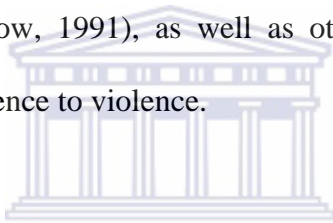
Political violence is one pervasive form of violence to which many children in South Africa have been exposed. Apartheid was the most harmful form of political violence faced by this country (Duncan & Rock, 1997). The effects of Apartheid are still being felt in most areas of our country. The long term psychological effect of violence during the Apartheid and post-Apartheid era has created a continuing perpetuation of this violence within our country today, significantly affecting the children. Many commentators have come to refer to South Africa as a "culture of violence" (Hamber, 1997). The political violence that South Africa has been subjected to in the past is directly linked to the current levels of violence that we experience. In order to understand the levels of violence occurring in South Africa at present, it is imperative to be aware of the country's history.

1.2   HISTORY OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

The 1980's were dominated by the violence that characterised the system of Apartheid in South Africa. During this era, the socio-political context of South Africa was defined by stringent racial segregation, violent oppression of citizens of 'colour' and economic deprivation orchestrated by the state (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001). The result of this was that the black population lived under conditions of poverty, deprivation, inequality and fear (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001). This type of political violence was termed vertical violence (i.e.: violence perpetrated by the state against its citizens) by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Hamber, 2000). Individuals may have experienced violence that included arbitrary arrests, detention without trial, civil unrest, acts of sabotage, harassment, torture, "disappearances" and the murder of political opponents and rivals (Hamber, 2000). The Apartheid laws segregated South African society along racial lines in various domains including electoral, educational, occupational, residential and land-owning rights (Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2002).

The era of Apartheid resulted in violence between groups representing the state and those who resisted the rule of government, which consequently "seeped into all parts of public life, undermining the moral, interpersonal and social framework of society" (Hamber, 1997, p 5). In April 1994 the first democratic elections were held and Nelson Mandela was voted into power as leader of the African National Congress (ANC), which resulted in the stringent Apartheid laws being repealed (Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2002).

Although the political violence that once characterised South African life has decreased significantly, other types of violence have not. In contemporary South Africa, the political violence of the past is still prevalent in society today, but it is over-shadowed by the violent crime entrenched in South African culture. South Africans have become a society who endorse and accept violence as an acceptable and legitimate means to resolve problems and achieve goals (Hamber, 1997). The shocking reality is that the experience of being violently victimised in South Africa has become a statistically normal feature of everyday life in the urban and rural settings (Hamber & Lewis, 1997). Schonteich & Louw (1999) note that although crime has not necessarily become more violent between 1994 and 1998, research has shown that citizens of South Africa have increasing concern surrounding safety and security. This is illustrated by research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) where in 1994, 73 percent of South Africans felt safe and 16% felt unsafe. By the end of 1998, only 45% felt safe and 48% felt unsafe (Schonteich & Louw, 1999).

Despite the momentous political changes that South Africa has undergone, the majority of children are still exposed to enormous socio-economic problems, which compromises their development (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001). They are exposed to varying degrees of violence on a daily basis and are certainly not excluded from the violent realities of their environment. On the contrary, children have been the ones who have been mostly affected by the violence, directly or indirectly (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001). Their own perceptions of violence are influenced by their personal experiences of violence, by the opinions of parents and siblings and exposure to the media or

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multimedia. Coetzee (2005), Grossman (1999) and Huston, Donnerstein, Feshbach, Katz, Murray, Rubinstein, Wilcox & Zuckerman (1992), estimate that by age 18, a typical young person would have witnessed 200 000 acts of violence and 40 000 murders on one screen or another (cited in Kader, 2006). Children do not have to be directly exposed to violence in order be psychologically affected by it. They are exposed to alternative forms of violence every day, in the form of television, gaming, news or parental perceptions (Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996; Kader, 2006; Osofsky, 1995).

1.3   RATIONALE:

The influence of violence negatively affects children psychologically and, regardless of whether they are exposed to low or elevated levels of violence, they are still fearful of direct or indirect exposure to violence (Spilsbury, 2002). In the South African context, as indicated by the statistics previously mentioned, violent crime is a reality that many individuals must face on a daily basis. The possibility of becoming a victim of violence is not an irrational or unreal fear. As Garbarino (1992, p. 83) states, "…for many children's neighbourhoods, danger has replaced safety as the organising principle" (Spilsbury, 2002). This is exactly the reality in South Africa where children and adults alike live in an environment in which danger has replaced safety and there is constant concern around security.

Previous research has generally focussed on the effects of community violence in low socio-economic situations (Brady, Smith, Henry & Tolan, 2008; Farver, Ghosh & Garcia, 2000; Spilsbury, 2002). Little research has been conducted with the low-risk, middle to

upper income areas and their perceptions of violence (Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2002). This study aims to expand research in this demographic group by examining their perceptions of violence and how children, regardless of exposure to violence, are affected socially and psychologically. This particular group of children are developmentally mature enough to be aware of the violence surrounding them and seem not be to overly influenced by the opinions and need for acceptance from their peers; which would allow for a rich and honest description of their experience of violence. They are integrally South African and critical to the development of the society given the need for the continued eradication of South Africa's high levels of intergenerational violence and trauma.

1.4   AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the research are to explore children's perceptions of violence and how this affects their sense of well-being within the context of South Africa. It will focus specifically on:

i)   investigating what children know and understand about violence,

ii)   discovering how this frames their perception of violence,

iii)   exploring how this affects their sense of well-being.

The objectives of the research are:

1. to explore the children's perception, understanding and knowledge of violence within South Africa

2. to understand from where their views, knowledge and perception derive.

3. to examine how these perceptions of violence influence their sense of well-being.

1.5   CHAPTER ORGANISATION

Chapter 1 provides the reader with an understanding of the background of the study. It aims to provide the reader with a history of the context of South Africa within which the research is based. It is expected that this will provide the reader with insight into the motivation for the study. In this section, the rationale for the research topic will be discussed, specifying the aims and objectives for the study.

Chapter 2 encompasses the literature consulted relevant to the aims of the present study. It includes a discussion of theories, themes and definitions identified by previous research. Finally, this section aims to identify the two theoretical frameworks employed by the study and highlights the relevance of this framework in relation to the nature of the study.

Chapter 3 provides a description of the methodological framework applied to the study. The research design is discussed, as well as a description of the participants and their context. The data collection and procedure are examined after which the explanation of the data analysis is reported, including a step by step description. In conclusion, the ethical considerations, limitations and significance of the study are discussed.

Chapter 4 includes a report on the focus groups, encompassing the analysis of the study. In this chapter, the results of the focus groups are discussed and specific themes are generated according to Thematic Analysis. These themes have been identified and coded, including extracts from the focus groups to validate the data. This includes how the data from the present study relates to previous research, literature and theories.

The final chapter includes a summary of the results, illustrating the noteworthy findings of the present study and highlighting their significance. The limitations of the study are discussed and recommendations and interventions are suggested for possible future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Internationally and locally, there has been much research conducted on children's exposure to violence and how this affects their sense of well-being. This following section will review studies on the effects of violence on children in relation to their development, perception of violence, risk and resilience factors, context and general state of well-being. This will be further explicated through the contextual and theoretical frameworks that underpin the study.

2.1   THE EFFECT OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN'S WELL-BEING:

Previous research shows that varying types of violence (political, personal and institutional) have a profound effect on children's psychological well-being (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Farver, Gosh & Garcia, 2000; Garbarino, 1998; Garbarino, 2001; Kader, 2006; Kerig, 2003; Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2000).

2.1.1   Children's judgment of safety and security

Farver, Gosh and Garcia (2000) examined how children's perceptions of neighbourhood violence and safety were related to their socio-emotional functioning, neighbourhood violent crime rates, and parental ratings of neighbourhood safety and violence. They found that children who lived in high violence neighbourhoods felt a lot less secure than the children living in low violence neighbourhoods. Results showed that children's perceptions of violence and safety are related to their neighbourhood violence rates. Children were generally found to feel safer at home and in school, but felt unsafe outdoors when playing in their neighbourhood or travelling to school, regardless of the area in which they lived. The findings suggest that exposure to neighbourhood violence may negatively affect children's feelings of well-being, sense of self, control over events in their lives, and opportunities to play safely in their neighbourhoods (Farver, Gosh & Garcia, 2000).

2.1.2   The psychological effect on children exposed to violence

Slone, Kaminer and Durrheim (2000) addressed the effects of political violence in South African youths in relation to how stressful events contribute to psychopathology, as well as the relationship between exposure to political life events and severity of distress. Their findings revealed that both political life events and stressful personal life events contribute to global distress levels and specific symptom dimensions. This remains consistent across race, gender and grade level (Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2000).

Within the South African context, the findings show that exposure to political life events have had a significant impact on the psychological well-being of all adolescents (Slone, Kaminer & Durrheim, 2000).

In a more psychiatrically focused study, Osofsky (1995) recognised the effects of psychological violence and how direct traumatic events can lead to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The criteria for diagnosis include life stressors which lead to re-experiencing of the trauma, avoidant symptoms and other related symptoms (Osofsky, 1995). Children who are affected by direct violence may withdraw, be depressed and have difficulty with concentration, fearfulness, anxious reactions and similar symptoms relating to trauma. In other research by Osofsky (1999), she states that children suffering from violent trauma exhibit symptoms similar to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in adults, including re-experiencing the event, avoidance, numbing of the event and increased arousal.

Angless and Shefer (1997) refer to children as the "forgotten victims of violence". Their focus is on the effects of familial violence on children and the effects on their psychological well-being as well as behaviour. Their research reveals that responses to observing violence in the family vary considerably in terms of behaviour and emotional problems. These children have similar reactions to those who have been physically abused resulting in emotional, cognitive and behavioural disturbances in development (Angless & Shefer, 1997).

Angless and Shefer's research also showed that witnessing violence can result in behavioural problems, including enuresis, insomnia, drug abuse, drug dealing, prostitution, assaultive and aggressive behaviour, truancy, running away and poor peer relations, which are also common reactions to stress (Angless & Shefer, 1997; Jonson-Reid, 1998). Children may internalise their distress and exhibit psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety and suicidal fantasy, or externalise their distress through acting out their behaviour (Angless & Shefer, 1997, Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003, Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). According to Martin (2002), psychosomatic symptoms could include headaches, nightmares and sleepwalking. Osofsky (2004) discusses how children who have been traumatised could develop problematic behaviours and symptoms including a loss of trust in adults, uncertainty and new fears, emotional instability, behaviour changes, returning to earlier behaviours (such as clinging, lack of toileting, regression in language), and posttraumatic stress symptoms (Osofsky, 1997; Osofsky, 2004). When exposed to trauma or direct exposure, children will react accordingly in relation to reactions of the people in their direct social environment. Thus it is important to be aware of the environments in which they live (Osofsky, 2004). They tend to engage in mental and behavioural disengagements in an effort to cope with the fear that and distress that they are experiencing (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003).

Fantuzzo and Mohr (1999), support this research in relation to domestic violence by stating that children exposed to domestic violence demonstrate more externalising and internalising behaviours than children from non-violent homes. They also address how children who have been exposed to domestic violence may struggle at school with lack of

concentration, general difficulty with school work and impaired cognitive, verbal and motor skills (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999).

Literature has also investigated the effects of domestic violence on children and how this may impact their behaviour. In a study by Baldry (2003), the perpetuation of domestic violence was illustrated. This study investigated the relationship between Italian children who have witnessed familial violence and bullying. Results reveal that exposure of boys to some kind of interparental violence is associated with bullying. Baldry explains this phenomenon in relation to Bandura's Social Learning theory to illustrate how children learn behaviour through their parents. There are noteworthy differences in gender in relation to these findings. It was discovered that boys are more prone to direct victimisation such as being directly threatening and calling each names, whereas girls are more prone to psychologically harming effects of bullying, such as 'being ignored' (Baldry, 2003). Girls are more likely to be affected by the interparental violence than boys. Girls exposed to interparental violence are about three times more likely to be bullies than those not exposed (Baldry, 2003).

## 2.2   THE EFFECT OF VIOLENCE ON CHILD DEVELOPMENT:

This study aims to focus on children between the ages of 10 and 12. At this stage of development, they are at the very beginning of adolescence. They are developmentally receptive and able to articulate their own personal views. At this stage, they are not as influenced by the opinions of their peers as they would be in later adolescent years. They

have a refreshing approach to information filtering and are not hugely influenced by the views of the media. They are however, vulnerable to societal influences such as community and media violence, which can influence their safety, security and general sense of well-being. Any exposure to political violence during the formative developmental years continues to effect the psychological adjustment of South Africa's youth (Slone, Durrheim & Kaminer, 2000, p. 482). There is no doubt that living under conditions of insecurity and the threat of extreme violence is detrimental to children's development (Raviv, Raviv, Shimoni, Fox & Leavitt, 1999).

2.2.1 Developmental theory

It may be useful at this point to discuss basic theoretical frameworks by which one may understand child development. The theory discussed is Erikson's psychosocial stages of development.
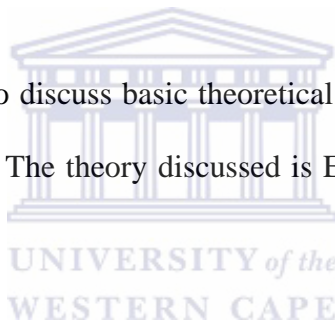
Erikson's psychosocial stage model is based on the development of an individual's identity. According to this stage model, the development of the individual is based on exposure to personal dilemmas at each stage (Carr, 2006). The way in which an individual may resolve these dilemmas is based on their social context and influences how they will describe themselves (Carr, 2006). This theory is based in the 'epigenetic principle' that every stage must be progressed through satisfactorily in order for development to proceed smoothly (Sadock & Sadock, 2007). If resolution does not occur sufficiently, all the subsequent stages will not be resolved and the individual will reflect this failure in social, emotional or cognitive maladjustment (Sadock & Sadock, 2007).

When a child is exposed to violence, the resolution of such phases may not be reached and the child may not be able to adjust and successfully move on to the subsequent stage.

The participants of the study given their ages of ten to twelve years old, are currently in Erikson's stage of 'Industry versus Inferiority'. Prior to this stage are stages related to trust of the caregiver, the achievement of autonomy and the ability to form initiative (Carr, 2006). If the child has progressed through these stages, they will then move on to the stage of industry versus inferiority in which children learn the tasks of how to problem solve, develop skills and engage in meaningful activities (Carr, 2006). They master tasks according to parental and teacher motivation, thus allowing them to progress to the following stage, group identity versus alienation. It is important to note that the children involved in the research were not yet at the stage of group identity versus alienation and therefore were not as influenced by social acceptance in their opinions (Carr, 2006).
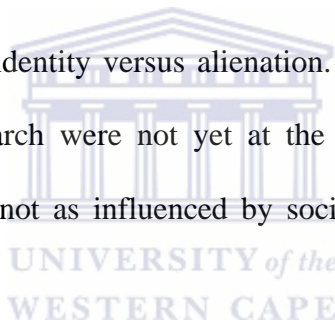
Children who have witnessed specifically marital violence tend to exhibit different reactions at various stages of development. Children at an infantile level will have poor health, sleeping patterns and often scream (Angless & Shefer, 1997; Osofsky, 1995). Preschool children will show signs of terror and more physical portrayal of their acting out behaviour, including aggression. Young school-going children act out in different ways, by complaining of somatic problems, regressing to earlier stages of functioning and becoming more aggressive as they mature (Angless & Shefer, 1997; Jonson-Reid, 1998). At a later stage, adolescents will act out the behaviour and become more aggressive, become anxious or project blame onto others (Angless & Shefer, 1997; Brady, Smith, Henry & Tolan, 2008; Osofsky, 1995).

Children are also affected cognitively and emotionally by the influence of interfamilial violence (Angless & Shefer, 1997; Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999). According to Angless and Shefer (1997) the following issues arise due to family violence. Firstly, there is a confusion of child-parent boundaries and roles which are blurred due to parents encouraging alliances between one parent and the child. Secondly, children often feel guilt and responsibility for the violence in the family and tend to blame themselves for causing the problem. Thirdly, the children's exposure to violence has been found to cause impairment in social interaction and often is the cause of problematic conflict-resolution skills. Finally, the effect of the violence may impact on their gender-identification roles, as they feel loathe to identify with the violence of abuser or helplessness of the victim (Angless & Schefer, 1997).
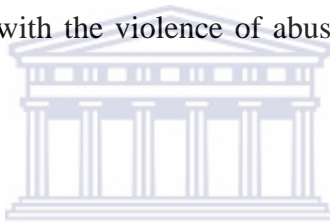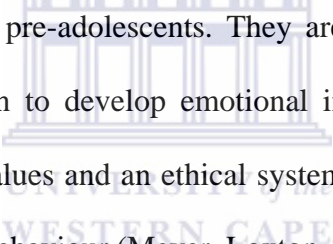
In Holt, Buckley & Whelan's (2008) comprehensive review of literature on "The impact of exposure to domestic violence on children and young people", the empirical evidence suggests that if an individual is exposed to domestic violence within the home environment, it may jeopardise the developmental progress of the child. This in turn may accumulate to adulthood and could continue the cycle of violence. It is suggested that the dynamics of violence interfere with the child's developmental need for safety and security, which may result in adverse effects in creating a secure attachment with the mother and also resulting in the child being unable to develop a logical approach for getting comfort (Martin, 2002).

Infants and toddlers are assumed to not be affected by violence, as they are too young to remember what occurred or to understand the situation (Osofsky, 1999). As noted in the Editorial of Child Abuse and Neglect (2009), identification of the effects of violence on emotional and physical development is often inhibited by the failure to recognise that children may suffer contemporaneous distress, but the effects of this distress on their behaviour may only be detected at a later stage in development. Research, however, has shown that there is a clear association between young infants, exposure to violence and emotional and behavioural problems (Osofsky, 1999). According to Erikson's theory of psychological development exposure to violence or trauma may result in inhibition of the normal development of trust and autonomy (Osofsky, 1995). This may result in later emotional and behavioural problems deriving from the central conflicts of mistrust and a need for autonomy with which they are struggling. Children may also regress in developmental achievements such as toilet training and language (Osofsky, 1995).
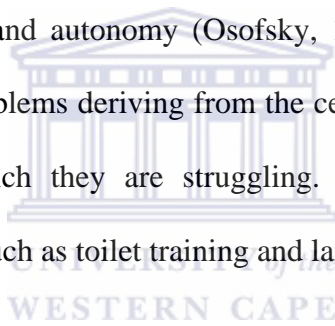
Pre-school years constitute one of the most important periods of psychological development (Duncan & van Niekerk, 2001). At this stage the development of cognitive skills and mental development is critical, especially emotional development (Carr, 2006). During this time, there is increased insight into the emotions experienced by others (Carr, 2006). This is when the foundations for appropriate or inappropriate ways of adjusting to society are laid (Duncan & van Niekerk, 2001). Thus, nurturing and caring is crucial at this point. Exposure to violence at this stage of development may inhibit the emotional and social development of the child.

School going children who are affected by violence present with anxiety, depression and aggressive behaviour (Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996; Osofsky, 1995). They may show less ability to master tasks and are less likely to be as playful (Osofsky, 1995). Children between the ages of 6 and 12 are developing a more complex emotional awareness of themselves. In terms of domestic violence, they are able to try and understand the violence, rationalise violent behaviour of an individual parent and may also try to prevent the violent acts from occurring (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2008). Literature has revealed that in terms of reactions to violence at this stage, boys exhibit more externalising responses, whereas girls demonstrate more internalising responses (Osofsky, 1995).

The children in this study are pre-adolescents. They are at a stage where they face a tumultuous time, as they begin to develop emotional independence from parents and other adults, acquire a set of values and an ethical system to guide behaviour and desire to achieve socially acceptable behaviour (Meyer, Loxton & Boulter, 1997). It is plausible to state with confidence that children at this stage of development will be affected by differing degrees of violence in society.

2.3.   THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEXT AND EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE:

2.3.1 An Ecological Understanding

Children are influenced by the various levels of society in the way they perceive violence (Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis & Ramirez, 2001; Engle, Castle, Menon, 1996). With this in mind, this study will be framed by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. The

approach to this study is consistent with the ecological systems theory perspective that contextual variables will affect family processes and children's developmental pathways (Ceballo, Dahl, Aretakis & Ramirez, 2001).

The ecological approach understands systems as they are examined as part of a multi-level, multi-structured, multi-determined social context, in which an individual cannot be viewed in isolation (Bhana & Kanjee, 2001). Bronfenbrenner (1979) sees the child's world being made up of four interrelated systems (Meyer, Loxton & Boulter, 1997). These consist of firstly the immediate physical and social environment (the microsystem). For very young children the microsystem is limited to the immediate family (Farver, Ghosh & Garcia, 2000). This system becomes more complex as children mature and are exposed to schools, youth groups, and neighbourhood play areas (Farver, Ghosh & Garcia, 2000). Secondly, the interactions of the individual among the systems within this environment (the mesosytem). Thirdly, the broader social, political and economic conditions (the exosystem) and finally, general beliefs, attitudes and ideologies shared by members of a society (Meyer, Loxton & Boulter, 1997). According to this model, it is clear that context plays a vital role in the way the child forms perceptions of violence.

In general, the majority of research conducted in the field of the effects of violence on children has been in high-risk, low socio-economic areas (Farver, Gosh & Garcia, 2000; Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991; Osofsky, 1995; Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007). Exposure to violence occurs less frequently for children who do not live in lower socio-economic areas (Osofsky, 1999). With this in mind, however, children do not need

to be at its centre to be affected by violence and even those children who are relatively removed from the so-called 'battlegrounds' are affected by political violence (Duncan & Rock, 1997). Exposure to family and media violence crosses socio-economic and cultural boundaries and occurs in all groups in our society (Osofsky, 1999).

This study hopes to contribute to past research by focussing on a lower risk area and how the children within this area are affected.

2.3.2 Exposure to Personal Violence

Evidence shows that safety is related to the structure and socio-economic circumstances of the families (Berger, 2005). Research shows that parents' behaviour is influenced by their socio-economic situation. A poor socio-economic situation also gives rise to poor educational achievement and fewer resources, which may also influence the children's behaviour (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003). Evidence has also suggested that individuals who are socio-economically disadvantaged do not give sufficient time to their children, as they need to adhere to external demands before their children's needs (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003). In poor socio-economic situations, there is more likely to be the abuse of alcohol or substances which assist in coping. This also leads to incest, child molestation, spousal abuse and other family violence (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003).

Berger (2005) researched demographic, social, psychological and economic factors, physical abuse and psychological abuse and the implications that these may have on

children as well as to provide a better understanding of the relationship between income and physical violence in single-parent families. This research verified many of the findings of earlier studies, confirming that demographic characteristics, maternal depression, maternal alcohol use, and intra-family patterns of violence may largely contribute to child abuse and that larger numbers of children in the household increase the probability of physical violence (Berger, 2005). These factors may influence the child developmentally and could adversely effect their perception of security and safety.

Children are exposed to violence at various levels, from different levels of society. As mentioned, we have addressed the familial violence on a personal level. Another facet of personal violence which needs to be addressed is bullying. Aleudse defines bullying as "a wilful, conscious desire to hurt another or put him/ her under stress" (2006, p. 38). It is recognised that there are varying degrees of violence, ranging from social isolation of individuals to physical bullying and teasing (Aleudse, 2006). The child who has had exposure to a long-standing act of bullying is severely affected by it (Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Hentonnen, 1999). Research conducted by Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Hentonnen (1999) reveals that as children grow older, bullying tends to decrease. Children's experiences of bullying were investigated over a four year period, in which it was found that half the children who were involved in bullying were still involved four years later and that the children at both points showed psychiatric disturbances and symptoms. These can include a decrease in academic performance due to absenteeism and lack of concentration, depression, anxiety and a lack of self esteem, which may result in introverted characteristics, being shy and cautious (Aleudse, 2006).

2.3.3 Exposure to Media Violence

On an exosystemic level, exposure to violence through the media is something that affects all children, through the television, cinema and the internet (Osofsky, 1999). Research has described that older children were more upset by television news than were younger children. (Smith & Wilson, 2002) This is due to older children being able to distinguish reality from fantasy and acting from reality, as well as comprehension and understanding of the implications of the news (Smith & Wilson, 2002). When addressing television news, it was found that fear ratings were significantly higher when exposed to real life events, which invoked inferences about the precise nature of the violence (Smith & Wilson, 2002). Media violence, according to Anderson, Berkowitz, Donnerstein, Huesmann, Johnson, Linz, Malamuth & Wartella (2003), produces short-term increases by priming existing aggressive cognitions, increasing physiological arousal and triggering an automatic tendency to imitate observed behaviours. They believe that this may result in a causal chain between viewing violence and potential aggressive behaviour. This theory is supported by American Academy of Pediatrics (2001) and van der Molen (2004). Van der Molen (2004) refers to recent research pertaining to the potential effects of violent news content. Her studies imply that reactions involving fear, aggression, and desensitisation, may also be due to unintended violence, such as accidents, natural disasters and structural violence (including war) (van der Molen, 2004).

Other studies on media violence have addressed the topic of desensitisation to media violence. It was found that children with lower exposure to media violence were more

affected by it than those who had higher exposure to media violence (Cline, Croft & Courrier, 1973). Therefore it was hypothesised that prolonged exposure to violent acts could lead to a degree of desensitisation. This study suggested that some children who are heavy television watchers (and are exposed to more violence) could be more prone to some degree of habituation or desensitisation to violence (Cline, Croft & Courrier, 1973).

2.4   RISK AND RESILIENCE FACTORS

Children exposed to violence react in different ways, depending upon the various risk factors they are exposed to and resilience factors they have developed. Kerig (2003), states that resilience is the product of complex interactions between the child and their environment.

Resilience refers to how children overcome adversity to achieve good developmental outcomes (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Competence refers to "a pattern of effective adaptation in the environment, broadly defined in terms of reasonable success with major developmental tasks expected for a person of a given age and gender in the context of his or her culture and society" (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998, p. 206). Both the child's capabilities and the nature of the contexts in which the child lives will influence competence (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998).

In a study conducted by Ward, Martin, Theron and Distiller (2001), the extent to which the child's individual, family, school and peer group's characteristics influence a child's resilience to violence exposure were investigated among grade 6 students living in a

high-violence community in Cape Town. The results showed that the individual's resilience to the effects of violence was affected by a number of factors including peer delinquency, social support and involvement (Martin, Theron and Distiller, 2001).

This view is supported by Bailey, Hannigan, Black, Covington and Sokol (2006), whose studies were conducted on a group of African American First Graders who had been exposed to significant degree of community violence. This community violence[3] exposure was associated with symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress, but did not correlate with internalising or externalising problems for all children (Bailey et.al., 2006). Results showed however, that children's perceptions of maternal acceptance moderated the relationship between violence exposure and internalising and externalising problems which included being withdrawn, anxious-depressed, and acting out behaviour. It showed that the children with the lowest levels of reported maternal acceptance were most affected by community violence. Therefore the study revealed that low levels of maternal acceptance placed children at greater risk for unfavourable outcomes associated with community violence exposure compared to those who experience superior levels of maternal acceptance.

This is further supported by Kim & Galvin (2004), who conducted a study similar to the nature of the current study. They focused on urban children's perceptions of violence, which revealed that participants in Chicago are dependant on the safety of their homes

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[3] "Community violence is defined as deliberate acts intended to cause physical harm against a person in the community (i.e.: neighbourhood, school, other public places)" (McCart, Smith, Saunders, Kilpatrick, Resnick & Ruggiero (2007, p.434).

and the presence of responsible and caring adults in order to manage the threat of violence (Kim & Galvin, 2004).

In a study conducted by Garbarino, Kostelny and Dubrow (1991), resilience factors that assist a child in dealing with violence are the ability to actively cope, cognitive competence, stable emotional relationships, social support and open educational climate. It may also depend on the individual temperament of the child (Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991; Ward, Martin, Theron & Distiller, 2007).

In a paper written by Kerig (2003), the field of family violence is addressed as well as the risk and resilience in children exposed to interparental violence. She places her attention on the risk outcomes associated with exposure to violence, the mechanisms by which those negative effects come about, the protective processes that can buffer children from risk, and the methods available for studying those processes. She addresses the diverse effects of children exposed to violence and their resilience in the face of abuse. She also identifies characteristics which enable children to cope well with stress. This includes intelligence, social class, gender, temperament, physical attractiveness and sociability (Kerig, 2003). She identifies risk outcomes for children exposed to violence. This includes adjustment problems such as internalising and externalising, including depression, anxiety, aggression, post traumatic stress and negative expectations of the future (Kerig, 2003).

One of the most important factors contributing to resilience is the child's secure attachment to their mother. It is also important for them to be able to have someone on

whom they can rely for social support (Bal et.al., 2003; Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996; Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003). This can buffer the effects of stress and other factors that could affect the child in the long term (Holt, Buckley & Whelan, 2003). Poorly attached children are likely to demonstrate limited self esteem and view themselves in a more negative way if they have been directly exposed to physical and other violence (Mitchell-Kamalie, 2002).

Engle, Castle & Menon (1996) believe that factors associated with resilience are related to later ages of experiencing the violence. Children who are older have a better understanding of the social context in which violence takes place, whereas children who are younger and have less of an understanding are more vulnerable (Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996). As they grow older, children's ability to manage their own attention, emotions and behaviour becomes more developed and they are more able to develop coping mechanisms (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). They are also able to develop a greater understanding of the reasons for the violence (Engle, Castle & Menon, 1996).

2. 5   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will look at the theoretical framework of the study, which is two-fold in nature.

The South African context is defined by a history of violent political struggle, which is still evident in society today. Violence is found at many levels of society and in different

contexts. Theories most relevant to the South African context are the theories proposed by Frantz Fanon (1968) and Hussein Bulhan (1985).

Within the context of South Africa, the concept of oppression has remained at the core of violence (Bulhan, 1985). Bulhan, states that "violence gradually permeates the social order to affect everyday living. In time, the violence takes on different guises and becomes less blatant and more integral to the institutional as well as the interpersonal reality" (1985, p. 131).

Violence is referred to by Bulhan (1985), as a process and condition which undermines the well-being of the victim. Violations can be physical, social and psychological in nature and can be between individuals, groups and societies (Bulhan, 1985).

Bulhan (1985) refers to three types of violence. These are structural violence, institutional violence and personal violence. Personal violence involves direct actions and is restricted by place and time (Bulhan, 1985). Structural and institutional violence are more complex and involve microsocial institutions including prisons, mental institutions and families, for example (Bulhan, 1985). All three of these types of violence are appropriate for the South African context and these types of violence affect all levels of society, thus giving us a richer understanding of the nature of violence.

The second theory around which the study is framed is the ecological systems theory approach. Bronfenbrenner (1979), focussed on the interaction between the individual and the environment. He describes the environment in which development takes place in terms of a series of nested systems (Visser, 2007). Individuals exist between these layers of social relationships, friendship networks, organisations, culture and society (Visser,

2007). The individual's life is strongly influenced by these layers of relationships. It is thus important to consider the systems which influence children and from where their perceptions derive.

There are four levels of interaction. This includes the microsystem, the mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem (Visser, 2007). The microsystem is the context in which the person in focus has immediate experience or personal interaction in a direct way (Visser, 2007). For children, this may include teachers, other learners, friends and sports teams. At this level, relationships have impact in two directions - both away from the child and toward the child (Ryan & Paquette, 2001). Ryan and Paquette (2001, p. 2) use the example of how a parent can influence the ideas and beliefs of their child, but also how the child can influence the ideas and beliefs of their parents.
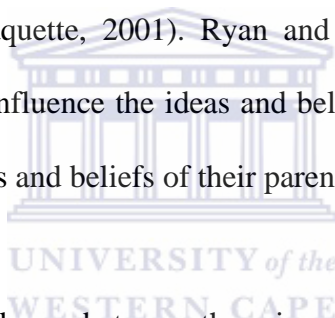
The mesosystem is a set of linkages between the microsystems that a person may enter (Visser, 2007). For example, the connection between the parents and the church (Ryan & Paquette, 2001). The exosystem is interconnections between the microsystem and mesosystems with which a person has no direct contact, but this could affect their functioning (Visser, 2007). This level defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly (Ryan & Paquette, 2001). Finally, the macrosystem is a wider system of ideology and organisation of institutions, common to particular class, culture and ethnicity (Visser, 2007). Everything that acts within this system is defined as part of this complex and interrelated system, where everything is connected to everything else, directly and indirectly (Visser, 2007).

2.6   CONCLUSION

The themes and theories discussed have been described as possible reasons to the current research enquiry. There has been a dearth of research surrounding the topic of perceptions of violence with children in low-risk, higher socio-economic areas. The themes and theories that have been addressed will add a rich understanding to the subsequent chapters, framing the current study of focus.

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CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1   RESEARCH DESIGN

The research adopted a qualitative approach, as the study explores the perceptions of violence in children. This enabled the researcher to take into account the varying viewpoints and practises of the individuals and the different subjective perspectives and social backgrounds related to them (Flick, 2002). This approach allowed for the formulation of rich descriptions and explanations of human phenomena (Durrheim, 1999). The interpretive approach was utilised, with the use of an inductive theme of enquiry. The interpretive approach favoured an inductive method which allowed for hypotheses to be generated regarding the research question. This approach further harnesses and extends the power of ordinary language and expression and helps us to better understand how the children perceive violence (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999).

3.2   PARTICIPANTS

The participants in the study consisted of 28 male and female grade 6 children, between the ages of 10 and 12. Three focus groups had varying group sizes, due to availability of the children. Focus group 1 had 8 participants, focus group 2 had 9 and the final group had 11. The focus groups were conducted at the school, during school hours. With the aid of the headmaster and the grade 6 teacher, the children were allocated groups and given

notice of the time when their focus groups would take place. The children who participated gained consent from their parents and signed assent forms themselves. All of the children were given consent forms and they were all signed.

The school is a private school[4] in the Cape Town Metropole. The school is situated in an area in which the community is not high-risk in terms of violence, but the extent of personal violence has not previously been explored. The community has been affected by a large amount of petty crime and burglaries. It is a community that is protected by various security companies, including neighbourhood watches created and run by the community themselves. The participants reside in the middle to upper income bracket of the general Cape Town population.

3.3   PROCEDURE

Permission was sought from the headmaster of the school. After discussions regarding the research procedure and agenda, the researcher briefed the grade 6 students as a group in order to collect participants. This provided an introduction to the theme and the procedures which the research would follow. Confidentiality and consent issues were addressed. Assent letters were sent out to all the children interested in participating in the study. Consent letters were sent together with the letters of assent and were signed and returned by the participants as well as their legal guardians/parents. The letter included a brief outlining the research and the procedures to be undertaken. Parents were provided

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[4] 'Private School' refers to a school institution, governed by a private organisation

with the researcher's contact details and were able to contact the researcher regarding any queries. The focus groups took place during school hours and were an hour in length. The focus groups were recorded and transcribed.

## 3.4 DATA COLLECTION

Data was collected through the use of focus groups. The main advantage of a focus group is that they are rich in data, they stimulate the answers; encourage participants to remember events and they can lead beyond the answers of the single interview (Flick, 2002). A focus group is a general term given to a research interview conducted with a group (Kelly, 1999).
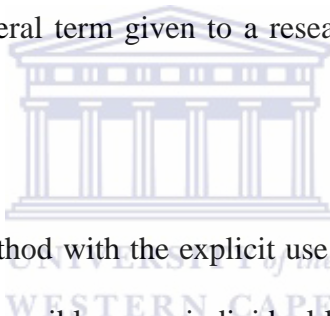
Focus groups are used as a method with the explicit use of the group interaction to gain data that may not have been accessible on an individual level (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas & Robson, 2001). It is an excellent way of collecting data with children, as they have the support of the other members of the focus group and do not feel pressured to contribute. Bloor et al. (2001) state that focus groups are sometimes presented as ideal environments for researching sensitive topics. The participants are more relaxed and less inhibited in the presence of other people, who are in a similar position to them. They may also feel a sense of empowerment within the company of others in a similar situation (Bloor et.al., 2001). The children in this study were, to some degree, already comfortable with each other as they attend school together.

Focus groups allow for the researcher to obtain large and rich amounts of data in the respondent's own words. The researcher can acquire deeper levels of meaning, make important connections and identify subtle nuances in expression and meaning (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). The focus groups in this study were semi-structured, with questions pertaining to the topic. According to Farquhar (1999), discussions with children should be preceded with a group activity, then starting with less sensitive topics and moving to the more sensitive areas, after which the children are given a space for clarification questions. The groups were conducted in this manner. Stimulus material was available if required. The focus groups consisted of 8-11 participants, which enabled control in the moderation of the groups, while still allowing participants to actively participate (Stewart, Shamdani & Rook, 2007). The active participation of focus groups allowed the researcher to gain an intersubjective experience as opposed to an individual's subjective experience of an interview (Kelly, 1999).
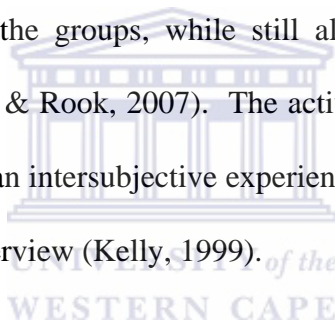
3.5   DATA ANALYSIS:

The data was analysed according to Interpretive Thematic Analysis. Boyatzis (1998) refers to 'thematic analysis' as a "process for encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis, 1998 p. vi.). This was completed through a step by step process, using themes and codes to understand the data. Firstly, the recordings of the focus groups were transcribed, from which patterns of experiences were noted. Secondly, themes or recurrent ideas were inferred from the data, identified and then organised using clear codes (Boyatzis, 1998).

At this stage the researcher already had a good understanding from immersion in the data and becoming familiar with extracts and topics that had arisen. Secondly, the researcher recognised and induced common threads from the data. Induction refers to the process of inferring general rules or classes from specific incidences (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999). During this process, the data was to be coded according to relationships between one or more of the themes. For example, one of these themes was related to children's perceptions of safety and security. This allowed the researcher to break down the body of data into labelled, meaningful pieces, which can later be clustered into bits of organised, coded material (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999).

The fourth step involved labelling the themes and identifying and labelling codes which flagged them in the text (encoding), which focussed on the finer nuances of the themes (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999). The last step is interpretation, which entails interpreting the data according to the thematic categories from analysis, including how subjective experience may have influenced data collection and analysis (Terreblanche & Kelly, 1999).

3.6   RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY

Qualitative validity implies that the researcher uses certain measures to ascertain accuracy of findings (Creswell, 2009). Gibbs (2007) defines qualitative reliability as showing consistency with other research conducted by different researchers with different projects (cited in Creswell, 2009).

Boyatzis (1998) refers to three major obstacles which could hinder the effectiveness of thematic analysis. He refers to projection, sampling, mood and style. When addressing projection, he implies that the researcher needs to be aware of attributing to another person, something that is your own attribute for example an emotion, characteristic or attitude (Boyatzis, 1998). The stronger the researcher's attitude, the more likely they are to project their conceptualisation of the event or issue onto the participants. In order to address the problem, the researcher needs be very familiar with the data and imply caution by checking and rechecking codes. In order to assist this process, the researcher immersed herself in the transcripts, checking and rechecking the themes as thoroughly as possible.
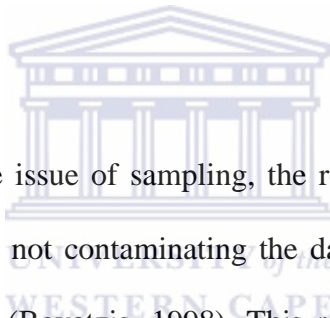
Secondly, when addressing the issue of sampling, the researcher needed to ensure that other factors or variables were not contaminating the data, as this could jeopardise the reliability of the interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998). This research focussed on a group of children of a certain age at a specific school. As this was not a comparative study and non-representative study the results are specific to the context and thus cannot be generalised across different settings.

Finally, the issue of mood and style could affect the quality, processing and analysis of the data. It is therefore important that the researcher remains focussed throughout the various steps in the process to aid in the proficient analysis of the data (Boyatzis, 1998).

3.7   REFLEXIVITY:

Reflexivity was considered throughout the research process. As an interpretive approach was used, much care was taken in interpreting the data as this may have evoked the researchers own views, judgements, preconceptions and biases. The researcher required a critical self awareness while conducting the study. By doing this, the researcher was aware of her own role within the research process and how she may have influenced the participants. The researcher was continuously aware of how she may have projected her own subjective views onto the research and attempted not to change the meaning and content of the information.

3.8   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical clearance was given by University of the Western Cape for the research to be conducted. The participants and the school have remained anonymous. The necessity of confidentiality was highlighted; with participants and legal guardians being informed as to the procedure and confidentiality. Both parents and participants signed assent/consent forms before taking part in the focus groups. Their participation was voluntary and they were given the option to withdraw at any point of the study should they feel it necessary. Documents and recordings will be destroyed at the end of the research process. Where necessary, counselling will be available to participants.

3.9   LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to the nature of the study it was apparent that the researcher and headmaster did not want the focus groups to be perceived as a negative experience for the children. It was discussed at initial meetings that the research be conducted to promote awareness and discussion of more positive aspects of South Africa. This impacted upon the research process, as the researcher was very aware of exposing the children to discussions that may be disturbing for them. It was also apparent that the time constraints did not allow for a more detailed discussion of the topic.

Another limitation to the study was that during the research procedure, the country was affected by the H1N1 (swine flu) virus and this caused many children to be absent from school. The focus groups were thus of different sizes. The final focus group had a larger group of children, which may have prevented some students from fully participating, which may have resulted in less rich information being collected.

CHAPTER 4

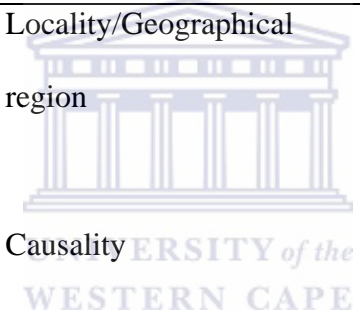# DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of the study was to explore children's perceptions of violence and how this affects their sense of well-being within the context of South Africa. The study sought to determine what children know and understand about violence, how this frames their perception of violence and how this affects their sense of well-being.

In this chapter, the results of the research process will be presented and discussed. The chapter will conclude with a summary of the key issues derived from the study. Data generated from the focus groups conducted during the study were coded and analysed using thematic analysis, as described in the methodology chapter (chapter 3). In the sections that follow, verbatim accounts are provided as verbalised by the participants of the study, which provide support and evidence for the themes. Each theme will be considered in relation to the existing literature as outlined by the literature review.

There are three dominant themes and various sub-themes which have emerged in the data. In order to aid analysis, these have been further divided into codes, which will provide a richer understanding of the data.

The data will be framed by the theories of Frantz Fanon's theory of violence (1968); Hussein Bulhan's theory of social oppression (Bulhan, 1985) and Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory.

Table 1: *Themes and Codes*

Themes	Sub-themes	Codes
Perception of safety and security	What makes you feel safe? What makes you feel unsafe?	Personal Safety Resilience Insecurity Risk
Perceptions of Violence in South Africa	Locality/Geographical region Causality	Neighbourhood Emotional reactions Drugs and alcohol Poverty and Apartheid
Exposure to Violence	Individual/Personal Contextual/External	Personal -Familial -Bullying Community Structural Media Desensitisation

For the purposes of anonymity and assuring the protection of the participants' identity, the participants will be referred to as 'P', the facilitator as 'F' and focus groups as 'FG1', 'FG2' and 'FG3'.

4.2 PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Exposure to violence and perceptions of danger within children's immediate context is likely to threaten the ability of children to fulfil their potential and inhibit their sense of psychological well-being (Bowen and Bowen, 1999). Garbarino refers to our society as a 'socially toxic environment, in which children are vulnerable' and states, "children and youth today must contend with a constant stream of messages that undermine their sense of security" (1998, p. 53). In the context of South Africa, children and adults alike struggle to maintain a permanent sense of security due to the degree of violence to which individuals are exposed in their community and society as a whole.

Despite the fact that crime has not necessarily become more violent between 1994 and 1998, South Africans have felt increasingly concerned about their own safety during this period. According to the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), in 1994, 73% of South African's felt safe and 16% unsafe. At the end of 1998 some 45% felt safe and 48% unsafe (Schönteich & Louw, 1999). South Africans remain exposed to high levels of various forms of violent crime, including community violence, rape, hijacking of cars, aggravated assault, aggravated robbery and murder (Hamber, 1997).

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Thus, the topic of safety and security was pivotal to commence the focus groups, as it illustrates the perception of the participants and how they view violence in South Africa on a personal level, and ultimately how this affects their psychological well-being. The majority of the participants agreed that, although they may not be directly affected by violence, there is still a distinct possibility that they could be affected by the widespread violence that South African citizens face on a daily basis. Their perception of safety depends on a variety of factors, which are addressed in accordance with the responses of the participants.

The first theme addresses the participants' perception of safety and what personally makes them feel more secure. It also incorporates their resilience and how they have managed to cope with the increasing levels of violence they are exposed to. This section will also address the participants' perception of insecurity, the causes of this insecurity, as well as their awareness of their own risk of becoming a victim of violence in this country.

4.2.1   Perception of safety

4.2.1.1   Personal Safety

In the data, the responses of all three groups were very similar in nature. These children's parents are in the middle to upper income bracket of the Cape Town community. The areas in which these children reside are middle to upper socio-economic areas, which are

not high-risk in terms of violence although some neighbourhoods are more prone to robberies, hi-jacking and assault. Most of the children expressed feeling a sense of personal safety and security when surrounded by highly advanced security systems, electric fences, security companies, domestic animals and proximity of police stations and neighbours in the area. The following account illustrates the need for material security in order for the participants to feel safe.

> P: "I feel safe at my house because we've got electric fencing and it is quite
> a quietish neighbourhood and there is lots of security in our road. There are
> four security booths in our block and there is 24 hour ADT patrol and we've
> got 2 dogs, one very stupid one, who will jump up on anything and the ADT
> base is right across the road from our house."
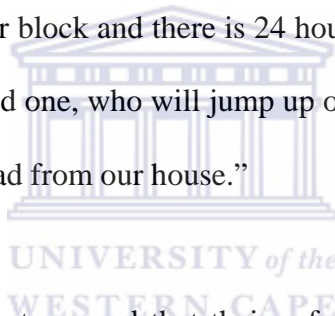
Although most of the participants agreed that their safety depends on material security others however, did not feel the need to have the material security in order to feel safe.

> P: "I don't know why I feel safe in my house, I have no electric fence, I
> have small walls, a built-in alarm and that's it!"

When it was discussed, the participant who felt safe without electric fences and alarms had never been directly threatened. He felt that he was not susceptible to burglary, due to the perception that other people were more vulnerable and more of a target than he. He

believes he is not targeted as he lives next to a tavern and believes that they will be more prone to burglary than he would.

4.2.1.2 Resilience

The second sub-theme is the resilience which the children have developed towards the violence they have experienced or been exposed to. Both the child's capabilities and the nature of the contexts in which the child lives will influence competence (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Each child will develop resilience according to risk factors and individual temperament. It appears that competence develops when despite the situation at hand; fundamental systems that generally foster competence in development are operating to protect the child or counteract the threats to development (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Previous research has also indicated that factors assisting a child in dealing with violence are the ability to actively cope, cognitive competence, stable emotional relationships, social support and an open educational climate (Garbarino, Kostelny & Dubrow, 1991). This was supported in the study, as most of the children expressed having a stable group of friends on which they could rely.

The notion of resilience deriving from maternal and paternal acceptance and support (Bailey et al., 2006) was verified in this study. The participants in this study spoke of their parents providing a source of knowledge and protection, which has influenced the way in which their resilience has developed in dealing with stressful situations. The

following accounts illustrate how the participants utilise their parents in assisting them with their understanding and concerns surrounding violence.

> P: "I would tell my mom that it (concern) is worrying me and then she would explain the situation and make me feel better."

The ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (1979) explicates how familial and other relationships are fundamental to the child's immediate microsystem (Ryan & Paquette, 2001). If these break down, the child will not be equipped to explore other parts of his environment. If children look to other sources for affirmation, this may result in deficiencies such as lack of self-discipline and inability to provide self-direction (Ryan & Paquette, 2001)
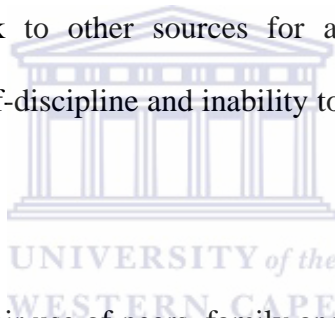
The children also expressed their use of peers, family and neighbours at times to provide a support structure on which they can rely. One participant, who appeared to be very informed with a strong general knowledge, revealed the group of people he approaches when he is concerned about issues of violence.

> P: (*I will talk to*) "…basically my whole family I would say, my brothers, mother, father friends and next door neighbours, anyone really…"

The school also provides an open educational environment in which they can learn about social issues in a positive manner. One particular focus group was particularly animated when discussing the headmaster of the school.

> P: "Sometimes it comes up in class. Mr (headmaster)'s lessons are so much fun, 'cause we will talk about one thing and it leads to another and we speak about issues. It is so much fun, 'cause we have conversations and he explains it to us. He will explain the latest news to us."

Although it was not something that was discussed, this is a private school with an excellent reputation which provides a structured and rigid educational system. One can infer from this information that the level of education is relatively high which is in accordance with the literature regarding cognitive competence.
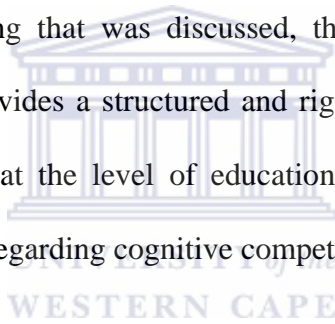
4.2.2. What makes you feel unsafe?

4.2.2.1 Insecurity

Spilsbury's (2002) studies revealed that regardless of the level of neighbourhood violence and crime, considerable numbers of the children are exposed to acts of violence and expressed concerns about becoming victimized. The effects of the insecurities derived from exposure to violence impact on various aspects of children's lives and contribute significantly to the prediction of each school outcome, especially attendance and

behaviour (Bowen & Bowen, 1999). Osofsky (1995) also spoke of aggressive behaviour, problems in early relationships with violence and post traumatic stress associated with exposure to violence.

The responses as depicted below are subjective views of how the participants view their own insecurities. The responses included feeling unsafe after hearing of other people's experiences, stories and exposure to violence.   Similar opinions were voiced by many of the other participants throughout the focus groups conducted.

P: "I donno, 'cause like we have electric fencing and then, um, there's also

a story that these people are jumping over the electric fence and then, um,

there's also a story that these people got caught (burglars) and they got, they

found like a map and all the red crosses (targets) were houses that didn't

have big dogs…"

The participants also expressed a sense of insecurity when addressing the topic of strangers. Numerous comments were made regarding peculiar people walking in the neighbourhood and the sense of insecurity they had felt. One individual who has recently immigrated from overseas conveyed his sense of insecurity concerning beggars[5]:

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[5] Individuals who are socio-economically constrained, who solicit financial support from the public.

P: "There's just all sorts of people coming by, ringing the doorbell and asking for things… yesterday there was someone who got all aggressive because my mom didn't lend him 20 rand for the bus and stuff like that."

This participant conveyed a sense of insecurity in South Africa:

P: "When I hear things about crimes I feel unsafe and I start feeling more aggressive. I have a baseball bat next to my bed and I have three pocket knives in my cupboard next to my bed and stuff like that. I lived in (country) where there was hardly any crime and here it is a big change!"

Other comments regarding strangers provoking fear, included:

P: "What scares me sometimes is if I am getting into the car, cause I always have to wait for my dogs, then if someone is walking my way, I always get scared that they are going to come…"

The general consensus of all three groups was that there is a lot of crime in South Africa and one does not know when and how they could be affected. It appeared that these participants believe that they will not be affected until they directly witness some form of violence. This was illustrated in the stories that they told. Those individuals who had experienced some form of violence appeared a lot more aware of the issues concerning

violence as opposed to the individuals who had not experienced any direct form of violence.

P: "Sometimes your neighbours get robbed and then we think, 'oh no! we're next!"

This statement illustrates how several of the participants believed they will not be affected by the violence unless it affects their immediate context. It has to be 'close to home' for them to feel that they will be directly affected by violence. This may be a form of defence, the desire to believe that their safety is not jeopardised.

Most of the participants agreed that that if you had experienced an incident first hand, there is a strong possibility that the individual will experience a decreased sense of security than individuals who had not had a similar experience.

P: "Usually, if you experience something, you feel more threatened. I also think that you feel it will happen to you and then during the day you forget about it."

4.2.2.2   Perceptions of Risk

Farver, Gosh and Garcia (2000), suggest that exposure to neighbourhood violence may negatively affect children's feelings of well-being, sense of self, control over events in

their lives and opportunities to play safely in their neighbourhoods. The results of this study support this, as the neighbourhood from which the children come influences the participants' perception of their susceptibility to violent acts and crime.

The participants in the study gave various opinions about their perceptions of risk. Some believe that due to their context, they are not susceptible to violence. Others feel that they are at risk of violence and this affects their sense of security. One particular participant revealed that he did not feel vulnerable to crime at all, due to his personal context.

> P: "I feel perfectly fine, because I highly doubt that murder or crime… other than being robbed, in most of the areas that we live in… we are not vulnerable to that. It is mainly like… out…the Cape Flats where this happens and places like that so I don't feel too unsafe."
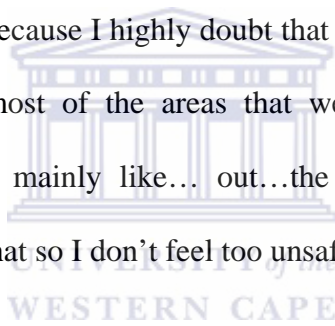
Other participants, who reside in areas which are rather more prone to crime, expressed insecurities surrounding their susceptibility to violence.

> P: "When I hear about violence, it makes me think that it might happen to me"

The results of the study show that these participants feel unsafe and susceptible to violence if they have had direct or indirect exposure to an incident. One individual held

the belief that because he has already been a victim of violence that it will not happen again.

> P: "I've got a feeling that if you get robbed once, you won't get robbed again, ya, that's my feeling, cause they know that you'll like put up more security next time and what have you…"

Several of the participants were also of the opinion that other people seem to be more susceptible to becoming victims of violence than they are. This may be a form of defence to maintain their own sense of security.
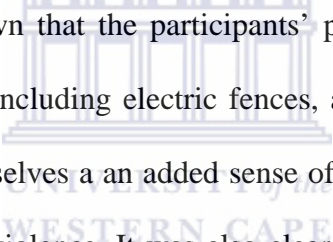
> P: "At our house we have people all around us, next to us, all around us and we have a long driveway, so it is much easier to go and steal stuff from other people's houses."

> P: "We are not much of a target; I think the person across the road is more of a target. 'Cause a lot of people go to their house for like parties and stuff, cause they throw parties every weekend and stuff."

In conclusion, the results show that these individuals consider their personal safety to rest on the responsibility of their parents and advanced technology. They also find that the presence of dogs and security patrols, including their own neighbourhood watch consisting of adults from the neighbourhood make them feel protected. They have a sense

of safety due to lack of exposure, not having witnessed violent events or not personally experiencing some form of violence. The participants also have a sense of safety due to their perception of other people being targets rather than themselves.

In terms of resilience, the study shows that children who have a highly perceived availability of social support tend to feel more secure than those who do not. Their parents have provided optimal home and school environments for the development of competence and resilience, in which they have matured to be able to cope with exposure to violence better than others.

In summary, results have shown that the participants' perception of personal safety is dependant on material safety, including electric fences, alarms, security companies and dogs. They also create in themselves a an added sense of safety by suggesting that other people may be more prone to violence. It was also clear that those individuals who had not been directly exposed to any forms of violence felt that they were not threatened. Results show that participants' resilience to violence derives from parental and social support as well as an open educational environment. This education has contributed to their cognitive ability, which may also influence their resilience.

Participants feel insecure when exposed to strangers who they find suspicious. They also convey feelings of insecurity when hearing about and witnessing crime and violence. They do not know when or if they will be the next targets. In general, the groups feel

more jeopardised when a violent act has taken place close to home or if an experience of the event has taken place first hand.

4.3   PERCEPTIONS OF VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

This theme addresses the participants' perception of violence within the context of South Africa. The subjects that arose in this specific study were associated with the geographical area in which they live and how they perceive the security of their neighbourhood. Secondly, their perceptions of causes of violence included emotional reactions causing violence, substance abuse leading to violence and how poverty and Apartheid have influenced the level of crime.
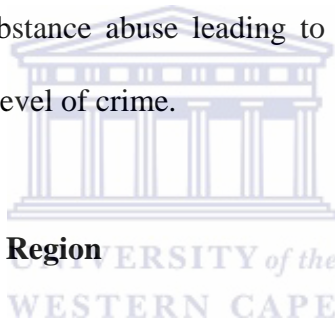
4.3.1   Locality/Geographical Region

4.3.1.1   Neighbourhood

The children's perceptions of their neighbourhood play a significant role in how they perceive violence. Farver, Ghosh & Garcia's research results reveal that children were generally found to feel safer at home and in school, but felt unsafe outdoors when playing in their neighbourhood or travelling to school, regardless of the area in which they lived. It reveals that children in areas with higher incidence of crime were more distrustful of police, showed lower perceived competence and had a lower external locus of control than children living in low violence neighbourhoods and that the exposure of the

individuals to the violence may result in negative affects on children's sense of well-being, sense of self, sense of control over their lives and opportunities to play safely in their neighbourhoods (Farver, Ghosh & Garcia, 2000).

Generally, participants in this study believed that there is a higher prevalence of violence in lower socio-economic areas. There was however a lack of awareness with regards to the situation in the Cape Flats. For example, one participant held the belief that most of the people on the Cape Flats are subject to burglary every day.

P: "They have unsecure houses, some of them, and say a big storm comes, their houses get blown away. They also get robbed like every day."
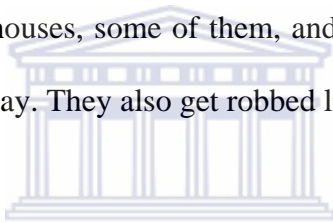
They also hold the perception that certain types of violence are exclusive to lower socio-economic areas. For instance, one participant states,

P: "There's a lot more like violence in the homes, like, in settlements and stuff because they are just like, so angry with not having stuff that they just like take it out on their families."

Some participants, on the other hand, gave the impression that although they live in the middle to upper socio-economic areas, they are still as vulnerable to crime and violence as anyone else. One participant states:

P: "It can be a really good area, but it can happen anywhere, so you are never actually really safe."

The common belief in this study was that the majority of the violence in South Africa is found in low socio-economic areas such as the Cape Flats and settlements or townships. Generally, the participants believe that they are partially safe, due to the area in which they live. Some believe that they are completely safe from harm in their area. They seem to believe that they are not influenced by crime and that major areas of crime are in poorer areas. Few of them have had any direct exposure to the low socio-economic areas. Some of them believe that 'it's like another world out there'. There were certain suburbs in the Cape Town metropole in which the participants felt more secure, and this influenced their perception of their sense of security. The areas in which they felt less secure resulted from stories they had heard regarding those areas. The results showed that most of the children felt susceptible to violence to different degrees.

4.3.2 Causality

The following section centres on the causes of violence. Three major causes were identified in the discussions on this topic. These included emotional reactions to situations leading to violence, substance abuse and poverty and Apartheid (and the relationship between the two). Previous research states that these are sources of violence. These causes will each be addressed independently.

4.3.2.1 Emotional reactions as a contributing factor to violence:

The groups understood violence as resulting from anger and emotional vulnerability. They also suggested that through this anger, violence perpetuates violence. This supports the literature in which many commentators have come to refer to South Africa as a "culture of violence". Vogelman & Simpson refer to our society as a culture which endorses and accepts violence as an acceptable and legitimate means to resolve problems and achieve goals (as cited in Hamber, 1997). The literature also maintains that several victims of violence in South Africa have begun committing acts of violence in order to gain a sense of "justice" and are often associated with vigilantism (Hamber, 1997).

P: "Also if you really angry and it builds up and up and up, it can lead to violence."
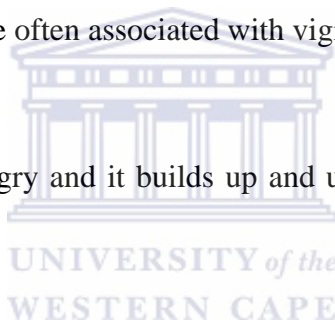
P: "If you get really annoyed and you are not very patient and you have a very bad temper then you can also get very violent."

Emotional vulnerability was also a cause of violence. One comment reflected how an individual can react violently when they are feeling sad or depressed.

P: "What could provoke violence is if you break up with your girlfriend or boyfriend and you get so distraught that you just go mad and start beating everyone you see and stuff…"

The participants did feel that there needs to be some form of provocation in order for violence to occur. One participant illustrated this factor rather eloquently, as it addresses the issue of the perpetuation and cycle of violence, as well as an introduction to the subsequent sub-theme, substance abuse:

P: "No one has a has got any real reason to start with anybody, um, with just people, I can understanding people reacting, but if nobody started with them in the first place then nothing should happen so it… it's people's fault, well obviously it's people's fault that it happens…. It just leads to another crime and another crime and another crime, and from anger from the person who was the victim; they start exploiting drugs or start getting abusive."
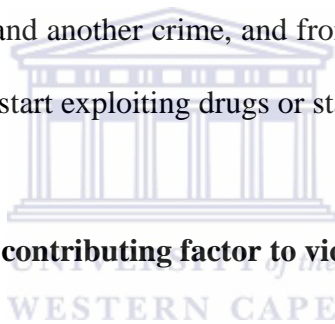
4.3.2.2 Substance abuse as a contributing factor to violence:

In studies by Parker and Auerhahn (1998), several clear conclusions were drawn from an extensive review of the literature concerning drugs, alcohol, and violence. Although previous studies have published a number of statements to the contrary, Parker and Auerhahn (1998) have found no significant evidence suggesting that drug use is associated with violence, although they have found that there is substantial evidence to suggest that alcohol use is significantly associated with violence of all kinds. One of the key conclusions drawn from their study is the overwhelming importance of context in any relationship that may exist between substance use and violent behaviour.

Contrary to these results however, within the context of South Africa and the Western Cape specifically, we are witness to substantial levels of substance abuse, specifically methamphetamine (Tik). Recent research has shown that chronic methamphetamine abuse can lead to out-of-control rages, violence, anxiety, confusion, mood disturbances and insomnia (Pauw, 2008). Kathleen Dey, the director of Rape Crisis revealed that substance abuse and poverty were a few of the key challenges to addressing sexual crimes. She states that "the nature of the crime has become more violent and the victims and perpetrators have become younger" (Jooste, 2009).

According to Grant Jardine, director of the Cape Town Drug Counselling Centre (CTDCC), the increased rate of crystal methamphetamine usage in particular, is referred to as 'dramatic'. He states, "…it is something we haven't seen before. It is the greatest challenge the CTDCC has ever had to face." (Pauw, 2008). Mr Jardine said that, although he would not deny the link between Tik and violent crime, specifically rape, other substances were also tied in strongly with aggression (Jooste, 2009).

The other consistent finding of the empirical evidence is that violent behaviour is regularly associated with alcohol. Many studies indicate that violent events are most likely to be associated with the consumption of alcohol than with any other substance (Parker & Auerhahn, 1998).

This research is consistent with the perceptions of the participants in the study. They expressed that there is a high correlation between drug and alcohol use and violence. They associate the connection of substance abuse and violence to the altered state of

consciousness, poverty and escaping reality, which is depicted in the following verbatim extracts:

The quotation illustrates their views that when individuals are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, they are more susceptible to committing acts of violence.

> P: "Like if they have a bit too much and they get a bit, not hyper, but they
>
> get a bit …high, and violent and they get a bit stupid and weird."

They also believe that drugs are not only a cause of violence but a motivating factor for it. They believe that people who burgle houses are doing it solely for the purposes of purchasing drugs.
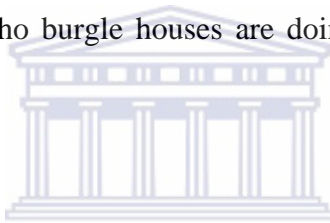
> P: "Guys, if you think about it, why are they *(the robbers)* doing this? It's
>
> only for the money for the drugs, that's the only reason why…"

Various participants believed that drugs help users to escape their poverty and misery and allows them to numb their feelings. These participants hold the belief that a combination of drug usage, poverty and loneliness contributes to the emotional reaction which precipitates violence.

P: "Same thing with drugs, like if you see like the bergies[6] on the side of the road, they are only taking drugs to make themselves feel better…'cause they have nothing…"

P: "like if they take drugs also cause when you take drugs people also say that it makes you feel happy, so it helps you numb the pain of not having anybody."

These extracts support previous research which indicates that substance abuse gives rise to violence. However, as mentioned previously, context plays a pivotal role in any relationship that may exist between substance use and violent behaviour, which leads to the next sub-theme and another cause of violence, poverty.

4.3.2.3 Poverty and Apartheid as a contributing factor to violence

The participants seem to understand the historical and contextual factors contributing to the cycle of poverty and violence in South Africa. It was a theme that was highlighted specifically by FG3, which is that violence is a result of the oppressive government policies of the past.

P: "The most, like probable reason why it *(robberies)* is more coloured people is due to Apartheid because they couldn't get jobs and they couldn't get money and so the other thing is that like a lot of people steal for themselves so they can get money."

[6] A colloquial Afrikaans term for a homeless individual, who is socio-economically disadvantaged.

P: "Some robbers are black and all robbers are obviously poor and they obviously when they were like younger, like they tried to get jobs and they couldn't get jobs, so that's the thing they could do…steal."

The participants are also of the belief that it is predominantly previously disadvantaged individuals who are more predisposed to acts of violence.

P: "All robbers are obviously poor…" and "I would say poverty leads to violence…"

P: "There's a lot more like violence in the homes, like, in settlements and stuff because they just like, so angry with not having stuff that they just like take it out on their families."
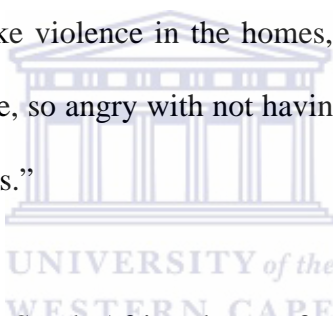
The intensity of the violence in South Africa shows of a history of desperation and how the cycle of poverty is maintained by massive job losses, rising food prices and widespread crime (Washington Post, 2008).

In summary, the results reveal that the participants' perceptions of violence in South Africa were related to two major sub-themes: their own and others locality and geographical area, and factors which cause violence. These factors include emotional reactions which lead to violence, substance abuse, poverty and Apartheid (and the relationship between the two).

The results show that the participants believe that most violence in South Africa occurs in the lower socio-economic areas. Some believe that certain types of violence only occur in the settlements and townships of South Africa. Contradictory to this, however, other participants believe no matter where you live, one is still vulnerable to crime. In general, the participants believe they are susceptible to crime to varying degrees, according to the area in which they live.

The second theme which was addressed is causality of violence. Firstly, participants believe that causes of violence are emotional reactions, including vulnerability. They spoke of how anger has caused a perpetuation of violence in South Africa. Secondly, the participants believe that substance abuse is not only a cause of aggression and violence, but can also be a motivating force, driving individuals to steal and commit acts of crime in order to procure finances to support their habit. Finally, the participants believe that previously disadvantaged individuals are predisposed to acts of violence due to the history of the country and the poverty that has resulted. They believe that due to the desperation of the individuals who have previously suffered, they are forced to commit crimes including substance abuse, in order to escape the shocking reality of their situation.

In accordance with the theoretical framework of this study in the context of South Africa and it's history, Bulhan (1985) contends that when social and structural constraints impede the fulfilment of basic human needs, people's identity and sense of self is marginalised, causing them to doubt their position in society and sense of belonging

(Bulhan, 1985). This leads us to the next theme, which addresses the forms of violence in accordance with Fanon's (1968) theory of violence and Bulhan's (1985) theory of the psychology of oppression.

4.4   EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

The third theme centres on the participants' exposure to violence. This will be discussed in terms of direct and individual exposure to violence, as well as indirect and contextual exposure to violence. The direct/individual exposure to violence will touch on personal violence, in the form of familial violence and bullying. The indirect and contextual exposure will look at exposure to violence on a broader level, focussing on exposure at a community level, including structural, institutional violence and media violence. The topic of desensitisation will briefly be discussed as a result of exposure to violence.

4.4.1   Individual/direct exposure

Individual exposure refers to personal violence which, according to Bulhan (1985) involves direct actions and is restricted by place and time. This is violence in which a victim is subjected to a specific incident committed by a specific perpetrator (Bulhan, 1985). Children of South Africa could be affected by personal violence on a microsystemic level, in the home, as well as personal violence in relation to bullying. The participants also spoke of the threat of personal violence in public areas:

P: "Pain, murdering, getting hit and often just an innocent person walking down the street and they will walk past a gang. The gang will just beat them up. There were stories of gangs who were killing people."

Various participants related to personal violence in the form of bullying and discrimination:

P: "Getting robbed, bullying, getting hit, if you are different, then people kind of look down on you and treat you like you are nothing."
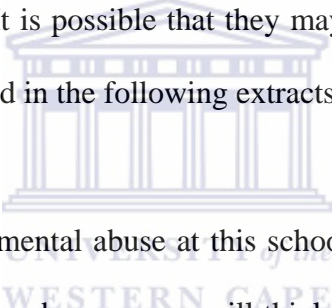
Although intimate familial and domestic violence[7] was not directly suggested, it was inferred that some of the children may be affected as understood by various comments. The exposure to violence was addressed from a broader contextual understanding as a group. The following comment was made by a participant in relation to discussions of inter parental violence.

P: "um, like, on TV and also even some violence in your home that you are not really aware of, but always there is… fighting"

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[7] The term "domestic violence" typically refers to violence between adult intimate partners (Fantuzzo & Mohr, 1999)

4.4.1.1 Bullying

Bullying is a form of violence, which is often underestimated in schools. Bullying can be a crisis to which children are exposed on a daily basis, which can make school a very unpleasant experience. Although there has been research to suggest that younger learners are more at risk of being bullied, it is a problem that affects all ages (Kumpulainen, Rasanen & Hentonnen, 1999). The effects of bullying on children may be severe and may have long-term effects on the individual being subjected to it. According to Aleudse (2006), the effects of bullying may include sadness, unhappiness, hurt or rejection as a reaction to peer victimisation. It is possible that they may even lose relationships due to victimisation, which is supported in the following extracts taken from the data.

> P: "Yes, there is a lot of mental abuse at this school. Um, I have noticed a lot of mental abuse, like maybe someone will think it's a joke but they may randomly go up to someone and go and start sussing them or insult people that they are friendly with or tease someone that they are friends with."

> P: "there is not mainly violence, it's *(bullying)* not really fighting, but it's in a way game playing, cause sometimes people will be your friend and then the next day they will turn their back on you and then be mean to you."

Some children appeared to be more affected by the violence than other children, which is reflected in the following participant's comment regarding the harmful use of words:

P: "You know there is that saying 'sticks and stones will break my bones but words will never hurt you?' it's actually sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will surely destroy you…"

In this specific school, strict policies against bullying are in place. Several of the participants initially revealed that they do not believe there to be bullying in the school and only regard bullying as a physical act of violence. Most of the participants, however, do believe that there is a lot of 'mental' or 'psychological' abuse, which takes place in the younger standards and particularly with the girls in the older standards. There is a sense of discrimination, leaving out and being rude to other children. One participant explained:

P: "It's not like actually bullying that is actually a problem like in some schools where people are killing each other, were they are actually giving them marks, where as here it is just someone saying you 'silly'…"

Results reveal that there is not this type of physical abuse or bullying at the school at present.

4.4.2 Indirect/contextual exposure

4.4.2.1. Community violence

During the focus groups, the children's perception of safety and risk was based on their exposure to stories within the communities in which they live. These stories were found to be on all four levels of interaction, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979). The exposure occurs on a microsystemic level, in the context of which the person in focus has immediate experience or personal interaction in a direct way (Visser, 2007). This may refer to incidences of familial violence or bullying as addressed earlier.

The mesosystem is a set of linkages between the microsystems that a person may enter (Visser, 2007). This could relate to the individual's perception of their neighbourhoods and the stories that they may hear. The example below illustrates how an individual could feel a sense of insecurity due to stories they have heard. This particular participant later expressed that she does feel scared when hearing of crime:

> P: "My friend was held up by knife and gun point and she still hasn't got
> over it, and this was two years ago and the man also threatened to rape her
> and her mom and they managed to push the panic button, but the by the time
> they had arrived, the guy had gone and they didn't find him and they still
> haven't found him."

When participants hear of incidents occurring in their neighbourhood, they feel directly threatened, when they would not have previously felt that way. In one of the suburbs, the rate of incidence of burglaries is so high that the neighbourhood has created their own neighbourhood watch system, in order to protect their community. This has proved very useful in the area.

> P: "Sometimes your neighbours get robbed and then we think 'oh no, we're next'."

It is not uncommon for children in South Africa to experience forms of violence that directly affect them and their families. There were two incidents which stood out to support this, as these two participants expressed a sense of insecurity within their neighbourhood and community.
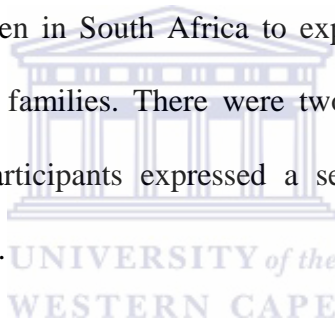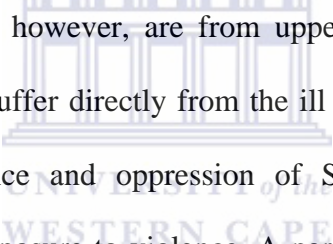
> P: "A year ago my mom was attacked in the driveway, she was busy pulling in and the guy came and my mom thought he asked for water and then he attacked her"

> P: "(*my brother*)... got tied up and they threatened him with a gun. Although we were not sure if it was a gun…"

The exosystem refers to interconnections between the microsystem and mesosystems with which a person has no direct contact, but this could affect their functioning (Visser,

2007). This relates to the subsequent theme of participants' media exposure. It also relates to structural violence, which is referred to by Bulhan (1985), as a 'feature of social structures, which involves more than the violation of fairness and justice'. Structural violence has been present in South Africa before and after the abolishment of Apartheid. Structural violence occurs whenever people have been disadvantaged, which is evident in South Africa today. Apartheid has affected every aspect of the country through it's inequalities of resources, repression and political discrimination. This was seen in housing, education, jobs and wages (Hamber, 1997). This has been a maintaining factor of the violent crimes that exist in our country today.

The participants in this study, however, are from upper to middle class areas of the Western Cape, which did not suffer directly from the ill effects of Apartheid. This said, the previous structural violence and oppression of South Africa has affected the participants' experience and exposure to violence. A participant expresses the unnatural amount of the violence in South Africa due to the past structural violence in the country.
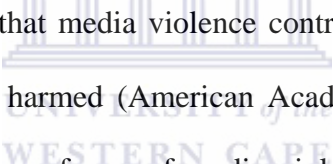
> P: "One news bulletin would be like three days long if they reported all the
>
> crime in South Africa."

Finally, the macrosystem is a wider system of ideology and organisation of institutions, common to particular class, culture and ethnicity (Visser, 2007). In South Africa, there are particularly gruesome stories which illustrate the level of violence and degree of

acceptance of this violence in the country. The following incident was told by a young participant:

P: "Once my maid didn't come to work, it was, I think last term and the next day when she came, she told my mom that there were taxi drivers striking cause they didn't want, they weren't striking but they were upset that most people were using trains instead of the taxi's so the taxi drivers poured gas over a woman and burnt her."

4.4.2.2 Media Violence

Extensive research has shown that media violence contributes to aggressive behaviour, nightmares and fears of being harmed (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2001). It is evident that the effects of various forms of media violence such as television, music, video games and movies have a significant risk to health of children and adolescents. Most television news broadcasts are not intended for a child audience, but this study supports the hypothesis that children depend on television viewing for facts and information (van der Molen, 2004).

Most of the children in the present study were exposed to various degrees of media violence, in particular, news coverage of violent events internationally. Common remarks were made around forms of violence witnessed on the news such as crime, murder,

abductions, rape, politics and international wars. Events that stood out at the time of the study were the strikes occurring in South Africa, with images surrounding these events.

> P: "The strikes. The main strikes. They show like the people throwing tyres around and burning them."

> P: "It's mostly about the cops shooting at people like lately at the technology place and they like shooting them with round bullets and stuff."

It was also evident that the participants, after seeing acts of violence such as these, acquire a sense of insecurity.
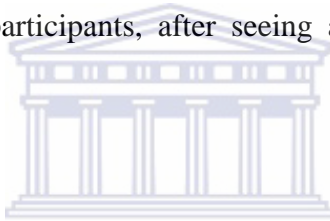
> P: "It makes me feel unsafe. I think that on the one hand it makes me feel scared that there is this kind of stuff in the world but it also makes me feel grateful that I am not a victim to any of those."
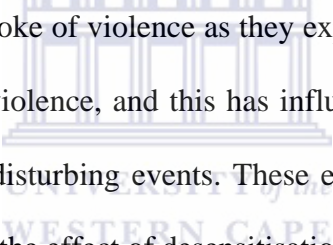
Generally, the events that were recalled were pessimistic and there were not many positive stories. One participant even stated:

> P: "Mostly everything in the news is bad"

Besides the news broadcasts, the participants spoke of watching other channels related to violence, such as the crime channel. They enjoyed watching the programmes but this made them feel scared or fearful.

P: "If you watch a criminal programme, you get scared. I would get scared that it will happen to you. That there is one person that is going to try and come and kill a few people. But I love watching those…"

4.4.3 Desensitisation

The participants of the study spoke of violence as they experience it every day. They are exposed to different levels of violence, and this has influenced their perception of how they view very unnatural and disturbing events. These events, often conveyed through media could, to an extent, have the effect of desensitisation. Previous research conducted on media violence has shown a definite relationship between media such as video games, movies and TV programmes in relation to violence, however, there does not seem to be an association towards desensitisation and real-life violence exposure (Funk, Hagan, Schimming, Bullock, Buchanen & Meyers, 2002).

This research is supported by the current study. Although violence is prevalent in this country and children are exposed to it on a daily basis, the participants seemed to still have a sense of fear regarding violence. The participants did however normalise the violence in the country. One participant states:

P: 'There are so many murders in South Africa, it has become normal. When

it is on British news, it is like, 'Oh my gosh, there was one murder this

week' .um, its, it's just so different. South Africa you think there is more

crime than in England because they put it all on the news."

Other individuals seemed to be greatly affected by the effects of TV violence and general

violence.

P: "When you think about things on the TV, it makes you feel like you there

and when you think about it, its' really scary, when you keep on thinking

about that thing you saw…"
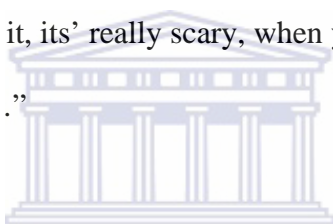
Although the individuals may be desensitised to television violence, the real violence of

the country is very much a reality to these children. They are in a position where they

believe they are secure, as they do live in middle to upper class areas of the Cape Town

metropole. There is still the fear among most of them that they may be victims of crime

and if they did not have their material security, they would be prey to it.

To summarise, the exposure to violence which these individuals have experienced is both

individual and contextual. Although it was not directly suggested, familial violence was

implied. All the focus groups stated that there was a presence of 'emotional' bullying in

the school, to different degrees. The participants refer to the bullying that occurs in the

school as 'mental' or 'psychological' abuse. Some believe that the term 'bullying' only

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refers to a physical act as opposed to a verbal act, but the majority of the participants characterise bullying within the school as acts of discrimination and teasing. It is also crucial to note that they understood the severity of bullying on different levels, some taking it seriously and others viewing it as over-sensitivity.

On a contextual level, the participants based their sense of security on exposure and experience of violence. This was understood by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) four levels of the environment. On the microsystem level, one would be exposed to familial violence and personal violence. At the mesosystem level, these individuals are exposed to stories in the community and schools, which affect their sense of security. On a macrosytem level, the participants spoke of exposure to media violence. Results showed that media violence does breed a sense of insecurity and raises a belief that everything in media is 'bad'. Other than television news, visions from other programmes left them feeling scared and wondering about certain situations, contributing to their sense of insecurity.

These participants are exposed, although maybe not directly, to high levels of violence from sources such as the media and community. They have been influenced by violence which has resulted in a sound sense of fear and insecurity. It would be predicted that there may be a desensitisation to the violence. In this group, however, there has been more of a normalisation of the violence that they experience.

4.5   SUMMARY CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, when addressed about their safety and security most of the participants felt patriotic to the country and desire to stay in South Africa. Those who did not wanted to leave South Africa due to employment opportunities abroad, or had a history in another country. They also agreed that most of the violence that occurs in this country is likely to occur to some extent in other countries.

> P: "I think it makes me feel more safe than it does unsafe. Living here makes me feel more safe than I do unsafe, and also, um, when you get back from being away, um, in another country, it makes you appreciate where you come from and where you live…"
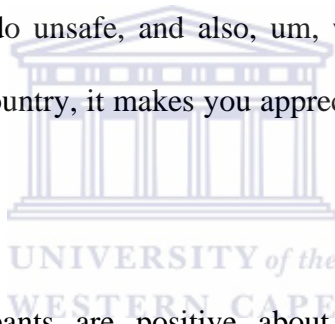
The majority of the participants are positive about South Africa and the many opportunities it offers. They recognise that it is a beautiful country, and despite the high levels of crime, it is a country where they see their future.

Upon reflection of the research process, the researcher found these children to be extremely enthusiastic and willing to share their experience and opinion freely. During the discussions, the researcher attempted not to ask leading questions as this may have led to the meaning and content of the information being changed. The discussions were open and honest and the researcher was very aware of projecting preconceptions and opinions.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

5.1   SUMMARY

The children of South Africa have been exposed to an unnatural level of violence. Thus, the study aimed to explore their perception of violence and how this affects their sense of well being, with the use of three objectives. Firstly, by exploring the children's perception, understanding and knowledge of violence within South Africa. Secondly, understanding from where their views, knowledge and perception derive and finally, examining how these perceptions of violence influence their sense of well-being. The results indicate that their sense of well-being was very closely related to their sense of security and safety. When this was threatened, their well-being became affected.

The results will be addressed according to the theoretical frameworks of the study, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the study.

Overall, nearly all of the participants had a sense of insecurity to varying degrees in the context of South Africa. The common belief in this study was that the majority of the violence in South Africa is found in the low socio-economic areas such as the Cape Flats and settlements or townships. Generally, the participants held different beliefs of their sense of safety which was related to the area in which they live and the amount of private security they have. Some believe that they are completely safe from harm in their area.

Few of them have had any direct exposure to the low socio-economic areas. Some of them believe that 'it's like another world out there'. There were certain suburbs in the Cape Town metropole in which the participants felt more secure, and this influenced their perception of their sense of safety.

Although they may not be directly affected, the participants of the study still feel that they are threatened by the widespread violence, which South Africans have to face on a daily basis. The results support previous literature (Farver et al., 2000), that context and neighbourhoods affect children's sense of security. The participants felt less safe in areas that are less secure. Most of the participants live in a low-risk, middle to upper socio-economic bracket of the Cape Town metropole, but still feel threatened from a more exosystemic point of view, which correlates with Duncan and Rock's (1997) literature that children do not have to be at the core of the violence to be influenced by it.

This study is important to recognise how context plays a vital role in how a child forms their perceptions of violence. In the context of South Africa, one needs to understand how this can influence their sense of safety and well-being, regardless of how physically secure they are. This correlates with Slone, Kaminer and Durrheim's (2000) literature, regarding how the political violence in South Africa has played a role in the psychological distress among South African adolescents and children. The results will therefore be discussed within a contextual framework.

Firstly, the majority of the participants felt, on a microsystemic level, that private security systems make them feel secure. It was apparent that, although exposed to different levels of violence, some children felt safer than others, as they had not been witness to direct acts of violence, or had never been directly threatened. It is only when violence occurs 'close to home' that they feel threatened. Until this point, it seems that they defend their sense of security by believing it will not happen to them. They do so by expressing that other houses and people are more of a 'target' than themselves. Those who had been exposed to violence directly or had an experience of violence were significantly more aware than those who had not. They also believe that causes of violence are related to emotional vulnerability, substance abuse, poverty and Apartheid.

Another factor which supports the literature and plays a large role in their sense of security is the development of resilience. Participants have developed resilience according to support structures, perception of risk and individual temperament. Although the latter was not explored in depth, it was found that two main factors, parental support and an open educational environment influence resilience. The participants' perception of risk varied, although most of them agreed that it could happen to anyone at any stage. Results showed that their level of perception of safety and security depended on their level of exposure to violence, which comes from people's experiences, stories, and personal exposure to violence. Their psychological well-being is jeopardised by their sense of insecurity, which arouses fear and caution on a daily basis.

It was found that exposure to violence occurs on an individual and contextual level. On a personal level, although intimate family violence was not directly suggested in the present study, it was inferred that some of the participants could be affected. Bullying was found to be present in a verbal and 'psychological' form as opposed to a physical form. It was also clear that some of the participants had varying opinions of what defines bullying.

On a contextual level, in South Africa violence is prevalent on a mesosystemic, exosystemic and macrosystemic level. On the mesosystemic level, it was apparent that participants hear stories in their school and community and have experienced events and acts of crime in their neighbourhood which, as a result, has impacted negatively on their sense of safety.
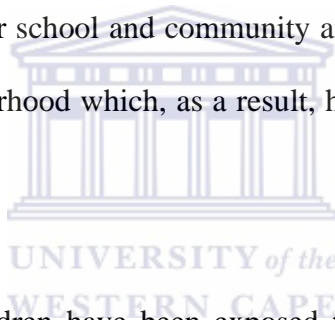
On an exosystemic level, children have been exposed to structural violence including media violence. The participants are exposed to high amounts of structural violence due to the rates of crime in South Africa, which, they believe is a result of the oppressive Apartheid system of our past. Media violence, according to previous literature, has exposed children to unnecessary amounts of violence and this has resulted in fear of being harmed and threatening their sense of security. The results of this study revealed that the majority of individuals had some degree of exposure to media violence, be it on the news or crime channels. It was also found that acts of violence seen on TV generate negative perceptions of the country and create a sense of insecurity, which supports previous literature.

Results confirm that exposure to every day violence has resulted in normalisation of the violence within our society. Previous literature has shown that high levels of exposure to media violence could result in desensitisation. Although the extent of exposure to multimedia was not explored (such as movies, video games, playstation games), it was found that television violence had not promoted desensitisation from real-life exposure.

5.2   LIMITATIONS

The limitations of the study occurred in the data collection procedure. Prior to this, there had been no limitations with the exception of time constraints. After the consent forms had been signed by the participants and parents, there were thirty children who were participating and therefore ten children for each focus group. The teacher allocated them randomly, assigning them to a particular group and time. It was unfortunate that in South Africa at the time, there was a H1N1 (Swine flu) virus outbreak, which caused a considerable amount of absenteeism. On one specific day, the group allocated only had three members and this resulted in taking participants from the final group, conducting a smaller group on that day and having a larger group on the final day.

Another limitation was a venue in which to conduct the focus groups. The room we utilised was the SEN (Special Educational Needs) room, which meant that we disturbed on a number of occasions. The other venues were all occupied. The researcher conducted the groups during school hours and was allocated only an hour, which did place time

constraints on the discussion. Due to the study being exploratory in nature, an in-depth discussion was not possible with only one focus session per group being allocated.

The final limitation was due to the nature of the study. It was apparent that the researcher and headmaster did not want the focus groups to be perceived as a negative experience for the children. It was discussed at initial meetings that the research is conducted to promote awareness and discussion of more positive aspects of South Africa. This inhibited the process slightly, as the researcher was very aware of exposing the children to discussions that may be disturbing for them. It is possible that with time constraints and sensitivity to the topic, it may have prevented a more detailed discussion from taking place.

5.3   SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study could be used as hypothesis about children's exposure to violence in a low-risk, middle to upper socio-economic bracket and how it affects their sense of safety and psychological well-being for future investigation on this topic. Within the context of South Africa, it is assumed that individuals living in the middle to upper income bracket are not as affected by the violence as communities in the lower socio-economic bracket. They are often disregarded when addressing violence in the country due to the privileged nature of their environment. This study illustrates that although this may be the perception; children within these communities are affected by the consequences of the extreme violence within the broader context of South Africa.

5.4   RECOMMENDATIONS

It is important that, based on the understanding from the study, one considers the various and often interrelated ways in which their context influences children's development. Thus, in order to give recommendations it will require multi-level intervention (Louw, Donald & Dawes, 2000).

Firstly, on a personal level, familial violence and bullying needs to be addressed. Due to the time constraints and personal nature of the subject, this was not addressed in the focus groups. It would be recommended that further research in this area be conducted.

In relation to bullying, it would be recommended that policies in the school be explored. The participants did say there was bullying in the school, but also expressed that the amount of the bullying is not excessive. However, it could prove helpful to have workshops with the children, not only as a preventative measure, but also to educate the children as to what defines bullying. Children should also be made aware that there are counselling facilities available in the school, should there be distress surrounding bullying.

Secondly, on a broader level, children should be trained to be more aware of the crime in South Africa, as well as enhance their resilience through the use of protective factors. Although some parents do not want children to be aware of violence and crime in South Africa, it is a reality that children need to be equipped to protect themselves against.

Thus, a strong parent-child relationship needs to be fostered in order for resilience to develop as well as intervention to occur (Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). Parents should also be encouraged to become involved in the children's viewing of media violence, in order to clarify situations in which there is confusion.

Training should include how children can use their parents, school and broader community to increase their sense of safety. They should also be made aware of necessary phone numbers that may be useful to them and what to do if they find themselves in a frightening situation.

It is important that within the community the safety of the children becomes a priority, which in this particular community does already seem to be true. The continuation of the neighbourhood security is important to maintain a sense of security in the children. There is a need for collaboration between schools, parents and children in order to create a greater sense of community safety. This should be an on-going process, in order to create the same sense of security for the younger generations to come.

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<div align="center">APPENDIX A</div>

10 April 2009

Parents of Grade 6 Pupils

The Schools Board

Cape Town

Dear Sir/ Madam

<u>Re: Informed Consent from parents/guardians of grade 6 pupils</u>

I am presently a student at the University of the Western Cape, completing studies towards a Master's Degree in Clinical Psychology.

I am very interested in conducting research at *(name)* Primary school, where I was previously employed from 2006-2008. In this time, I found the children to be open, affable and insightful about the world around them, and eloquent in their engagement with the issues of the day facing young people. I would like to conduct a study involving the grade 6 pupils, investigating their perceptions of violence. This would include exploring their hopes and dreams for the future.

I envisage the data collection to include discussions and focus groups, the use of newspaper articles and other forms of media to encourage discussion. A more detailed exposition of the methodology is available upon request.

I feel that this research will be of great benefit to the school as well as my academic development. *(School's name)* is a highly respected school in Cape Town, and has a record of academic and social excellence. The views and perceptions of our future generations are important to those in the community, as they will have a considerable say in the future of South Africa and I feel it will provide a unique insight and understanding to those who read it.

The research will be carried out with a strict ethical code of conduct. The research proposal will be submitted for ethical clearance with the Faculty and Senate Research Committees, which provide oversight on issues of confidentiality, informed consent and academic integrity. My supervisor, Umesh Bawa, is a lecturer and clinical psychologist at the University of the Western Cape.

The children are free to choose if they would like to participate and if at any stage they are unhappy with the process, they are free to leave the focus groups. The topics will be carefully chosen and any article or vignette used will be presented to (*the principle*) before it is discussed with the pupils. At the conclusion of the research, I will conduct a debriefing session. If required, requisite support with learners will be provided. The data collection will be conducted in a sensitive and empathic way, with the focus of the study being positive in nature   Data collected will enjoy strict data security at the University. I will present my findings in the form of a thesis to the school for reference.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions that you may have regarding the research. I will be available before, during and after the research should you need to contact me.

Kind regards,

…………….   …………………
Claire Lund   Parents Signature
Email: lundclaire@googlemail.com

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APPENDIX B:

10 February 2009

Grade 6 Pupils

The Schools Board

Cape Town

Dear Participant

Re: Informed Consent from participants

I _____, hereby give my consent to participate in the research being conducted by Claire Lund. Consent shall be gained from my parents/guardian. My participation is voluntary and I have been given the option to withdraw at any stage of the study, should I feel it necessary. My school and I shall remain anonymous. I am aware that should there be a need for it, counselling will be available to me after the study commences.

Researcher

…………….   ..…………….

Claire Lund   Participant

APPENDIX C:

SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTION GUIDE:

1. Where do you live?

2. How many of you feel safe where you live?

3. Where do you feel the most safe?

4. What makes you feel unsafe?

5. Who watches the news?

6. What kind of things do you learn from the news?

7. Who do you speak to about violent acts in SA?

8. What do you understand by violence?

9. What kind of violence do you hear about in South Africa?

10. Where do you think takes place in Cape Town?

11. If you see something violent and it makes you feel scared, what do you do?

12. What is it about us living in South Africa that you like?

13. Why do you think people will stay here?

APPENDIX D: TRANSCRIPT: FOCUS GROUP 1

C: Okay, I am going to start just by saying that there are a few things that I need to tell you about. K, um... obviously what I said earlier about how important it is to do this project. Obviously there are certain things that you guys do… in the school and you all need to contribute, and this is something that you are going to contribute to as well. I have got permission from your parents and I've got your permission from you, which is a great way to start! Okay, so before I start this is going to be about 45 minutes. We are just going to chat casually, I just want to know what you opinions are, what your views are. If you don't feel like talking then you don't have to talk, um.. and as you can see, we are being recorded and I am going to write it up, but when you speak I am not going to mention your names, I am not going to mention who said what when I write up the report. Would you like me to? (*children giggling)* Okay, when I write up the, the report, which is basically going to be a book, I am going to write it up and I am not going to mention your names and I am not going to mention your school either, so it's all anonymous, okay? Um, … also something I have to mention to you guys is that if there is something that is harming you in the school or harming you out of the school then it may be my obligation to report it, okay? That's something I have to let you know. And lastly, because we are recording, can you please speak one at a time and try and speak up, apparently it works quite well, and um, just to give each other turns like you normally would do, okay? So, we are going to start with the fun part, I am going to go round and you are going to introduce yourselves, I mean I know that I know all of you but I don't know everything about you, I didn't work with you. So, I'll start, basically what I am going to stay is just your name, um... where you live, uh, how you get to school. Hang on a sec (*child puts up hand),* your favourite food and your favourite movie.

P: Do you know your dad is my paediatrician?
R: (*laughs)* No I didn't.
P: Kay
R: But now I do…okay, so I'll go first. My name is Claire and you know I worked her last year for a while and I am at UWC at the moment which is in Belville and I live in Durbanville which is a big change from last year. My favourite food is pizza.
P: (*whispering)* where did you live last year?
R: Where did I live last year? I lived in Pinelands last year.
P: About Durbanville, where in Durbanville cause my parents have a farm in Durbanville and I want to know if it is near by…
R: I live in a place called De Bron…
P: don't know where that it is
R: My favourite movie is…Harry Potter. Okay,
P: My name is … my favourite food is medium to well fillet steak with chips, although I do like savoury food-like pizza, pasta and olives. I live in … near … and over to…
P: Hello my name is ... favourite food is… pasta and favourite movie is Zoolander. I live in …, but my house just got sold
R: and where are you moving to?
P: …place

P: My name is ….I live in Tokai, my favourite food is Sushi. I have so many favourite movies. Should I just name one? YOU, ME AND DUPREE.

P: I am … My favourite food is sushi, I have no favourite movie and I love in …

P: My name is …, my favourite food is pizza, and I don't really have a favourite movie…

P: where do you live?

P: (*area*)?

R: okay

P: My name is …, my favourite food is sushi and my favourite movie is Harry potter, that's about it…

R: and you live in?.

P: …

R: Okay, thanks.

P: Hi, my name is … my favourite food is spaghetti, I don't really have a favourite movie and I live in …

P: Hi my name is …., my favourite food is pasta, I have no favourite movie and I live in …

P: My name is, I live in … my favourite food is Chocolate, my favourite movie is Spirit and I live in …

R: Okay, the reason why I am asking you where you live is because today we are talking about violence. Crime, however you view violence. But we will discuss how we view violence in a second, okay?

P: I live in a road that is the workers road to ... prison, so ya, violence is quite near my house.

R: So I am going to ask you a few questions and I want you guys to discuss it, as I said earlier if you don't want to say anything then that is fine. Firstly, how many of you feel safe where you live? Okay, so that is 7. Sort of. Why do you not feel safe?

P: No electric fence.

P: I have an electric fence…

P: There are all sorts of people coming by ringing the doorbell and asking for things., yesterday there was a guy who got all aggressive because she didn't want to lend him 20 rand for the bus and stuff like that…

R: You sort of had your hand up?

P: I don't really feel safe because on Friday a friend of mine got robbed close to my house.

R: Okay, and were they okay was the house broken into?

P Two people robbed them and then another two people came and they kicked him.

R: So is it feeling unsafe in your neighbourhood or is it feeling unsafe in your house.

P: In the area.

P: also area

R: and do you guys feel safe where you live? others? You say you feel safe? What kind of things make you feel safe where you live?

P; um, just I just feel very safe where I live.

P: But something else, you live right on the end of the street, but … lives on the corner of (*road name)* so it's much more mains road

P: but … also lives on a main road

R:And you girls? What makes you feel safe?

P; we've got dogs that will bark at anything and um, people don't really like, get up any further than our basement.

R: Okay, and for you?

P: I don't know, we've also got dogs that bark at things that she doesn't know.

P:I said I didn't feel safe.

R: Okay, and can you tell us why you don't feel safe?

P: I donno, it's like we have electric fencing, but we just hear stories all the time We have electric fences and we hear that people are jumping over the electric fencing. There was also a story that that these people got caught and they found, like a map and all the red crosses where all the houses that don't have big dogs. And we have dachshunds..

R: alright and who told you that story?

P: I donno, I just heard it from my parents

R: okay, um…

R: would you like to say something?

P: no…

R: so makes you feel unsafe?

P: I feel safe in my house because we have electric fencing, and it is quite a quiet, quietish neighbourhood and there is lots of security in our road. There are four security booths in our road, in our block.

R: is it one of those little wooden huts?

P: …and there is 24 hour ADT patrol. And we've got two dogs, one very stupid one, who will jump up on anything and the ADT base is right across from our house.

R: Okay, so you feel quite safe then…

P: Well, I feel very safe in my house, 'cause the police station is about a one minute drive away and we have a massive rottweiler dog and we have beams that are on all the time and my Dad used to be head of security for the Israeli embassy in Pretoria, so he knows quite a bit about security. And also our house does not look like much of a target from the outside, because there are other houses in our street that look like much more of targets.

R: Okay, so some of you are feeling a little unsafe 'cause of the area that you are in. Some feel safer because you have dogs, dogs seem to have come up a lot and by the sound of things, big dogs? And um, do you all have security companies in your area?

P: yes (*all of the children agree*).

C: alright, and how do you guys think about the security companies, do you think they keep you safe?

P: sort of..

P: not really…

P: (*company name*) does, but not like that …

P: We have (*company name*) patrolling our road 24/7. um, my friend had a robbery and they couldn;'t catch the robbers, so they are not exactly the best.

P: Don't you live in a complex?

P: Ya, I feel quite safe.

R: and you feel quite safe in your complex? What kind of security do you have, do you have electric fences or…

P: Ya, and there's like a main road like right outside and there's a fence and there are like lots of trees and stuff

P: I donno why I feel safe in my house… I have no electric fence and I have small walls. I have two bolts on the door and a burglar alarm, that's it….

R: What is it about your house that makes you feel safe?

P: I donno, I just feel safe?

R: has you house ever been broken into or anything like that?

P: No, I am not sure why I feel safe. I don't think we are much of a target. I think that the people across the road are much better targets.

R:Why do you think they are different to you?

P: Because a lot of people go to their house and they always have people round and they are always having parties and stuff, cause they throw parties like every weekend.

R: where did you say you lived again?

P: …

P: At our house, um we have people all around us, we have people next to us, behind us, and a long driveway so it is much easier to go and steal things from other houses instead of ours.

P: Ya, I think we are less of a target because the people across the road from us own Fogies (bar), so…I think they'll get robbed before we do.

C: and do other people around you make you feel safe?

P: ya, *(all yes).*

P: when my dad is away I feel unsafe.

P : I don't really see the difference.

P: me neither..

R: and why do you say that?

P: Dad comes home late often, and um my mom is neurotic, so every time my dad is not there and the alarm isn't working, she'll tell my brother and I that we have to sleep in her room. She will make us sleep in her room and will lock the door and stuff, so she is very neurotic about that kind of stuff. If she had a bad dream she calls us into her room, and lock us in the bedroom.

R: okay, and does that make you feel more anxious?

P: no, I feel quite chilled about that kind of thing.

B: I also feel quite safe with my mom in her room.

R: and you guys? How do you feel about it?

P: doesn't really make a difference.

P: fine, 'cause where the upstairs bedrooms are there are security doors in the passage

R: so it seems that a lot of things make you feel safe, so as we said the dogs, and the walls the security companies and dads by the sound of things…they seem to make you feel safe?

R: right, I think we must move on… how many of you guys watch TV?

R: wow, that's all of you... and what kind of programmes do you watch?

P: sport,

P: British comedy, discovery, national geographic, Disney, history channel.

P: animal planet, sport, house.

R: can I see hands again

P: the crime channel

P: whatever is on, discovery, house

R: and how many of you watch the news?

P: Yes I do, I watch the news with my dad

R: does blitz bulletin count as the news? one at a time, guys…News? My dad watches it.

P: usually at night time when dad comes home.

P: whenever my dad is watching news.

P: my dad comes home and turns on news and I watch with him

P: whenever my mom feels like watching the news.

P: In the morning…

C: and what kind of things do you see on news?

P: Crime, murder, crashes, natural disaster, global warming.

P: Striking. Mostly everything in the news is bad.

P: ya, there's a lot of natural disasters

P: the worst part of the news is the weather…

C: So you learn quite a lot from the news. You say you hear a lot about crime, now what kind of things…, if I asked you to remember a story from the news, what would you remember?

P: murder

P: rapes

P: in South Africa?

P: everywhere…

R: guys please put your hands up…

P: When Madelaine Mcain got stolen. Portugal.

P: Rapes all over the world.

P: The crash in the Hudson river

P: Um, the strikes that is what I remember, the main strikes and that…

R: Okay, so what do you remember about the strikes, you see it on the TV…

P: um, like they throw tyres around and burn them and stuff

R: that could also be a form of violence…protesting

P: The whole thing that is happening in GAZA earlier this year. The thing that really, really annoys me is that the news channels seem to be pro arab, and I think it is unfair that they are taking sides, they should be neutral...

P: But you are also taking sides…

P: Well, it's because I belong to one of the sides.

P: Well, you are still taking sides

P: Not so much rape on British news. There is not so much rape in British news…It seems that in South Africa it has become normal, when on British news, it's like… oh my gosh, there was one murder this week. It's just so different. South Africa you think there is more crime than England because they put it all on the news.

P: Can't even fit it on the news here…

P: If South Africa had to put it on the news, one news bulletin would be like three days.

R: How do you guys feel about that? You guys live in a country where there is so much crime.

P: well, we live in quite secure areas.

P: Thankfully none of us live in the Cape Flats.

P: All of us live in suburbs that are like first world. People are like, I understand, because we aren't vulnerable to murder so much in our area and our age. But if you go further out then you will see why South Africa is called a developing and a third world country

because you see names of gangs on buildings and people are so much more vulnerable to crime, murder and abduction in those areas, because everyone is open there. Everybody can walk, anybody can walk anywhere, so that's why I feel safe where I am.

R: Okay, *(participant's name)?*
P: The news doesn't always show the once my maid didn't come, I think last term, last term and the next day when she came she told my mom that the taxi drivers were striking, they were upset that most of the people were using the trains instead of the taxis. So taxi drivers poured gas over someone and burnt him. My maid saw this happen so she went home.
R: not such a nice thing to hear hey?
P: no, it's horrible.
P: we did an outreach programme last term. And it was like. It was in like a very insecure area in the cape flat, Vrygrond and we would see gangs names on walls, and like people living under and millions of people living under small building and…
P: we realised how lucky we were to live in a good area with proper housing. It's like another world out there, because you see millions of people….
P: and it was raining the one time we went and most of the houses were shacks and we saw people were walking out with no shoes on and it was freezing.
P: everyone looks dodgy there...
R Okay, hang on there guys, how many of you have been to other areas of Cape Town, the poorer areas? Where have you guys been?
P: the airport
R: okay…
P: when you go to the airport, on the way to Franschoek.
R: Um, I take my maid home with my mom on the weekend.
R: okay, and where does she live?
P: I'm not sure…
P: Nyanga
P: My brother's friend's au-pair does an outreach programme and she goes and gives all the township children um, she gives them, like Christmas presents. And the one year we went with her and we just saw the desperation of people and children, like they have to get marks on their hands so that they can't come back again, some kids would change their shirt, change their pants just to get more...
P: I go to Langa and all of that with my mom and the people at our soccer club, the under 15's or whatever, we take them straight to there house in Parkwood and places like that.
R: We talking about these places, and what kind of things happen in those places as opposed to where you live?
P: From what I saw, it seems that people will not exactly go and help each other and would rather keep to themselves and keep what they have. That is what I saw, maybe it's different.
R: …and you girls... what do you think? How do you think it is different for poorer people as opposed to you guys I terms of violence?
P: They like, like don't have security there and there is like a whole village there.
P: They have unsecure houses and say a big storm comes, some of them their houses get blown away. They get robbed virtually every day, well sometimes.

P: not every day man…

P; The most part about drug takers and crime is parents aren't responsible for what they do, so if they are poor then they go onto the bottle or the drugs and then the children get influenced and you get kids who are irresponsible and they are on the streets and they start joining gangs. If the parents were responsible towards their children then the problem would never be this bad because no one would, the people would be less dodgy.

R: alright, so what do you understand violence. How would you describe it?

P: Pain, beating, murdering, getting hit or often just an innocent person walking on the street and they will walk past a gang. The gang will just beat them up. There were stories where gangs of children were doing that and just randomly beating children up.

P: weapons, guns, knives.

P: gangs, sometimes they do it for fun.

P: or they get money for it

P: Stupid Chinese invented gun powder

R: anything else? So which kind of violence do you think applies to you guys?

P: Getting robbed,

P: bullying,

P: getting hit, if you different people kind of look down at you and treat you like you are nothing.

R: Do you think there is a lot of bullying in your school?

P: no

R: Some say yes, some say no. Who said yes? (*6*)

P: I have only been to this school and I don't know what it is like at other schools. Some schools I am sure are worse than ours. We think that shouting the odd threat at each other and being ugly to each other counts as bullying. Other school is beating up the person and in some cases and actually hurting them with weapons.

R: Do you think that shouting is still bullying?

P: yes

P: no

P: yes, there is a lot of mental abuse at this school. Some people will randomly walk up to someone and dussing them and insulting people that they are friendly with, or teasing them about being friends with someone.

P: I think it's like, it is verbal and psychological. There is a lot more than actually getting hit or physically bullying.

R: So, you think that there is more emotional abuse than physical abuse at your school then.

P: You won't see a guy with a black eye here

P: I think if you don't start with someone, someone won't start with you. If someone like, kicks you or swears at you, or tells something to you, you, you, you are literally given permission to have a go back at them. But is still wouldn't be right.

P: but you see other schools if a grade 5 or 4 , disrespects like a senior elder, they will get like caned or tortured or will get like abused and beaten up.

P: Is this an army? You don't get tortured in schools!!!

R: so you do think that there is bullying in this school, but you don't think it is physical…

P: It's not bullying…

P: some people think that bullying can be verbal abuse

R: I think it would also depend on how you define bullying. I think that some people do think that bullying can be verbal abuse and some people don't.

P: If you go to probably another school then it is probably way more severe than it is here, I think it depends which school you go to.

R: So if you see something violent on the TV or you hear about something violent, how does it make you feel inside?

P: it makes me feel unsafe. I think that on the one hand it makes me feel scared that there is this kind of stuff in the world, but it also makes me feel grateful that I am not a victim to any of those. Makes me feel 'if it could happen to him, it could happen to me'.

P: so does it make you feel vulnerable in a way?

P: I feel perfectly fine, because I highly doubt that murders or crime, other than robbed, in most of the areas that we live in, we are not vulnerable to that. It is mainly like out on the Cape Flats and places like that where it happens so I don't feel too unsafe.

R: so you seem to feel very safe?

P: I feel upset that people have seen violent things and they do nothing about it. It makes me feel upset that they just stand around and do nothing about it. Its like, 'wow shame, poor them and I would try and put myself in their position. And then I also feel sorry for the people who did it because they have some psychological problem and they have harmed someone without even thinking of the consequences.

R: Boys, can you come and sit on the floor please…

P: no one has a reason to start with anybody. If nobody started with them in the first place. It is people's faults that this happens. It happens when someone harm someone else, then they do to someone else and then another crime and another crime and so on. It comes from anger of the person who is a victim. And they start exploiting drugs or start getting abusive.

P: no matter how small the first crime was.

P: when I hear things about crime I start feeling unsafe and I start getting more aggressive. I have a baseball bat next to my bed and I have three pocket knives in my cupboard and stuff like that.

R: he has a point, how would you feel. It makes him feel more safe.

P: I lived (*country*) where there was hardly any crime and now here it is a big change,

P: when I hear about violence, it makes me think that it might happen to me.

P: So, some of you seems that when you think about violence, some of you think that it won't happen to you and some of you think that it will happen to you? Am I right?

P: It can happen to anybody, but the possibilities of happening to some people are much smaller than the possibilities happening to another person. So obviously, when I said I don't feel vulnerable, it might happen to me but I think that the chances of it happening to me are fairly small.

P: 2 things, I sleep with my golf clubs in my room so if people come into my room I can just grab one and smack them over the head. And second, we had people who broke into our house and they went into the garage and stole my sister's boyfriend's mountain bike. When we put tiles over the garage to stop them getting in, they still got in the next day and stole my dad's bike. After we put in an alarm, they didn't come again. It was our mistake that they manage to get away with it.

P: how do you feel about it?

M: I think I feel fine, it could happen to me.

P: I don't think it will happen to me.

P: I hope not but when you see it on the TV, you hope it won't but you just hope for the best.

P: when you see it you always feel sorry for the people and for their families.

P: I think that usually if they have experienced something you feel more threatened. I think that you feel it will happen to you and then during the day you forget about it.

R: Are you saying at night you would feel worse about it? So when you are doing a normal; day to day activity you tend to forget it?

P: ya, when you have time to think about it.

P: and how safe do you feel on the school grounds?

P: very safe, too safe. Can't get out, can't get in. it's very boring. School, I wonder what we will do.

P: It's like, 'what did you do today? We learnt stuff…'

R: You are very lucky to have such a safe school.

P: I was going to change schools but I decided not to cause they actually don't even have a gate to keep anyone coming in or out the school there was no security.

R: so the security at the school also makes you feel more safe.

P: ya

R: So we are going to move on now to, what is it about South Africa that you like?

P: People are so friendly, tourists, Waterfront, Table Mountain, spacious, like if you have to go to America there are people everywhere.

P: It is a more closed up place. I mean and you haven't got technology everywhere and you can go to places like Upington and the Kalahari and further north of Africa and you get very spacious places. I mean, you feel content.

P: It's so beautiful, so many beautiful places…

P: Sport here is great, everything is good. Except obviously the negative, for the crime.

P: 2 things, in the schools in other places you don't have what you have here. In Israel, they mix people from good areas and dodgy areas. They do that so the kids from the good neighbourhoods. They think that the guys from the good neighbourhoods are going to rub off on the kids from the dodgy neighbourhoods and it has the opposite effect. I remember my childhood best friend when we were like 5, and he changed completely. He just randomly swears at little children running past and he is different to how he was when I left. Also in South Africa is you want to go on a nice holiday, you have don't have to pay millions, you can just go to the Kruger Park, which is amazing cause you have so much to see in your own country.

P: The respect. The respect of the elder people

P: so you saying that people have respect for older people, and for people who are more important.

P: I have nothing to say really. I would choose to go to *(country)*. I have been here for 1 and a half years.

R: and for you?

P: no comment

P: you people are so not patriotic.

P: I just realised something… I've been in South Africa for more than half my life...

R: There are some of you who think very highly of South Africa and some of you don't want to comment. Who has travelled?

P: I am a very big partriot

P: I've been to Mozambique

P: England, France,

P: Europe, Australia, Italy,

P: a lot of places…Australia, Mauritius, America, West Indies, Canada, Amsterdam.

R: Wow, that's amazing

P: I've been to London, Paris…, Frankfurt and Natal

P: Israel, Rhodes, Switzerland, Holland, we went on a Camper tour in Holland.

R: That's amazing guys, you have seen so much of the world, you are very lucky. What I am trying to get at is that we have been speaking about South Africa and the violence in South Africa and how it can sometimes make you feel unsafe. Where would you live if you are thinking about safety? I am not talking about the place, I am not talking about how amazing the place is, or how many McDonalds there are in the street…

P: *(laughs)*

R: I just want to know in terms of safety, where would you rather be?

P: South Africa is my home, your home country people are always attached to and I don't think people are always attracted to their own country.

P: I know that I will live in Israel at some stage, but I would take South Africa.

R: and in terms of safety?

P: Israel.

P: I would choose South Africa. I would go somewhere else, I would go to America. I would want to move to England to work because of the foreign exchange… *(laughs)*

P: I don't know because I have never been anywhere.

R: Guys, you have really been fantastic…

P: Don't you want to keep us for another hour?

R: *(Laughs)* We still have a little bit of time left and I just wanted to ask if there was anything that came up for you, anything of interest. I mean, it is a huge thing violence is a huge thing that we have to face and I am interested in how it has affected you…

P: We could discuss how UCT is the only university that is ranked as one of the top 150 universities in the world.

R: I think we are going off the topic we touched on it earlier, but in South Africa,, what kind of things would you class as violence-

P: taxi violence, strikes, rape murder, poverty

P: dodgy parts they have violence.

P: but they have the noice parts too.

R: Okay guys, I am afraid we are going to have to stop there, we have run out of time.

P: No, it's been such fun.

P: we have to go to computers now…

R: Okay, can I just say I am seeing a on Friday and Tuesday so if you don't mind, rather don't talk to them about what we spoke about and give them ideas, okay? You can speak among yourselves, so speak to each other, but just don't tell them too much about the group. Don't tell them too much.

P: Can we tell them that you used a lie detector on us?

R: um, no, I don't think so *(Laughs)*

P: does your university have one?

R: I am not sure…

R: Okay guys…

R: I am going to take your group, one on Friday and one on Tuesday and then I am going to see if you say similar things or if you think very differently or what.

P: Okay guys thanks very much…

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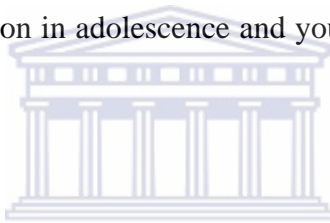
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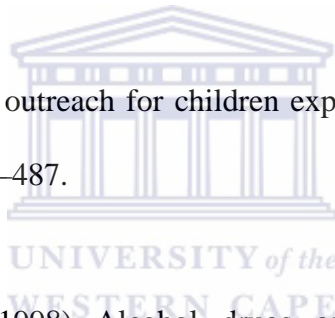
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