University of Natal

Gender Conflict Amongst Adolescents at the

Rossburgh High School, Durban

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Rossburgh High School, Durban

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by

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Dissertation Supervisor   Prof. L.R. Uys

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Dedication

To my mother, Uma,

the strongest woman that I know and,

to my father, Chet,

for teaching me to change tyres and wire plugs,

I love you both.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

- Prof. L.R. Uys, for her excellent support and guidance on this project.

- All the people involved with CRISP, thanks for welcoming me on board and for all the encouragement and support, with this project.

- The staff, learners at the Rossburgh High School and their parents for allowing me to conduct this study, for giving up their time and for sharing their experiences and views with me. The information that you provided is sure to help make things better for other adolescents.

- Dr. Adejumo for all his support - Yinka, thanks for always understanding.

- My family for being so supportive and always being there for me.

Declaration

Except for referenced citations in text,

this is the researcher's original work.

Ms. Ravani Chetty

Abstract:

In 1998 the Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines (CADD) embarked on a project to prevent and reduce crime involving school children. A needs assessment was conducted in the three schools where the project was to have its main focus. One of the problems that came out of the Rossburgh High School was the conflict that appeared to exist between male and female learners at the school. Male learners were observed to 'bully' their female counterparts. Given the high statistic of violence against women in South Africa, this seemingly 'small' problem could have relevance later on in the lives of these adolescents.

In order to intervene successfully it was first necessary to understand the problem that existed. By means of focus groups male and female adolescents provided information around the phenomenon. From data obtained, it appeared that fighting was predominantly due to boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. The problem was explored in depth and recommendations were made with regards to intervention programmes and future research.

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<u>**Chapter one**</u>

1.1 Introduction

Adolescence is a time of great change in the life of a human being

(Ngendane, 1985, Adams, Gullotta & Montemayor, 1992). The physical and

emotional changes that occur can result in conflict within the individual, as well

as with those interacting with that particular individual. Conflict if not detected

and resolved can have far reaching consequences for the individual and society

as a whole (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998).

In 1998 the Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines (CADD)

embarked on a project entitled "Crime Prevention in Schools, A Pilot Project of

the University of Natal: Office of Community Programmes, Linking home to

school and school to community". This project is aimed at intervention with

crime prevention at schools (both primary and secondary). As part of the

problem statement in the draft proposal, Gray (1998, p1) highlights the issues:

> "Violence in schools is a major problem being experienced in Durban and
> its surrounding areas. A recent study by Dr. R.A. Griggs of the
> Independent Projects Trust (IPT, November 1997) revealed that, in 90%
> of the schools studied, gang-related violence was a problem and security
> measures were inadequate. Further, none of the disadvantaged schools
> offered counselling for pupils despite the high incidence and severity of
> violence; only one school offered education in tolerance and diversity; and
> parental indifference undermined the effectiveness of conflict resolution
> programmes in schools."

What was proposed was an interdisciplinary intervention research project, which would draw from both staff and students from various departments within the university. The emphasis is on service-learning, incorporating service to the community within the academic curriculum, in the hope of producing programmes that would be contextually relevant (Gray, 1998). Different departments or schools within the university joined to form a consortium. The School of Nursing is one of the members of that consortium. The hope is that the end product of this type of project will be the development of a partnership model for interventions which link the university to the schools and the relevant communities.

A needs assessment was conducted in the three schools where the project was to have its main focus, namely, the Stellawood Senior Primary School, The Carrington Heights Junior Primary School and the Rossburgh High School. One of the problems that came out of the Rossburgh High School was the conflict that appeared to exist between male and female learners at the school. The problem was verbalised and documented as "boys bully girls in school" (O'Brien, 1998). The need that arose from this problem was for an intervention strategy to bring about a "change in boys' behaviour towards girls" (O'Brien, 1998). However, before any type of intervention strategy was to be carried out a full understanding of the problem was essential.

South Africa is presently noted to be amongst the countries with the highest rape statistics in the world, this is according to the 'Statistics from the Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women' (1998). This report indicates that South Africa has the second highest crime rate in the entire world. In 1994 there were a total of 32 107 rapes that were reported. This figure showed an increase of 16% from the previous year. According to Gray (1998) in the final proposal for the "Crime Prevention in Schools" project, "the 1996 NEDCOR Report found that, of all crimes reported by young people, 59% of the incidents involved rape, 15% assault, and 10% violence or intimidation". This makes one wonder what is it about the South African scenario that makes it a breeding ground for violence and negativity.

Gray (1998) also highlights the fact that Kwa-Zulu Natal appears to have the most problems with regards to violence, of note being the fact that it is the province with the highest recorded number of murders since the 1994 elections. Given this, what may start off as simply 'boys bullying girls' may have far reaching consequences for those involved as they reach adulthood. Thus bringing to the fore the need to understand the events that surround the problem and the need to intervene timeously.

'The Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and Children:

An Addendum to the 1997 Declaration on Gender and Development by SADC

Heads of State or Government' (1998, p4) states:

> "Recognising that violence against women and children:
> Reflects the unequal relations of power between women and men resulting
> in the domination and discrimination of women by men".

In doing so, they bring to the fore the prevalence of the problem of

unequal power relations between men and women that exist in society at large.

Eder, Evans and Parker (1997) bring out similar information in their exploration

of social rankings of youth in a Midwestern middle-school in America. The main

emphasis being to achieve peer recognition and prevent peer rejection.

According to Eder, Evans and Parker (1997, p58), "It is within this context that

both boys and girls were constructing notions of what it means to be a male or

female, both among themselves and in regard to the opposite sex". One of the

things that they noted amongst others was the emergence of a social hierarchy

, namely that of gender inequality. Eder, Evans and Parker (1997, p58-59)

explained the perpetuation of negative behaviours towards girls as follows:

> "The fact that most students in this school were somewhat insecure about
> their social standing may help to explain why so few students were willing
> to risk appearing 'abnormal' by challenging more traditional gender
> messages. Instead, most students' first priority was to be included by
> their peers and to participate in the informal speech routines of their
> groups, regardless of the impact of their participation. Not only did this

encourage boys to engage in sexist behaviours at times, but in some cases girls also engaged in behaviours that promoted limiting and negative perceptions of themselves as girls".

1.2 Relevance to Nursing

With the emphasis on the holistic approach to health care increasing, the focus of nursing has become more diffuse. Nursing has extended beyond curative care in hospitals. The promotive and preventative aspects of health care are encouraged and patients have become clients, with whole communities being seen as the client. Individuals make up communities, and if problems cannot be prevented with such individuals the community as a whole may suffer as a result. Thus this study has relevance to the mental health of communities within Kwa-Zulu Natal and South Africa as a whole. By understanding properly the problems a community encounters, one would then be able to hopefully prevent it and promote health.

This study also has relevance to nursing in that it can help in the battle to prevent physical harm to women, as well as emotional and psychological harm to them. The information gained can be used to assist the development of programmes that can be instituted into the school curriculum to promote healthy physical and emotional relationships between male and female adolescents.

1.3 Theoretical framework

According to Uys, Pietersen and Middleton (1994) the cognitive framework makes the assumption that emotional problems are the result of irregularities in the thinking process of the individual. Therapy in these situations is aimed at rectifying the thinking process of that individual to bring about a change in behaviour. This theoretical framework will guide this research study since the cognitive approach anticipates that a person's thoughts have an influence over their feelings and this in turn will influence that individual's behaviour (Uys, Pietersen and Middleton, 1994). Uys, Pietersen and Middleton (1994) cite the application of this framework as being suitable for interpersonal conflicts.

This framework was used to structure the data collection process. An attempt was made to divide information provided on thoughts and feelings from that provided on behaviour. Data was collected in three phases in order to do this effectively. During the session one focus groups learners were asked to provide information on their thoughts and feelings related to the conflict. During the session two focus groups they were asked to provide information on the behaviours that were exhibited in such conflict situations. In order to assess if there were any other factors that could influence the way these

adolescents thought, session three interviews focussed on their other encounters with conflict and violence, other than in school. All focus groups were run using a schedule of questions (Annexure 1).

The cognitive framework is suitable for such a study, as it can be effective in preventing negative influences during what Erikson refers to passive identity formation (Adams,Gullotta and Montemayor, 1992). If one uses this strategy to understand human behaviour then one will be able to hopefully intervene appropriately. On completion of this research study the "Crime Prevention in Schools Project" will attempt to carry out intervention strategies aimed at altering the "negative thought chain" (Uys, Pietersen and Middleton, 1994, p45) in order to change the negative behaviour that was documented by the study and help in the long-term to decrease violence against women.

1.4 Research Objectives

The purpose of this study was to specifically examine the problem of gender conflict that appeared to be occurring at the Rossburgh High School in Durban. In doing so the researcher hopes to fulfill the following broad objectives:

(i) To describe the thoughts and feelings of gender conflict that exist amongst the adolescents.

(ii) To describe the behavioural manifestations of the conflict.

(iii) To ascertain whether the extent and nature of the conflict undergoes a change as adolescents become older.

(iv) To analyse the genesis of the gender conflict.

It is hoped that the above information once obtained will provide the consortium with a more complete understanding of the conflict between male and female learners at the Rossburgh High School. This in turn will lead to the development of intervention strategies. These strategies should be aimed at firstly, prevention of conflict and secondly, conflict resolution where conflict is found to exist. The research will be instrumental in working with the "Crime Prevention in Schools" project at the intervention phase, which will occur after the completion of this research project.

1.5 Definition of concepts

To ensure consensus between reader and researcher, it is necessary to define some of the instrumental concepts.

(I) Gender: The term gender according to the Collins English Mini Dictionary (1995, p228), refers to "state of being male or female".

(ii) Conflict: The term 'conflict' in the Collins English Mini Dictionary (1995, p106) is defined as a "1. struggle or fight. 2. disagreement". In this study the term fighting will be used to refer to verbal aggression, while the term violence will refer to physical aggression.

(iii) Gender conflict: For purposes of this study the term 'gender conflict' shall refer to any areas or issues dealing with fighting or disagreement between male and females adolescents, whatever the form.

(iv) Adolescent: Kreipe and Strauss in Adams, Montemayor and Gullotta (1989) divide the period of adolescence in three stages. The first stage is that of 'early adolescence' and is the period from ten years to fourteen years of age. The second stage is 'middle adolescence' and is that period between fifteen to sixteen years of age. Lastly the third stage is termed 'late adolescence' and falls between seventeen and twenty-one years of age. For the purpose of this study, the term 'adolescent' will refer to any learner at the school who falls between ten to twenty-one years of age.

(v) Learner: With regards to this study the term 'learner' will refer to any person who is a scholar at the school where the research is being carried out.

Chapter two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at existing literature on adolescents and gender conflict with a view to getting a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied. Identity development during adolescence is explained and the differences between male and female identity development brought to light.

The influence of social context and socio-historical events on identity is discussed, elucidating their negative or positive effects. The South African context is examined in detail, in an attempt to make meaning of the experiences of black adolescents in apartheid and post-apartheid times. Issues of male aggression towards females are explored, with particular reference to what is happening abroad, under the heading of 'peer sexual harassment'. The chapter also attempts to make meaning of how adolescents deal with strife, negativity and conflict, where outcomes can lead to psychopathology or strengthen character. Lastly, the chapter makes more sense of the cognitive theoretical framework that guides this study.

2.2 Identity Formation

Adams in Adams et al (1992, p1) states that

" adolescence is widely recognised as a stage associated with substantial change

in the self". He cites theorists Erik Erikson and Peter Blos for their frameworks

on "transformation of the self during adolescence" which appear to be the most

widely known (Adams et al, 1992, p1). The psychodynamic theory of human

development by Erikson is described as " arguably the only psychosocial theory

to address adolescence as a specific developmental phase within a coherent and

integrated life stage framework" (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997, p250). According

to these two theorists, adolescence is seen as an important period for identity

formation.

Erikson and Blos see identity " as an internalized, self-selected regulatory

system that represents an organized and integrated psychic structure that

requires the developmental distinction between the inner self and the outer

world" (Adams et al, 1992, p1, Stevens and Lockhat, 1997). As puberty begins

this process is enhanced, by the development of the ego in areas of role taking

and with better cognitive functioning. This allows the individual mastery over

self, as well as the ability to accurately perceive his or her "talents, skill and

abilities" (Adams et al, 1992, p1).

2.2.1 Passive Identity Formation: Adams (Adams et al, 1992) differentiates between passive and active identity formation processes. In doing so he also illustrates the difference between how Erikson and Blos perceive these two concepts, as well as their similarities. " Blos portrays passivity of identity in his description of prolonged adolescence, where arrested movement is observed through the resistance to make final choices" (Adams te al, 1992, p1). For purposes of this study the writer prefers Erikson's explanation of passive identity formation. Erikson sees passive identity as a process whereby the adolescent accepts the role and self-image provided by other people, without attempting to judge or evaluate it. So what does this mean for the adolescent concerned? Both Erikson and Blos hypothesise that adolescents tend to be uncertain and doubt themselves. When removed from the structured environment in which they live, they lose their perception of self.

2.2.2 Active Identity Formation: In opposition to this, the process of active identity formation is seen as one where the searching and self-selection takes place. In short, "where self-chosen commitments are integrated into an organized psychic structure" (Adams et al, 1992, p2). Adams sees this type of identity as being linked to the concepts of self-assurance, self-certainty and mastery.

2.2.3 Social Context: The issue of social context is an important one with regards to identity formation and development. Erikson sees the process of individual development as taking place within a social context, so too does Blos. For Erikson, "societal expectations require a selection from available choices, with the individual, in turn, needing confirmation of choices and community acceptance" (Adams et al, 1992, p2).

Erikson views the role as intergenerational socialization as imperative to the process. This allows for the individual to experiment, whilst receiving acceptance, as well as support. As such an atmosphere of mutual trust exists where the adolescent, is allowed to choose his or her future independently. As each conflict or problem is dealt with during the stages of identity development, the outcome can either be positive or negative. Positive results lead to the individual being mentally well, whereas, negative ones can lead to maladaptive thoughts, feelings or behaviours (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997). According to Ngendane (1985) assistance and guidance is crucial to the adolescents development of an ethical framework on which to base thoughts and actions. When there is no guidance given there is an increase in unwanted behaviours such as teenage pregnancies, abortions and other negative or delinquent behaviour. Ngendane (1985) thus agrees with Erikson on the need for support,

understanding and care to be given to the adolescent during this period of identity formation.

Blos, on the other hand sees the need for the adolescent to separate himself or herself from the caregiver as being essential to the process of identity development. In contrast to Erikson, Blos sees emotional distance between adolescent and caregiver as being important. This allows for psychological differentiation to take place. Thus generational differences, together with their tensions or conflicts are thought to be useful to the process of identity formation and development of self. Blos, in keeping with Erikson, sees the need for the adolescent to receive emotional support within a supportive environment. However, this same environment should also permit the display or expression of tensions and conflicts that may naturally occur due to generational differences.

Ngendane (1985) sees the South African context as not fulfilling the necessary role to ensure appropriate adolescent identity development. Since society does not appear to cater for these adolescents' feelings and needs in a useful way, it results in boredom. As such the adolescents, according to Ngendane (1985) then try to find ways to deal with this boredom, involving themselves in activities that could have either negative or positive outcomes.

This also leads to an increased sense of belonging to a collective, ie. the peer group, which serves as the individual's 'yardstick'. Relationships become the 'sounding board' for the developing identity. Thus highlighting the need for appropriate adult intervention to ensure successful identity development and a socially appropriate ethical framework.

2.2.4 Identity as a Personality Construct: Patterson et al in Adams et al (1992) highlights Marcia's Identity Status Model. Marcia describes four identity statuses in his model. These statuses are seen as the end product of the process of identity formation, as well as the outcomes of the structural components of personality. Each of these four identities illustrates a major method of experiencing the environment of the individual. Patterson et al in Adams et al (1992, p10) states that "identity status at late adolescence should thus affect and shape future identity formation as well as the person's passage through subsequent life stages". This statement has great significance for this study.

2.2.5 Women's Identity: Patterson et al in Adams et al (1992) question the application of identity constructs to women. They feel that current theories of identity formation may be inappropriate as they appear to be biased, and relate more to the "western, masculine ideal of individualism over relatedness"

(Adams et al, 1992, p14). With regards to the content domains used in assessment of women's identity, Archer in Adams et al (1992) found adolescent girls and boys to be equally concerned with issues of occupation. However, she noted that issues of career linked to marriage was of greater importance to adolescent girls. "She concluded that women face a more complex task in identity formation than do men, because of the number of content domains within which they define themselves, and the relative lack of societal support for their positions" (Adams, 1992, p15). Women tend to define their personalities as being more empathetic in nature, and having self-confidence to a lesser degree as compared to men. This has great significance according to Raphael (1993), who sees self-esteem, self-concept and self-efficacy as intervening factors that can decrease mental morbidity. They also tend to exhibit 'thrill seeking' behaviour to a lesser degree when compared to men (Otis, Levy, Samson, Pilote and Fugere, 1997).

With regards to timing of identity development, Patterson et al in Adams et al (1992) speaks of two categories. The first one is of those women who achieve identity development in one phase. These women predominantly have less traditional lifestyles in that they have continuous careers or employment. Late adolescence is said to be the optimal period for the task of resolving the

identity versus identity confusion in this group. Schiedel and Marcia (in Adams et al, 1992) see this group as achieving identity development before men.

The second category is made up of women who opt for a more traditional lifestyle, which involves marriage and motherhood. This group is said to " have a diphasic developmental pattern" (Adams et al, 1992, p16). These women obtain initial identity before age twenty. Personal identity is held in abeyance until they have fulfilled the roles of spouse and mother. Once the children of women from this category reached school age, the women then had more opportunity to develop a personal sense of identity. So whilst the job of identity development for men and women may begin in adolescence, they appear to take on different patterns as the individual progresses.

Another important point put forward by Patterson et al in Adams et al (1992) is that whilst identity development in men takes place in a linear fashion, with stages preceding each other, the same cannot be said for women. Identity development in women appears not to be sequential, probably due to the many roles that women are expected to play in society.

Josselson in Adams et al (1992, p20) views women's identity "as being in connection with others". What is proposed is that women's identity is not merely an extension of individual autonomy, but that women form their identity in a

context of relationships to other people. This has significance when attempting to make meaning of women's identity development.

During adolescence interpersonal context areas feature more as identity concerns, with females as compared to males. Due to interpersonal connectedness, women may reformulate their identity when interpersonal relationship transitions take place. For women the issue of identity and intimacy are not held separate. Instead they may mix or join, since for women their experiences of loving others or of being loved by others are 'part and parcel' of their sense of self. The apparent link between women's identity and their relationships has great significance in terms of this study. Negative experiences in interpersonal relationships during adolescence can impact negatively on the development of that female's identity. Hence drawing our attention to the need to prevent and resolve conflict and harassment when it exists.

2.2.6 The Effects of Social Events on Individual Development:

According to Stewart in Lieblich and Josselson (1994), there exists a link between the socio-cultural context and the personality development of an individual. Important social and historical events usually impact on young children by affecting their values and their expectations of the world in which they live. One must bear in mind, however, that young children's experiences are influenced

by their experiences within their own families. Thus it stands to reason that some social events will have a greater effect on some children as opposed to others.

On the other hand, adolescents and young adults are affected in a different way by social and historical events. Adolescents when confronted by a major event, also bring to that encounter their own experiences and world views. As a result events that they encounter, can either be absorbed into previous views or not. Events which are greatly different from their normal lives may have little or no impact on their personality development. However, if an event is greatly different to anything that they have experienced previously, that event may then have a great effect on the development of that adolescent's personal identity.

Stewart in Lieblich and Josselson (1994) cites examples of such occurrences in adolescent personality development. Young adults in England were faced with World War I, which commenced in 1914. These young people had to deal with experiences of international conflict, as well as great violence. According to Stewart (Lieblich and Josselson, 1994, p233) "many in this generation grounded their identity formation in their experience of World War I". What this means is that when events which are in total contrast with

childhood values and expectations, take place in late adolescence, these events can then go onto become the main components of a person's conscious identity.

Stewart (Lieblich and Josselson, 1994) also presents findings of her research done on 91 women in America, during the 1980's. These women were given a list of significant social and historical events which had taken place in America during their lifetimes. They were asked to select one event from the list that had meaning for them and to explain its significance. What they found was that 72% of their target population selected events that had taken place during their late adolescence or early adulthood. Stewart's (Lieblich and Josselson, 1994, p238) conclusion was that, "for this cohort, then, those social events that were felt to have special personal meaning did, in fact, cluster during the identity formation period".

2.2.7 Effects of Oppression: Similarly, Stevens and Lockhat (1997, p250) in their discussion view the period of self-definition during adolescence as being "attained through combining certain aspects of earlier childhood identifications with the adoption of certain socio-historically influenced systems of values, norms and standards. Our emergence in South Africa from the apartheid era, is a significant socio-historical event that can be seen to have far-reaching effects on present adolescent development.

Black South Africans have had to endure a lengthy period of oppression, during the years of apartheid. Bulhan in Stevens and Lockhat (1997) suggests a theory for exploring the effects of such oppression on the minds of oppressed individuals. Bulhan proposes three ways in which the individual attempts to psychologically defend himself or herself. The initial stage is that of capitulation. Here the individual tries to mix into and become one with the dominating culture. At the same time that individual attempts to reject his or her own culture. The next stage is called revitalisation, where the individual attempts to deny his or her connection with the dominant culture. Simultaneously, the individual tends to view the culture that he or she is born into in an idealistic way. The last stage is that of radicalisation. During this stage the individual is committed to making a fundamental change.

Stevens and Lockhat (1997), making use of Bulhan's definition of violence, view oppression as situation of violence. Black South Africans were faced with many other experiences that contributed to this violent atmosphere. They lived in a state of poverty as opposed to many white South Africans and felt the effects of capitalism during the apartheid years to a greater degree. Due to the Group Areas Act and Land Act, they were forced to uproot. This relocation brought about the destruction of black families, and communities. There was an

unequal distribution of resources such as health care and education. This led to

increased mortality and morbidity, and a lower standard of education or total

lack of education among many black people in South Africa (Stevens and Lockhat,

1997).

This lack of education resulted in black adolescents and young adults being

unable to achieve academically, which meant less skill and lowered paid jobs, or

no employment at all being available. To escape their circumstances many black

adolescents resorted to negative behaviour such as substance abuse. More cases

of depression were also noted among these adolescent, which was the result of

the psychopathology of them being unemployed. Raphael(1993) also makes

mention of increased psychological illness among unemployed youth in Australia

(Resnick et al, 1993). Many black parents had to leave home to earn a living. This

meant that contact between them and their children was decreased and difficult

at best, due to financial constraints (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997, Rutter, 1995).

This brings us back to the point made by Erikson about the need for interaction

between the adolescent and his or her significant others and community for

effective identity development to take place (Adams et al, 1992). Raphael (1993)

also cites family break-up as a factor contributing to mental pathology in

adolescents. Parents need to be present in order to be able to supervise and

guide their children, thus preventing anti-social company and behaviours.

Adolescent coping strategies need to be monitored, else they adopt strategies

that do more harm than good, such as substance abuse (Rutter, 1995).

Even when families do not separate to overcome financial problems as

mentioned earlier, economic difficulty is seen to have effects on adolescent

personality development. Skinner, Elder and Conger (1992) conducted a study in

Midwestern America, to explore the impact of economic hardship on adolescent

behaviour. What they observed was that there was a definite link between

financial difficulty and adolescent aggression. Lack of financial resources and

the uncertainty that came with it, appeared to impact directly on the fathers of

the households that were studied. Being the primary breadwinners, these men

experienced loss of self-esteem. As a result they became hostile and withdrawn

in their interactions with their partners. The marital tension that followed

caused irritability and inconsistency in their parenting. This inconsistency in cues

received by the adolescents caused them to act out aggressively.

Of importance to this study is the fact that while men displayed behaviour

changes as a result of economic hardship, their wives did not. The women

studied, did not show the same loss of self-esteem. However, when their

husbands responded to them negatively, they reciprocated. The question then is:

(1) does the father's negative treatment of the mother impact on the way the

adolescent male behaves towards the opposite sex, and (2) does this also impact

on the way in which adolescent females view and accept their roles in their social

settings?

2.2.8 Resilience: One must mention, however, that black adolescents

should not always be characterised as victims within the context of oppression.

A negative outcome after being subjected to negativity as discussed earlier need

not necessarily be the case. They are capable of demonstrating resilience to the

situation with its stressors. Dawes in Stevens and Lockhat (1997) states the

outcome cannot be predetermined with certainty. One needs to take into account

"that there may be several mediating factors that determine the extent of

children's subjective experience of stress" (Steven and Lockhat, 1997, p252).

This has significance for this study since the aim is to understand the problem

presenting at the Rossburgh High School, so that interventions can be carried

out. If one followed the biomedical approach which sees the end point as

inevitable and unchangeable, then the intervention phase after completion of this

study would be futile (Dawes in Stevens and Lockhat, 1997).

Rutter's (1995) view of resilience is in contrast to that proposed by

Raphael (1993, p534) who reports its association with concepts such as, "strong

interpersonal skills, positive self esteem, internal locus of control, positive mood, family warmth and cohesion". Since clearly the situation of oppression endured by black South African adolescents under apartheid generally did not allow for such a positive environment. Rutter (1995), however, suggested the idea that while the adolescent may not be able to select their environment, they are able to have self-determination over their response and behaviours within the situation or environment. This implies that human beings can determine to a large extent what happens to them. Rutter (1995) is in agreement with Stevens and Lockhat (1997) that those at risk need not be victims of the situation.

Going back to Erikson's ideas on identity formation that is based on the agreement between the individual's self-image and his or her role expectations of the environment, it becomes clear that the process of identity formation for black adolescents is a difficult one. Due to the oppression that they faced, they were denied the opportunity of experiencing emotional, judgmental, economic independence, the chance to prepare for life in the workplace and in the family, and to develop socially acceptable behaviours, values and ethics (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997). Raphael (1993) draws our attention to the link between life experiences that cause stress to the individual and predisposition to pathology. Thus emphasising the need for timely recognition, strategy development,

intervention and prevention where possible. This has significance when looking at one's exposure to violence and the long term effects thereof. Everatt and Orkin (1993) obtained results relevant to this study in that a total of 5% of young people in South Africa were being assaulted by their partners and a further 23% were aware of people who were being beaten. Thus it clearly indicates the pathology that may form the foundation of many relationships between young males and females.

2.2.9 Effects of Capitalism: According to Stevens and Lockhat (1997) black South African adolescents have been faced with role expectations that contradict one another, due to the ideologies of capitalism and racism. "Black adolescents have been exposed to the imagery, symbols and values that encouraged individual achievement and social mobility, but simultaneously have been refused access to any significant material resources that allowed for this (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997, p252). This has been seen to hamper the development of appropriate and adequate self-concepts and the ability to perform independent judgement in these individuals. Apartheid and racism had led to the black identity being viewed in a negative light (Resnick, Harris and Blum, 1997). The breakdown of family relations within the black community has also led to the increase in emotional insecurity among the adolescents.

2.2.10 Effects of Politicisation: The period between 1970 and 1990 was one of increasing politicisation among black adolescents. This gave these adolescents a temporary shelter from the oppressive effect of the society in which they existed. Suddenly adolescents belonged to a collective determined by their similar social identity, experiences of oppression. Politicisation was the environment in which these adolescents could derive meaning of their social experiences and have the freedom to call them into question. This sense of belonging served to decrease the alienation felt by these youth previously. In terms of Bulhan this is seen as the stage of radicalisation, as discussed previously. However, in terms of Erikson's identity foreclosure, Stevens and Lockhat (1997) are unsure of the effect that this premature occurrence will have on these adolescents.

This politicisation could also be the reason for resilience among black adolescents. Rutter (1995) describes results of a study conducted on children raised in institutions. What was found was that these children later had problems in life due to the fact that they saw themselves as passive, having no control over their lives. As a result they were unable to change their negative situations by active means. Rutter (1995) draws the conclusion that resilience can be developed by acts that make people feel more in control of their lives. In

the South African setting politicisation, gave black adolescents a sense of purpose, and an active way to fight back. Thus they developed resilience within their oppressive environment.

2.2.11 Post-apartheid South Africa: As South Africa emerged from apartheid, black adolescents have had to make great changes to their identities. Overnight, they went from being young 'freedom fighters' to entrepreneurs (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997). Suddenly they had to redefine themselves according to norms and values that they had previously rejected, which could have contributed to their identity confusion, rather than integration. The loss and legitimisation of their role models has resulted in a breakdown in their social identity. The lack of the common goal and aggressor, has lead to them having to form new and individual social identities. As a result of western influence an ideological transition has occurred from the previously existing collectivism to American individualism (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997).

However, while opportunities for capitalistic development are now open to these adolescents, the previous inequity which lead to poverty, still exists and make upward mobility difficult. Thus these adolescent are caught in a situation of 'wanting' but not being able to achieve, leaving them confused and frustrated. Contributing to this situation was the fact that while opportunities were now

open to black adolescents and young adults in the world of commerce and industry, the available positions were disproportionate to the number leaving school (Leggett, Mller and Richards, 1997). Education also did not prove to lead directly to some form of employment, as survey results among unemployed people living in the townships indicated that they expected a wait on average of three years after education before one could secure employment (Leggett et al, 1997). Everatt and Orkin (1993) found a total of 57% of unemployment amongst black youth in South Africa.

Ntabazalila and Thiel in Stevens and Lockhat (1997) report the increase of gangster activity, substance abuse and behaviour that is not socially acceptable. This taking on of an American type identity whilst allowing the adolescent to cope in the short term during this post-apartheid period, may in the long term have negative consequences, of alienating them and making their social realities insignificant. In his or her attempt to embrace both worlds, ie. Western and socio-cultural, the adolescent may in effect be facing further oppression and role confusion.

2.2.12 Connectedness: According to Resnick et al (1993) Western society, due to its focus on individualism tends to ignore three fundamental human needs. These being: (1) the need for community, where the person is part

of a collective, interacting with others in co-operation and trust; (2) the need for engagement, here one is able to understand social and interpersonal problems, in an atmosphere free of 'ego-extensions', and (3) the need for dependence, where there is sharing of control of ones's life and the direction that it might take. As a result this prevents individuals from attaining connectedness with others in their environment. This need for connectedness was also highlighted earlier in this chapter in terms of women's identity development. Everatt and Orkin (1993) found that young women in South Africa tended to be more isolated and played a less active role both organisationally and societally.

Resnick et al (1993) emphasise connectedness as a protective factor during adolescence that enables the adolescent to develop resilience when faced with negativity. In their study they found that family connectedness, ie. two parent families, was positively related to less 'acting out' behaviour from adolescents, both males and females. The school environment had a greater effect than the family in providing the adolescents with an opportunity to belong to a collective, this acted as a protective factor and in turn led to less 'acting out' behaviour. This serves to emphasise the need for school environments to be conducive to carry out this vital function of connectedness. In light of this

Everatt and Orkin (1993) found that African youth made up the greatest percentage of those who described themselves as 'lost' and 'marginalised'. Of note was the fact that females were greater in number than males when it came to marginalisation.

Earlier in this chapter the writer discussed the loss of role models that black adolescents faced, which led to them losing a sense of purpose. Møller in (Leggett et al, 1997) asserts that present day youth have found another role model to emulate in ex-president Nelson Mandela. By example he has managed to create an atmosphere of morality and imbue youth in post-apartheid South Africa with feelings of tolerance and the need to reconcile towards a better future and country. Maybe, this is what is needed to give the youth of today a feeling of connectedness that is beyond materialism. Of note is the fact that despite this positive picture Møller (Leggett et al, 1997,p.289) found "that South African society is still deeply divided along racial and socio-economic lines".

2.3 Male Aggression Towards Females

Eder, Evans and Parker (1995) brings to light the fact that not much research has been done on beliefs regarding male-female relationships and the importance of them with regards to gender inequality. Work has been done by

Thorne in Eder et al (1995) in this area. What was found was that boys used sexual insults towards girls as early as elementary (primary) school. Boys were also seen to approach male-female relationships with an attitude of daringness and aggression. Connell in Eder et al (1995) found that the main type of masculinity in Australian secondary schools, concentrated mainly on aggressiveness and had its roots in participation in male sports. "This research was among the first to draw attention to the construction of masculinity as a dominating and potentially sexist practice that results in the subordination of other boys as well as of girls" (Eder et al, 1995, p15). What further disadvantages females, is that they are socialised into associating sexuality with love or romance. This results in females not being able to assert themselves and communicate their needs within the sexual arena (Otis et al, 1997).

Eder et al (1995) describes how competitiveness and aggression that is learnt by male students at a middle school in the Midwest of America, actually spills over into their sexual behaviour. It would appear that the competition philosophy of "winning at all costs" moves over from the sporting fields to male-female relationships (Eder et al, 1995, p85). Male students here did not see female students as their sexual equals. They tended to see female students as objects, which had to be conquered and owned. In short, females were perceived

as property. Male-female relationships became just another arena where males displayed their aggression towards other males, as well as their dominance. Eder et al (1995, p85) put forward the idea that the negative effects of competition on the sports field may then have been incorporated into boys' attitudes to girls, during this crucial stage of "newly developing relationships".

What was surprising for the writer, was that the girls who were involved in such interactions did not retaliate. Instead they appeared to accept these interactions which objectified them. It was found that the responses of both male and female students tended to "illustrate how girls are viewed as territorial property to be violated when challenging another boy's masculinity" (Eder et al, 1995, p86). It is suggested that while emphasis is placed on aggression and competitiveness in the male world, the adolescent female world places emphasis on attractiveness. As such these adolescent girls are not prepared adequately for male-female relationships which results in gender inequality. Otis et al (1997) asserts that a gender asymmetry exists in the Western world. This results in marginalisation of female sexuality. Based on this viewpoint male sexuality is see as "aggressive and pleasure-oriented", whilst women are perceived to be "passive recipients of male passion" (Otis et al, 1997). Eder et al (1995, p6) poses these two questions around this issue:

"Do contemporary practices prepare adolescent girls to deal with the competitive, aggressive sexual style promoted in male culture? Or do they further undermine the possibility of equality in sexual relations by focussing on female appearance?"

The emphasis on attractiveness is perpetuated in American schools by organised and sponsored, therefore sanctioned, events such as 'homecoming and prom queen contests'. In these competitions girls are judged on how attractive they are. "All of these contests send girls a strong message that what they do and who they are is less important than how they look" (Eder et al, 1995, p121). It is felt that this type of foundation lays the ground for how women will be rated in the adult world and the employment world, where their position and future will be determined by their appearance. Sprague and Quadagno in Otis et al (1997, p19) highlight the fact the women are also socialised in such a manner that emotional matters have more urgency or are more compelling in male-female relationships. Whilst for men "lust and the quest for sexual domination are pervasive". As a result women continue to be dominated by men in certain areas of sexuality.

In keeping with what is taking place in South Africa, Eder et al (1995) also speak of danger for women being on the increase and the need, therefore, to make sense of the issue of gender inequality. In America not only has sexual harassment in the employment arena gained attention, but it is also being

observed in schools. This type of harassment is being carried out by students who have more power as well as status in these schools, and also by male peers. Eder et al (1995) cite statistics related to sexual harassment and aggression. They postulate from their findings that one-fourth of young females will be forced to engage in unwanted sexual intercourse. While three-fourths of them or more will experience some form of sexual aggression at some point.

More current statistics are provided by Mauro in USA Today (1999) who states that in the category of 8th to 11th grade students, 81% have been sexually harassed in some way, while a mere 19% have not. According to a survey done by the University of Michigan, 83% of girls and 60% of boys face peer sexual harassment in American schools today. To deal with this problem the Supreme Court of America brought about a ruling on the 24 May 1999, which allows for schools to be sued if they do not effectively handle students who sexually harass their peers. This ruling came in the wake of the case of LaShonda Davis, a fifth grader who suffered sexual harassment in the form of touching and verbal abuse from a fellow student over a five- month period. The ruling was received with mixed feelings from many quarters, with many fearing an increase in school litigation, unnecessarily. One teacher in favour of the ruling is quoted by Mauro in USA Today (1999) to have said, "We do not simply educate the child. We are

teaching the children in our classrooms how to be good citizens, and we're teaching them ways to live".

Going back to the issue of resilience, Rutter (1995) speaks of positive experiences at school being able to influence this process. As we have seen the school environment can have a negative effect on the self-esteem of female adolescents. This can prevent them developing resilience to the situation and taking active steps to stop their domination or harassment by male peers. According to Rutter (1995) positive experiences at school need not be academic only. They can be oriented towards sport, art, drama, music etc. Positive experiences and accomplishments in one area can lead to greater self-esteem and self-efficacy, which can then spill over into other areas of the adolescent's life

2.3.1 Age and Aggression: According to Lindeman, Harakka and Keltikangas-Jarvinen (1997), there appears to be a correlation between the adolescents age and his or her level of aggression. During pre-adolescence aggression as a reaction to conflict was not often used. However, during mid-adolescence this changed and aggression became the most widely used conflict resolution skill. Of note, for males during late adolescence, their aggression used

reverted to those of pre-adolescence levels. For females, their aggression levels during this stage dropped to levels lower than that of pre-adolescence.

2.3.2 **Aggression and Gender:** Lindeman et al (1997) also brings to the fore the fact that a relationship exists between gender and strategies for coping with conflict. Males were found to be more aggressive in their repertoire of skills to solve conflicts. Apart from aggression , more male adolescents as compared to females used 'withdrawal' as a means of coping with conflict. They state that this is a typical response during adolescence, since the individual often feels powerless to alter the situation that presents and chooses rather to withdraw. Of note, withdrawal strategies were seen to decrease during late adolescents. Otis et al (1997) produce similar findings in communication styles between men and women. While most women use some form of negotiation, men choose withdrawal. Otis et al (1997) suggest that for women negotiation may be due to a change in their range of communication skills, while for men it is due to their agreeing with their partner and wanting to avoid lengthy discussions. In terms of behaviour on the whole, Lindeman et al (1997) also found that during the stages of pre-adolescence and mid-adolescence, males and females are equally prosocial in their behaviour. However, during late adolescence, females tended to display more prosocial behaviour than males. Differences between age

and aggression, and age and gender are of importance to this study. They may give the reader an understanding of what to expect from the study at the Rossburgh High School.

2.4 Cognitive Theory

People being diverse in nature will naturally evaluate their circumstances differently from one another. Contextual factors are clearly very important in how people see their circumstances. An event when appraised by different people will be seen differently by each person. "It is clear that cognitive factors play an important role in emotional disturbances and also in how people deal with social problems of various kinds" (Rutter, 1995, p82). Hence, stressing the need for cognitive behavioural therapy, as well as appropriate interventions to solve social problems, such as male adolescents dominating their female counterparts.

The cognitive framework asserts that the manner in which an individual perceives a situation or happening, will determine his or her feelings / emotions and subsequent behaviours (Dryden and Golden, 1986, Kendall and Hollon, 1979). Cognitions related to an event are the thoughts and images that one has. These are influenced by attitudes and assumptions that previous experiences have caused the individual to generate. An individual will use these attitudes and assumptions to understand, give value to, categorise and give meaning to a

particular event. "Thus, cognitive structuring of a situation triggers affect and behavioural mobilization or demobilization" (Dryden and Golden, 1986, p.65). Weishaar and Beck (Dryden and Golden, 1986) state that some individuals are more affected than others by situations or events. Each individual is unique with regards to what they are vulnerable and sensitive to, which in turn may cause psychological stress. What this means is that while one individual may be harmed by an encounter, this same situation for another individual may prove harmless. "Individual learning experience, developmental history, and personality differences account for variations in sensitivities to stressors" (Dryden and Golden, 1986, p.65).

Alterations in one's thinking processes can have effects on feelings and resultant behaviours that may add negatively to a conflict situation. When one's interests are being compromised, it can result in thinking processes which are too inclusive and unyielding. There may also be an inability to control ones' thinking and shut off intense attitudes and assumptions.

Another effect may be decreased ability to concentrate, remember and think logically.

"Because of these features and the fact that the individuals construction of the situation contains only a subset of information to begin with, maladaptive schemata may be maintained and reinforced. In situations of interpersonal difficulties, both individuals bring to bear maladaptive

cognitive reactions which tend to be mutually reinforcing" (Dryden and Golden, 1986, p.65).

With reference to this study this is an important suggestion to note. Whilst male adolescents bring maladaptive reasoning to the conflict situation that results in domination, the female adolescents bring maladaptive schemata that result in the perpetuation of their submissive status.

Linehan (Kendall and Hollon, 1979) suggests that unassertive behaviour is perpetuated by one's fear of the reactions of other people. The individual, thus has the capacity to be assertive, but does not do so based on how others will react. This is reassuring in light of this study as it provides hope that female adolescents can overcome their societal roles and conquer adversity.

Boyd, Graham, Gleit and Whitman (1998) in their discussion of self-care models asserts that as individuals begin to feel more confident about their ability to change their situations, the more they will display behaviours that can do so. The ability to care for one's self depends on; the person's ability to see what has to be done, his or her belief that their action can bring about change, the person's ability to learn the new skill and lastly, the person's ability to retain the behaviour change as part of one's normal behavioural repertoire. This

demonstrates all the enormity of factors that need to be taken into consideration, when one is attempting to change negative behaviour.

Linehan (Kendall and Hollon, 1979) also draws our attention to the fact that cultural beliefs and expectations play a great role in preventing women from displaying assertive behaviour. Møller (Leggett et al, 1997) asserts that young women in post-apartheid South Africa exhibit great levels of self-assurance. Studies done on young women earlier displayed similar findings to Linehan (Kendall and Hollon, 1979), in that these women appeared to lack assertiveness in their interactions with their peers. Møller in (Leggett et al, 1997) attributes this self-assurance with increased awareness of their constitutional rights and the opportunities that are inherent with the newfound democracy. Those adolescent females that do not appear to have benefited from constitutional changes need to be made aware of one's internal health locus of control. This is "the belief that one can control many aspects of health with one's own behaviour" (Boyd et al, 1998, p. 129).

Keeping the cognitive theory in mind the key would then be to target the thinking process or cognitive functioning of adolescents in order to ensure appropriate and positive resultant emotions and behaviours, between males and females. The goal of cognitive therapy is for the therapist to assist the client to

discover and change thinking distortions and maladaptive assumptions (Dryden and Golden, 1986, Kendall and Hollon, 1979). "The proximal goal is to promote cognitive restructuring through the modification of systematic bias in thinking" (Dryden and Golden, 1986, p.73).

One must bear in mind, however, that an individual's eagerness or reluctance to take action is very much dependant on his or her perceptions. The Health Belief Model cited by Boyd et al (1998, p.128) sees action depending on; "(1) one's level of susceptibility to the condition, (2) the degree of severity of the consequences that might result from contracting the condition, (3) the potential benefits of the health action in preventing or reducing susceptibility, and (4) barriers or costs related to starting or continuing the proposed behaviour".

Thus it is obvious that work with adolescents will involve making them understand how they are susceptible within these conflict situations. Both immediate and long term consequences need to be addressed, before these adolescents may see the benefit in changing their behaviour patterns.

One of the respondents in the study on which the book "My life in the new South Africa: a youth perspective" (Leggett et al, 1997, p.206) is based had this to say on the issue of gender inequality, "if one man rapes and another beats his wife it

is because they don't value those women as equals. Stricter laws will not rid society of these crimes, only a change in attitudes and value". This statement has great significance in light of the cognitive framework that has been discussed as it elucidates the need for change in attitudes and values in order to decrease crime against women in South Africa.

5. Conclusion

Adolescence has been seen to be an important stage in identity development. Male and female adolescents experience differences in how they develop their identities, which can impact both negatively and positively on the outcome of the process itself. Socio-cultural factors can affect this process and therefore, need to be taken into consideration, when one is trying to understand what is occurring and how to help the adolescent. This is further compounded by the gender inequality which exists between male and female adolescents. How do we then get rid of the gender inequality? The cognitive theory asserts that individuals perceptions alter their thoughts and feelings and finally manifest in their behaviour. So before negative behaviour can be changed, that is boys bullying girls, one needs to make sense of the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of these individuals.

Chapter three

Methodology

Merriam in Cresswell (1994) makes mention of six assumptions related to qualitative research. These assumptions give grounds to the needs for a qualitative approach to this study and they are as follows (Creswell, 1994, p145):

> "1. Qualitative researchers are concerned mainly with process, rather than outcomes or products. 2. Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning - how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. 3. The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines. 4. Qualitative research involves fieldwork. The researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site, or institution to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting. 5. Qualitative research is descriptive in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning, and understanding gained through words and pictures. 6. The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details."

3.1 Design

Following on from this a phenomenological qualitative research design was chosen for this study, since according to Burns and Grove (1995), this approach attempts to describe experiences as they are lived by the participants. This approach is used when one is trying to understand or study a particular phenomenon that is taking place, which in this instance would be 'boys bullying

girls'. Reality is considered subjective and attempts were made to understand the reality of the phenomenon as perceived by the participants.

This phenomenological qualitative study involved the learners at the Rossburgh High School in Durban (Kwa-Zulu Natal). This specific site was utilised, since it is one of the schools that the 'Crime Prevention in Schools' project focussed on. It was also the school where the problem of "boys bullying girls" (O'Brien, 1998) existed. Hence the phenomenon that was to be studied had already been identified by the 'Crime Prevention in Schools' project.

The school was divided into junior secondary and senior secondary categories. Junior secondary were made up of grade eight and nine, whilst senior secondary comprised grades ten, eleven and twelve. The idea was to select the focus group members evenly from both of these categories. However, due to the examinations being written this was not possible. The higher grades were absent from school as they were studying at home. Hence the available learners were from grades eight, nine and ten.

Between six and eight male and female learners were selected from these grades, thus making up six groups in total with boys and girls being separated. These participants were selected on their willingness to take part in the study and on whether they were sources of the phenomenon that was being studied, ie.

where they had been involved in conflict of this nature or had been witness to it. According to Creswell (1994) random selection of participants is not used in qualitative studies. Participants should be selected based on their ability and willingness to provide information about the phenomenon. Thus participants should be "purposefully" (Creswell, 1994, p148) selected. As a result the number of participants was approximately 42 in total. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size is not seen as a primary consideration.

3.2 School's Demographic Make-up

In 1999 CRISP conducted a survey in the school and it revealed certain demographic data that is of relevance to this study. According to the results there are a total of 900 learners who attend the Rossburgh High School. Female learners outnumber their male counterparts, with the females comprising 58.3% and the males 41.7%. The survey also indicated that 92.8% of the group who participated came from homes where Zulu was spoken. When asked about payment of school fees a total of 37.7% of the respondents indicated that their mothers were responsible for the payment of such fees. Which could indicate a single parent family or an unemployed father. The survey also found that only 9.1% of the school's population lived in the surrounding areas. Most learners made use of public transport to get to school in the form of buses (52.2%), taxis

(5.8%), and trains (27.9%). A total of 47.5% of the learners came from what was

characterised as 'Durban South' and "included areas such as Lamontville and

Umlazi" (Collett van Rooyen & O'Brien, 2000).

3.3 Researcher's Role

Locke, Spiroduso and Silverman in Creswell (1994) see openness on the part

of the researcher as being both "useful and positive" (Creswell, 1994, p147) to the

research process. Accordingly the prejudices, values and opinions of the researcher

should be explicitly stated, so that researcher and reader are in the same critical

plane. As such I, the writer feels that it is necessary to give the reader an idea of

how I fitted into the picture and of how my existence within this context may have

affected the findings.

3.3.1 Professional I taught midwifery at a nursing college for three years

and am presently teaching at university level and have been for the last two ·

years. Midwifery deals with rendering care to pregnant, labouring and

postpartum women and their neonates. During teaching sessions many women's

issues come to light, that have bearing on their mental and physical health and

well-being. I have also been involved in the development and facilitation of a

"Women's Health" course in the School of Nursing at the University of Natal,

aimed at students undertaking a clinical masters degree. One of the modules

covered by this course is the issue of violence against women. So as can be seen I have an active interest in anything that might impinge on the physical and mental well-being of women.

3.3.2 Personal I am a woman who has been fortunate to grow up in an environment where I have been exposed to strong female role models. Even though I have grown up in the Indian community where men are considered to have more status than women, I have not been personally affected by this. I have no male siblings, however, I do have male cousins, with whom I have had a close relationship, both as a child and now as an adult. In these relationships there has never been any signs of male dominance displayed. Other family members have always treated us all, both male and female offspring, as equals. My parents also view each other as equals in their relationship, each one having strengths in their particular areas of expertise in the home environment. I have never been witness to domestic violence of any kind. As such I have always believed that men and women are on an equal footing in society, or so they should be. Having been fortunate enough to be empowered in this way, I see it as my duty to pass this onto other women where there may be a need. This may result in biased interaction with focus group members or biased interpretation of their participation.

3.3.3 Male Dominance During my primary and secondary school experience, I was not affected by peer male dominance. Being the assertive person that I am, I was probably not the target of male dominance. In fact on the contrary, during my undergraduate degree one of my male secondary school friends verbalised his envy to me regarding the fact that during my matriculation year my parents allowed me to drive the family car around the area in which we lived. He on the other hand was allowed to do no such thing and could not believe that I as a female had that privilege. This was definitely an example of where, he as a male felt that he should have been superior to me.

During my adult male-female relationships I did, however, encounter a male friend who had been brought up in a home with a very autocratic father. As a result he felt that there were clear divides between what were male and female roles. He saw it as being normal to remind me that he was a man and as such was entitled to a certain higher status than myself. Apart from these types of interactions I have had very little experience of male dominance within my environment.

3.4 Data Collection

Data collection took place by means of focus groups. There were six focus groups and these were made up of participants as follows:

(i) Group one: eight females learners from grade eight,

(ii) Group two: six male learners from grade eight,

(iii) Group three: eight female learners from grade nine,

(iv) Group four: seven male learners from grade nine,

(v) Group five: seven females from grade ten, and

(vi) Group six: six male learners from grade ten.

By creating such distinct categories and separating participants it was hoped that variations in information provided, due to gender (sex) and age, may have come to the fore. This division into categories of gender and sex was also necessary for purposes of triangulation. One of the functions of triangulation in qualitative research is to be able to put togther a more complete picture of the phenomenon being studied (Jick in Morse, 1989). "When using this form of triangulation, the investigator does not expect multiple sources of data to confirm one another, rather, the expectation is that each source will contribute an additional piece to the puzzle (Knafl and Breitmayer in Morse, 1989, p 212). By using the data source the researcher aimed at obtaining information about the phenomenon, across gender lines, time and possibly across various situations, thereby accessing maximum data and bringing to the fore a clearer picture of the phenomenon.

The researcher was instrumental in facilitating group process, by means of probing questions, to elicit information. However, the focus group was not restricted to the prepared questions of the researcher, so as to allow new and unexpected information to be explored. The focus groups was held at the Rossburgh High School, during term time by arrangement with the school and the necessary education authorities, for easy access to the learners (see Annexure 2). All focus group sessions were tape recorded to make data capture effective. This also prevented disruption of flow during the focus group, which may have taken place if the researcher attempted to make copious notes during the group session. Since interviews were not one-on-one, tape recording the group sessions seemed to be the most appropriate way to record all information provided. Focus groups were a maximum of one hour in duration. Focus groups were used, since it fitted in with the nature of information that needed to be collected. This study was concerned with conflict, thoughts and feelings related to the conflict and behaviours that were displayed. Interviewing students by means of focus groups gave the researcher a chance to understand the participants feelings about the conflict and their experiences of it and observe peer group interaction. It was also less time consuming and allowed for easier verification of findings by other group members.

Each focus group was asked to participate in three sessions. According to the cognitive framework that was utilised, the first sessions for each of the focus groups concentrated on eliciting data related to individual's and group thoughts and feelings relevant to the gender conflict. The second focus group session focussed on behaviour manifestations of the conflict that existed at Rossburgh Secondary School, that is personal and observed. The final focus group session attempted to elicit data related to incidents of conflict and violence that group participants may observe on their way to school or in the communities in which they resided. Male and female learners were combined for session three focus groups. This was done to complete data collection prior to the school term ending. It was also felt that combining both boys and girls would not negatively influence the information they provided and bias the results. In total thirteen focus group sessions were conducted. Each group had two sessions, with the exception of the grade nine boys, who did not turn up for their session two focus group and two session three focus groups were held.
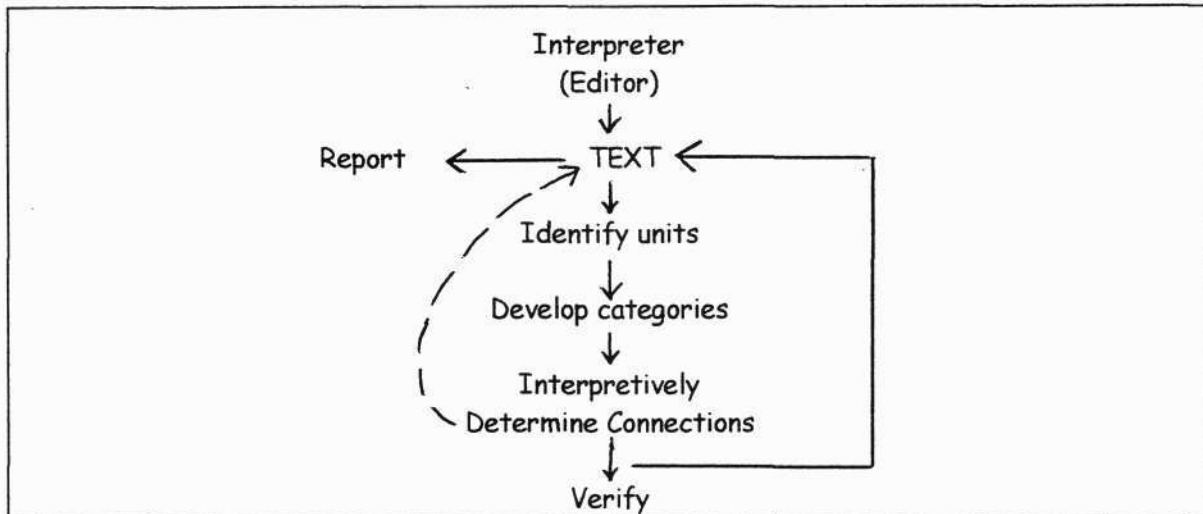
3.5 Data Analysis

In qualitative research the processes of data collection and data analysis go hand in hand. As data was being collected the researcher attempted to identify themes and patterns that would assist with further data collection, and

to sort information into categories to form some sort of picture for presentation. For all data obtained from the focus groups, the unit of analysis was the whole statement.

Nud*ist software was utilised to analyse the data obtained, to identify themes and categories that emerged. This software was developed specifically for the analysis of qualitative data and enabled the researcher to manipulate the large volume of information that was obtained, thereby identifying text segments, placing these segments into appropriate categories and showing the relationship between categories as they emerged. In effect this software package assisted the researcher with the process of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation as described by Tesch in Creswell (1994, p154) which is when, "the researcher takes a voluminous amount of information and reduces it to certain patterns, categories, or themes and then interprets this information by using some schema".
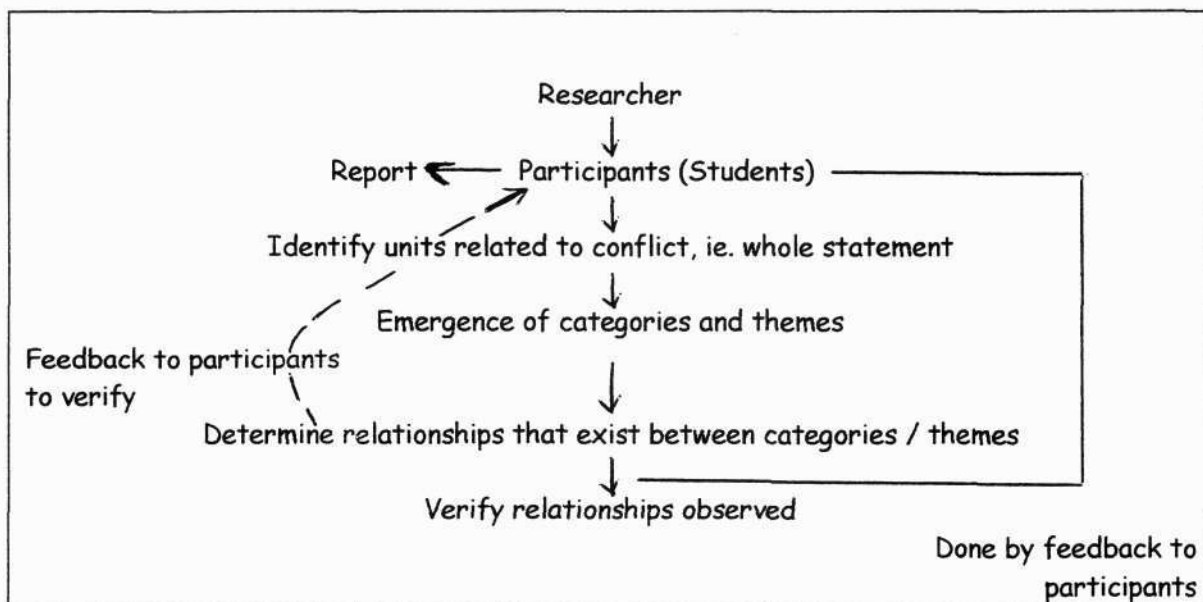
The study aimed to utilise the 'editing analysis style' proposed by Crabtree and Miller (1992), which is in keeping with phenomenology. The following schematic representation has been drawn up by Crabtree and Miller (1992, p18) to explain this style of data analysis:

Figure 1: Editing Analysis Style

```
                        Interpreter
                         (Editor)
                            ↓
        Report  ←——————→  TEXT  ←——————————————┐
                      ↗        ↓                │
                   /    Identify units          │
                  /         ↓                    │
                 /    Develop categories         │
                (         ↓                       │
                 \     Interpretively             │
                  \  Determine Connections ———————┘
                             ↓
                          Verify
```

In terms of this study the schematic representation was as follows:

Figure 2: Adapted Editing Analysis Style

```
                          Researcher
                              ↓
        Report ←——— Participants (Students) ——————————┐
                 ↗          ↓                          │
     Identify units related to conflict, ie. whole statement
              /             ↓                          │
            /      Emergence of categories and themes  │
  Feedback to participants                             │
  to verify    \            ↓                          │
       Determine relationships that exist between categories / themes
                            ↓                          │
              Verify relationships observed ———————————┘

                                      Done by feedback to
                                      participants
```

3.6 Verification

It was hoped that internal validity of information would be achieved by the different focus groups themselves. Other group members listened to accounts and were able to vouch for the accuracy of 'accountee's' story / information and they were also able to establish whether it fitted into what they perceived as reality. Verification of information was also conducted by 'feedback' to informants. At the beginning of the second and third round focus groups, the researcher presented the identified themes and categories from the previous focus group session to the informants. They were then asked to comment on the accuracy of the conclusions. Due to the nature of the study, external validity and reliability could not be ensured and may result in difficulty in replicating this type of study.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Once participants were selected, they were asked to give verbal consent to participate in the study. Since the learners were legally under the age of being able to give consent, written consent was sought from their parents (see Annexure 3).

Anonymity was maintained as learners were not asked to introduce themselves at the being of focus group sessions. No names were recorded linking participants to their statements during data capture. However, where

participants provided names in the course of their statements these were recorded. No personal details were asked of participants. In order to put the reader into the broader picture of the participants some general demographic data was provided. This information was obtained by the 'Crime Prevention in the Schools Project'. Confidentiality was maintained with regards to information obtained from participants. All information obtained during focus groups was used specifically to understand the problem that existed and for the development of appropriate intervention strategies after the study was complete. This was conveyed to participants.

3.8 Reporting of Findings

In keeping with the phenomenological approach, a descriptive narrative was produced. This narrative was discussed in light of relevant theories and current literature on the issue of adolescent gender conflict. The final product attempted to give the reader an idea of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours surrounding the conflict as perceived by the informants.

Chapter Four

Results

4.1 Introduction

The data obtained from focus groups held with adolescents at the Rossburgh High School, was recorded using an audio cassette player. It was then transcribed into text format, for the process of analysis. Due to the large volume of information obtained, as with qualitative research, it was necessary to reduce it. The data was analysed using both manual methods and computer programmes (NUD*IST). Descriptive, interpretative, and pattern codes were formed as the researcher went through the data. Themes and patterns were identified as they emerged.

4.2 Demographics

Focus groups were held at the Rossburgh High School, during normal school hours. The venues were the CRISP counselling room and some classrooms. On average the focus groups were made up of between six to eight learners at a time. Learners were predominantly of African ethnicity, except for one Coloured female learner and one Indian female in the grade eight focus group, and one white male learner in the grade eight focus group.

4.3 The Existence of Conflict

When asked if conflict did exist between male and female learners at the school, all six focus groups were unanimous in their answer. Yes, conflict did exist at the Rossburgh High School. As to the initiators of this type of conflict, they were divided. Focus groups held with boys cited girls as the initiators and vice versa. However, females did cite themselves as initiators of the conflict in certain situations but felt that boys usually started the fights .

> No, boys fighting with girls.
> And girls fighting with boys.
> But usually boys start the fight".   (Grade Nine Females / Session One)

According to grade nine girls, girls initiated fights with boys so as to show their power to their female peers. The reason given was that these girls saw themselves as being stronger than the boys.

> "The other girls start the fight with boys. They want to show the girls how they can fight."   (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Conflict was also reported to exist in other schools and was not seen to be peculiar to Rossburgh High School. Learners reported experiencing it at their previous schools, as well as the areas in which they lived.

> "Yes, Warner Beach."   (Grade Eight Females / Session One)

Conflict was also reported to take place between learners of the same sex, ie. girls with girls and boys with boys. However, it was predominantly between boys and girls. The older female learners (Grade Ten) reported that the conflict was from both sides, ie. males and females. They also brought a new angle to the source of conflict. When asked where else conflict existed at the school they cited between learners and teachers, as another example.

> "Teachers."
> "Teachers and students. Also boys themselves and girls."
>
> (Grade Ten Females / Session One)

No other group had made a similar reference. All other groups only spoke of conflict between learners, with the main source being boyfriend / girlfriend relationships.

4.4 Definitions of Conflict

Learners were asked what they understood by the term conflict. Their answers were as follows:

> "Miss I understand that it's a person that's in trouble, maybe with another person."
> "Miss, maybe it's someone who is telling someone that they don't agree......."
> "They argue."   (Grade Nine Females / Session One)

> "It means like an argument."
> "Fighting."
> "Disagreement."
> "Arguing."   (Grade Ten Females / Session One)

> "Violence."   (Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

It would appear from the definitions provided that learners did understand, what was meant by conflict. As such they could recognise it and report on it.

4.5 Reason for Conflict

4.5.1 Boyfriend / Girlfriend Relationships: A surprising discovery was that male and female focus groups all agreed on the main reason for conflict. They all felt that it stemmed from boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. Conflict was related to problems within the relationship, or was as a result of interference from others, external to the relationship. This conflict was between boyfriend and girlfriend, over issues related to the relationship. It was also between girls, who were fighting over a particular boy and the same applied to the boys, fighting between themselves over a girl. This is evidenced by statements from grade eight female learners, as to the reason for the fighting between girls themselves.

"Over men."
"Over boys."

(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

"Maybe, they are fighting for the boy." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

"Miss, I think the girls are fighting with us because they like girls too much, miss."
(Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

When asked how they felt about this fighting, it was clear that they did not approve. For them it added to the imbalance of power between male and female adolescent, making the male more powerful.

"They shouldn't fight."
"I mean some girls like to fight over boys and they are making the boy feel, you know powerful. Because he has got girls fighting over him."

(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

It appeared that as the girls grew older the reasons for fighting with one another became more streamlined and seemed to focus primarily on boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. The grade ten girls also seemed to be of the opinion that the fighting mainly took place between the girls over boyfriends.

"In this school miss, most of the time girls fight among themselves over boyfriends."
"Like you are taking my boyfriend."
"Ya."
"Its mostly girls against girls."   (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

4.5.2 Gossiping: Another reason cited by focus group members for the conflict between learners was 'gossiping'. Learners felt that problems arose when they talked about other people and when other people talked about them, usually in a negative way. This applied to both male and female learners, but was more prevalent amongst female learners. Examples are the statements below.

"Sometimes a person is scandaling. Maybe, for example like Tatum is going to tell Candice about what Nobhuhle said about her. And then maybe, Tatum is going to be

standing with Candice at break and Nobhuhle comes to Tatum and asks her why she said things to........"   (Grade Eight Girls / Session Two)

"Maybe you are talking about someone's boyfriend and then they fight."

"No miss, like you are gossiping they can take you to fight. Like if I am gossiping with her and her go and tell another. She will come to hit me."
                                                              (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Grade eight girls reported that the gossiping was predominantly related to fighting over friends and talking about one another (same sex). With regards to the grade nine girls it was reported that while gossiping could be similar to the grade eight girl's example, it was more often due to talking about someone else's boyfriend or relationship that caused problems. It resulted in same sex fighting and fighting between the sexes. Males said that this was the reason that they fought with females, because of what the female learners were saying about them.

4.5.3 Teasing: Another reason for the fighting was because of teasing taking place, between learners of the same sex, as well as those of the opposite sex. Grade eight females learners described this form of teasing when asked if they were being bullied in class.

"Like you put your hand up and the teacher say that's wrong and the boys say 'isch'."
"And like this other boy in the classroom, most of the time he says 'shut up Andile, why are you such a nerd."
"If you make a mistake they call you that. Like last time a boy said 'repeat again, sir' and sir said 'repeat still means again' and they called him 'repeat again'."
                                                              (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

This teasing also took the form of name calling as described by the grade nine girls.

"Dogs."
"Crocodiles."
"They call it crocodiles."

(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The last statement seemed to be a sexual reference as groups members followed this statement with laughing and looking embarrassed. It would appear that they were making reference to female genitalia. The girls did not like being called these names.

Grade eight boys also reported wanting to hit girls who teased them, when they tried to ask them out.

"Sometimes you tell her that you love her and the girls they just tease you and you get angry and want to slap them."   (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

Other male focus groups reported similar incidents, and wanting to take similar action. Boys were also teased about their sexual performance by girls and likened to children as opposed to being men. Boys it would appear did not know how to handle rejection without using some sort of physical force.

"Sometimes you are teasing the girl, miss. Like you are teasing each other and she is getting 'red' and she like, swears you. And then what you gonna do, miss? Then she swear at someone that wasn't there, like your mother and then what you gonna do, miss? That's when you feel like you want to hit her."
                    (Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

In the above scenario, it is clear that the boy started the teasing. However, when the girl got angry and retaliated with anger, the boy did not like the direction the teasing was taking. It was now becoming a fight and he wanted to resort to physical force to stop her from saying anything more. Yet he was the instigator of the whole episode.

4.5.4 Difference between the sexes: Some of the adolescents felt that it was normal to fight with one another. They attributed this to the difference between males and females. They were not clear on how they were different from one another and on how it actually brought up the misunderstanding and the fighting.

"Its because we are different."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Some grade nine female group members felt that the fighting was normal, however, that it should not include the use of physical force. For them it was still normal if it remained verbal.

"Maybe, not slapping and kicking, but maybe shouting."
(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

In order to explore this idea of the differences between the sexes and to examine how it contributed to the conflict, focus groups were asked about the qualities that men and woman possess. This is what some of the female group members had to say on what men were:

"Respect."
"Gentleman."
"Be nice."

<div align="right">(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)</div>

Male focus group members made reference to 'acting like ladies'. They were asked how a 'lady' would behave. For them it was someone who did not talk too much, who should behave well. This meant not being 'easy' and not allowing boys to touch her. She was also supposed to make it difficult for boys to have sexual intercourse with her.

4.5.5 Sexual harassment: Conflict also occurred as a result of sexual harassment. Female adolescents revealed that their male counterparts made what they considered to be sexual advances on them.

"Like touching us."
"Yes, in our private places, looking up skirts."

<div align="right">(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)</div>

The females found this unacceptable and reacted negatively, which inturn would lead to conflict between them (the girls) and the boys. These types of incidents were reported by all three female focus groups.

"Ya, this one girl in our class the boy was looking under her skirt and then the girl turned around and slapped him." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

The respondents described the boy in scenario above as being a pervert. They said that this type of incident, made them angry and embarrassed enough to want to resort to physical force.

"You are upset miss and you want to slap him."
"Because he did it in front of the class and she got embarrassed miss."
(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

As can be seen from the above example, girls at this school also resorted to using physical force as a means to solving a problem. Other types of sexually harassing behaviour that was reported were; touching of buttocks, breasts, genital areas, boys rubbing up against girls, and boys forcing girls to kiss them.

"And miss they demand a kiss, miss."

"Miss, they just say 'please kiss me' and even if you don't want to miss, they force you."
(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

These incidents took place at school, in the class rooms when teachers were not present and during break times. Refusal to kiss the boys as requested, was met with insults and girls were called 'ugly' and 'stupid'. Girls also reported that this behaviour was not only exhibited by boys at the school. They had experienced this type of behaviour from other adolescent boys, where they lived.

When asked why they thought boys did such things, the girls in the grade eight session one focus group said that it had to do with control. Boys sexually harassed them to get control over them. Another reason that they put forth was that it was probably because these boys do not have girlfriends, which they did not qualify.

A similar finding came from the grade eight males, who felt that the boys who did such things as look up girl's dresses, were those who did not have girlfriends. The boys felt that they may be doing this to gain experience, that he could not get since he did not have his own girlfriend.

"Wants to see it, maybe he hasn't seen it before."   (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

One boy very honestly owned up to looking under girl's skirts. When asked why he did that, he said that he did not know the reason why, he just did. The other boys in the group said that while it made some girls uncomfortable, there were those who enjoyed having their skirts looked up. They also felt that the girls concerned did not have the right to be upset as they wore very short skirts to school, that were not within school regulation. This exposed their legs and in turn affected the boys.

"She's showing the legs, miss and it disturbs you while you are doing your work."
(Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

So while they felt sorry for the girl concerned while she was being harassed as they looked on, they would not intervene on her behalf. The reason was that it was her fault for not keeping to school regulations and wearing such a short skirt.

According to grade nine girls sexual advances were seen as either harassment or harmless depending on who the individual was, that was making

these advances. This also contributed to whether girls reacted negatively or positively to these advances. Not all girls, according to focus group members saw these advances in a negative light. If the boy was good looking and popular, then his advances were welcome. However, if he was not then he was spurned, and the behaviour was seen as harassment.

> "But miss, some of them feel very happy."
> "Ya, they enjoy it. Miss, if it is a cute guy miss, doing that, they enjoy it."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

4.5.6 Inter-racial conflict: Focus groups were asked if conflict between the different racial groups took place at the school. According to the grade eight females learners it did occur sometimes and tended to be predominantly between black and white learners.

> "Most, especially Whites and Africans."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

From what they said, it would appear that black male adolescents bullied their white counterparts. This led to negative feelings towards all blacks developing in the white learners. This is portrayed by the following incident that was reported.

> "Like yesterday, this boy stays near my house, he went into the toilet and when he came back his bag was opened and this white boy was sitting next to his bag. So he said who opened his bag and the white boy said 'well, don't ask me' and he just slapped him. And the boy looked down and he didn't cry because if he cried the boys would laugh at him."
> "And the White boy feels that Africans are like bad........"
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Demographics obtained from CRISP of the school, indicated that white

learners were in fact a minority group. This tended to add to the bullying

situation to the detriment of the white learners. Another effect was that white

boys attempted to win the approval of their black peers. They did this by

exhibiting negative behaviour that would make them notorious.

> "Some of the white boys they want to act like they are high and mighty, they want to do wrong things so that the African people can say they are high and mighty."
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

While fights were reported between black and white males, the same did

not occur between the females. According to female focus group members they

were able to get on with white female learners. However, these friendships were

not common. So no fighting took place but neither did friendships. They did

report that when it came to fighting, black girls fought with one another.

> "The African girls usually fight amongst themselves."
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

4.5.7 Stealing: Stealing was another reason for conflict taking place. It

was suggested that fighting broke out because one party was stealing from

another.

> "Maybe when they were stealing and they took somebody's money by mistake. And then they start fighting." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Other things were also stolen like articles of clothing and jewellery. The

perpetrators were fellow learners, learners from other school who also caught

the train at the Rossburgh Station and other miscreants that hung around at the station or outside the school.

Tied in with the stealing was the formation of gangs. Gangs and deals going wrong with regards to car theft were reasons for conflict between boys according to the grade ten girls.

4.5.8 Misunderstanding: Conflict was also thought to arise because of learners not understanding one another. This was brought up by grade nine boys during their first group session. However, they were not clear if this applied to the conflict between members of the opposite sex or between members of the same sex. The statement was taken to refer to conflict in general. They said that it was only due to fellow learners thinking others were inferior to them. That in turn angered the learner who was looked at in a poor light, resulting in conflict. This type of conflict seemed to be related to the social hierarchy within the school and learners' standing therein.

4.6 Settings for the Conflicts

Situations of conflict took place at school on the play grounds, mainly during break times, when learners were outside the classroom. Teachers were not often present during these times and this made it possible for conflict to

take place. Learners were afraid of being caught by teachers and disciplined for

fighting. Therefore, they did not often fight in class.

> "They don't fight in school because they know they are gonna get expelled. They only
> make meeting after school." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

Male learners said that the conflict between them and the girls did not

take place at school, due to boys being afraid of being disciplined. According to

the grade eight boys, the girls would always get the advantage in such a

situation, even if she had started the fight.

> "If a boy hits a girl the boy, the boy gets in trouble."

> "The girls come and tell the teacher in school."
> "They don't consider why the boy hit the girl, what happened."
> (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

Even in this situation the boys did not see anything wrong in using physical force

to solve a problem, the question was just how to and where to do it, without

getting caught or into trouble.

One of the main areas where conflict took place was outside the school

itself. Either on their way to school in the morning, or on their way home after

school. Most of the learners do not live in the surrounding areas. They have to

make use of public transport to and from school. One of the main sources of

transport was the train, which they took from the Rossburgh Station.

> "Yes, miss at the station." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

> "The fighting takes place by the station." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

All focus groups made reference to conflict taking place at this station. Learners also made mention of conflict taking place on buses as well.

Grade eight boys revealed that while the problem starts at school it is continued outside school. This usually was the case if gangs were involved, if the fight took place at school the gang would be outnumbered. So for best outcome, the actual fight took place away from the school, where reinforcements were not readily available to those involved in the fight.

> "And the little boy goes and tells his big brothers and they bring their gang. Ya, there is gangsters. Then there is a problem at the station. They won't come for him at the school because then they have to fight the whole school. That's where the problem starts, miss at the school."
> (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

4.7 When conflict started

When asked if there had always been conflict between girls and boys, one grade eight female respondent said that it was actually due to their age. It was taking place because they were now teenagers and that it was normal that it should happen like this. She reported getting on well prior to this time and being able to interact without problems.

> "Its mainly when you age, like you know when you just turning a teenager and you know you want a boyfriend, that's when it starts."
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

4.8 Feelings about the conflict

The female learners saw the conflict as having negative consequences and effects.

"Its embarrassing."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

There was also the feeling from the female learners that physical behaviour against them by boys was unfair. That it resulted in misuse of power on the part of the boy.

"Its wrong, boys shouldn't hit girls."
"Because if the girl hits back and a fight starts the boy takes advantage."

"Depressed."
"Unwanted."

(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

When asked what they were thinking while watching boys hitting their girlfriends, a response was that it could happen to any one of them.

"Sometimes your boyfriend can hit you."   (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

It would appear that they could identify with experiences of one another. This makes it seem as if the situation appears normal to onlookers.

A grade ten girl added another dimension to the conflict while describing how she felt while watching. She spoke about the formation of gangs and the use of weapons to settle disputes. This created worry in her about her safety, she saw her life as being in danger if she was nearby.

"We think about the next year, will we ever get there or not. Because, if you fight, nowadays young boys, they are like gangsters and they have guns. If you fight they can just like just lose their temper and you are gone."   (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

This also meant that onlookers would not assist those in trouble for fear of their own safety.

The grade eight boys did not see the conflict in a negative light. For them they were actually helping by hitting girls. They gave the example of a girl who dated many boys. Hitting her would in fact be beneficial to both her parents and themselves. Her parents, because they were helping to discipline her and to themselves, because they were able to stop her from dating other boys.

"Sometimes, say like she goes out with every boy. When you hit her, that's when maybe she goes right. You helping her parents, as well as helping yourself."
(Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

4.8.1 Acquisition of behaviour and attitudes that contribute to the conflict:

Learners were asked about where they thought attitudes and behaviours were acquired from. Grade nine girls felt that boys learnt how to treat and behave towards their girlfriends from programmes they watched on television. This education also included learning when to hit one's girlfriend. Boys also concurred that they learnt how to treat their girlfriends from what they saw in

television programmes like the current soap operas 'Days of Our Lives', 'The Bold and the Beautiful' and 'Generations' to cite a few.

> "It shows you how to behave, what to do."   (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

Another influence was thought to be one's home environment. Where adolescents were seeing their parents fighting with one another.

> "Even at home I can hear my father shouting at my mum."
>   (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The above statement was the response of a grade nine girl to the question of whether it was normal to fight or not. According to her, she felt that it was normal at the very least to shout because that is what she sees her parents doing to one another. Siblings were also seen to influence adolescents' thoughts, feelings and behaviour about conflict situations. Older siblings were approached for advice on how to handle such situations and their advice did not always prove to be of benefit, as can be seen from the following statement.

> "Sometimes your brother. You go to your brother and you ask for advice, and
> sometimes he will tell you to hit her."   (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

There were also reports of learning behaviour and attitudes from relatives such as aunts and uncles, who the adolescents felt at ease to discuss their personal matters with. Grade ten females respondents suggested that boys

learnt how to behave from their friends. This meant them being assertive

towards their girlfriends and ensuring that they were submissive in return.

> "From each other, they say 'don't let your woman rule you like that'. 'You should take
> control of her', they tell each other in their group."
> "They influence each other."   (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

It would also appear that girls adopted their ideas about how boys should

be from famous popular music icons. Boys mentioned the criteria that girls laid

down with regards to who they considered eligible for 'dating'. Apparently the

boy had to have his own car, should have money to spend, should have a cellular

phone etc. From further questioning it would appear that this idea stemmed

from the song entitled 'No Scrub' by the musical group 'TLC'. Hence boys without

such possessions were referred to as 'scrubs' by the girls and were not seen as

prospective boyfriends.

> "They call you a scrub."

> "They don't want no scrubs."

> "A scrub is a person who sits in the passenger side."
> "Doesn't have a car."
> "Doesn't have a phone."
> "Doesn't have a car, only sits in the passenger side. He doesn't money, has nothing."
>   (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

This contributed to the conflict since there was pressure on boys to attain

material possessions, which lead to incidents such as stealing. It often meant

that girls would not go out with boys that were the same age as them, since they

did not have the means to provide as they were school boys and did not have

money. The girls would go out with older boys, who while they could provide, were more experienced than the girls and being so were able to adopt a position of superiority over their girlfriends.

> "That she wants high people but she is still low, that she is our age group because we are still at school."
>
> "Perhaps it is not really impossible. But they are looking for things that they cannot really afford themselves. We are still at school, so how can we have cars when we are still at school? So I think some people are go to crime, because some people are pushing them." (Grade Ten Boys / Session One)

This also meant that since the boy had to work so hard to please a girl and spend money on her, when she disagreed with him or refused his advances, he then felt that it was his right to control her by using physical force.

4.8.2 Effect of conflict on their schoolwork: According to learners conflict situations did in fact effect their school work. The teasing that takes place within the classroom, as mentioned earlier, caused them not to want to participate in class discussion. This was due to a fear of looking stupid in front of other people and of being laughed at by their peers.

> "Like when you feel the answer is right and you are not sure, you must be sure because they will laugh at you." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Learners also found it difficult to concentrate during class time, because of conflict situations that were going to occur after school. Sometimes other learners threatened them with a beating after school. This resulted in the

individual worrying about what was to come and not actually concentrating on his

or her schoolwork.

> "You cannot concentrate because you worry because sometimes they say they are going
> to hit you after school." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)
> "Like this one time in the class this boy and girl were fighting and the principal came
> and asked me what was happening and I said I think that they were fighting. Then they
> said 'you bitch, you got a big mouth, you see what's going to happen to you after
> school'." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

4.8.3 Other experiences of violence: Approximately 900 learners

attend the Rossburgh High School. They are predominantly of African descent

and do not live in the surrounding area, which was classified as a 'white area'

under the Group Areas Act during the apartheid regime. This means that most

learners have to travel a great distance to school, by public transport while only

9.1% of learners live in the surrounding areas. Focus group members were asked

where they lived and gave the following areas; Umlazi, Wentworth, Lamontville,

Durban North, Inanda, Kwa Makhuta etc.

It would appear from the information that they gave that they were no

strangers to violence and conflict. They regularly saw people harming one

another in the areas in which they lived and on their way to and from school.

Girls reported also seeing and experiencing episodes of sexual harassment in the

areas that they lived in.

"Some people let say you wearing see through things and all that stuff. Like you are wearing something underneath, like a bra. Then they come around and they touch your breasts as they walk past."   (Session Three Focus Group)

This was reported to be done to them by older men living in the area. When questioned about reason for the men doing this to them, the girls put it down to fact that they were black. According to them the men knew that since they were black girls, they would not have lawyers to defend them. So even if they complained to their parents, there would be no legal recourse and as such the perpetrators were not afraid and continued with their behaviour. This was the reason, according to female focus group members that black men did not do the same thing to girls of other race groups. They were afraid of the action that could be taken against them. It would seem that these girls accepted what was being done to them and did not see the injustice in it or the fact that they did not have to tolerate it, that they could have recourse against it.

Learners reported being witness to, knowing of or hearing of people being stabbed, being shot, being beaten, being mugged and their possessions stolen, being raped etc. Of significance to this research study, is the fact that they did see women being beaten by their boyfriends and husbands. They also reported the existence of gang activity in their areas. This lead to them being unsafe on the streets in the areas as fighting could break out at any minute. The manner in

which they recounted their experiences created the impression that they were

not shocked by what they saw. Instead they seemed to accept it as part of their

normal environment and appeared to take it in their stride.

What is also of importance is the absence of outside help. When people

were being attacked or threatened, learners saw other people watch but not

assist. They also witnessed spectators encourage people in conflict to take

physical action. Weapons were freely available to people in their residential

areas, linked with gang activity. This is probably the reason that people were

reluctant to help, for fear of being hurt themselves. Learners exhibited similar

behaviour in relation to the conflict taking place in their school. They watched,

egged the conflicting parties on, enjoyed the spectacle but did not assist.

4.9 Behaviours related to the conflict

Learners reported seeing, being on the receiving end of and displaying

many different behaviours related to the conflict. It seemed that acting out

physically was the norm and learners were not at all surprised by this. Reports of

hitting, slapping, kicking, punching, jabbing one another in the side were provided.

"Sometimes with boyfriends and girlfriends they don't fight, the boy hits the girl."

"Maybe, the boy slaps the girl and the girl cries."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

According to grade eight female learners, when there was conflict between girls it did not result in actual physical force. Instead it was usually made up of threats of being slapped and warnings of 'I'll show you'. Reports were given of the use of foul language and swearing as being part of girl's repertoire of behaviour when in conflict.

Most groups made mention of stealing related to the conflict. This took place when aggressors were reported to teachers and action such as suspension was carried out. According to grade nine female learners complaining to school authorities did not do them much good. Since even if the offender was suspended, he or she would wait for them at the Rossburgh Station and steal from them.

> "Miss, even if they suspend, that boy he will come back to you...."
> "And wait for you at the station."
> "And hit you there at the station."
> "Sometimes they take your things miss."
> "Yes, miss like if you are wearing something, earrings, jackets ...."
> "Whatever, you are wearing miss."
>
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Conflict also resulted in gang or mass action when one person was threatened. Both male and female group members related how they would seek help from older brothers when they were threatened. This resulted in the older brother bringing his friends with him to fight in order to solve the problem. This served as a deterrent to some of the boys when they wanted to threaten or

physically harm both boys and girls. One grade nine boy recounted how his sister had been slapped by a boy at her school. His action was then to go to her school with some of his friends in order to deal with the offender.

Moving on from this boys appeared to make clear distinctions about how their own sister should be treated as opposed to other girls, who were not related to them. They saw no problem with interfering with someone else's sister but did not want anyone to do the same to their own sister. They could not see the unfairness within such a situation. This distinction, however, did not apply to when they needed advice on their relationships with girls. One boy said that he would not discuss his girlfriend problems with his sister. According to him, because she was a girl herself, she would naturally take the part of the girl and would not take his side. This automatically separated girls and boys into 'them and us' creating a rift of misunderstanding. It also meant that boys would not seek assistance from people that they thought would not tell them what they wanted to hear.

One grade eight female learner described how the guidance counsellor at the school had intervened between her and another girl who were fighting. He asked them to each write down their version of the problem and used this as a means to see both sides and mediate. The focus group member in question, saw

this as being beneficial and the correct thing to do. So it would appear that learners were aware of other ways of solving problems besides fighting with one another. The same insight was shown by a grade ten boy during the second session focus group. The rest of the boys in the group were adamant that hitting a girl for what they considered bad behaviour would go towards disciplining her and assisting her parents with this task. He, however, stood his ground as he did not feel that hitting a person necessarily solved the problem or got her to conform.

> "You don't have to hit the girl, just talk to her and sort it out."
> "Excuse me, what if she doesn't listen."
> "Then dump her."
>
> (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

For him the solution was not to hit. He suggested talking to the person instead and trying to reason with them. However, if they did not agree then there was always the option of leaving the relationship. This shows evidence that learners were aware of others ways to solve conflict, however, they seldom made use of other action besides fighting.

There were also reports of power struggles between the boys. Older boys tried to dominate the younger boys. Grade eight boys reported that they were given a hard time by the older boys when they started the school year.

> "Say a big boy wants the lunch and the little boy doesn't want to give it. Then the big boy bullies him and hits him for it."   (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

However, by the time the focus groups were conducted, this had changed. Their reason was that the older boys had now gotten to know them and accept them. Boys also tormented others boys who they perceived as 'soft and weak'. It would appear that if a boy got on well with the girls at the school he was categorised by other boys as being homosexual.

So boys had to appear to be emotionally hard, harsh and 'manly' to prevent themselves from being categorised and persecuted as such. This meant that they could not have harmonious relationships with the girls. Another reason that they were aggressive towards the girls was because they did not want to be perceived as 'weak' and 'easily taken for granted'. They felt that any boy who appeared like this was easy prey for the girls and could be 'taken advantage of'.

4.9.1 Pressure from Others to Fight: Learners were asked if they experienced pressure from others to engage in fights or conflict. Males learners were clear about the pressure they received from the friends and peers if they did not react to situations, as was expected.

> "They'll say 'you're scared of the girl', there's lot of pressure to fight her or hit her."
> (Grade Eight Boys / Session Two)

So they would fight to prove their fearlessness and social standing with the school. Sometimes this would mean fighting and beating up someone that they had not intended to in the first place.

"It's like miss, I'm sitting here and he is going to say something bad about me, like chirp or something. Then I'm not going to like sit down and do nothing because they are all going to start laughing and I am going to get mad. Everyone will be laughing at me and I am going to look stupid. So if I hit him, he is going to look stupid. That's why I hit him, but I wasn't going to hit him in the first place."
"They say that you are a chicken, all those things."

(Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

Female learners also made reference to peer pressure. In their case it was not to initiate conflict. Other boys encouraged their boyfriends to beat them when there was conflict. If their boyfriends did not obey, it was then seen as a sign of him being weak and soft and of the girl being in control of him.

"Miss, boys like to see girls get hit, they always say, 'no hit her, hit her, she playing the fools with you."
"Especially in front of their friends, its like they have power over the girl."

"His friends encourage him because they got girlfriends and they hit their girlfriends. So now if they hit their girlfriends and you boyfriend is like the soft type they thing him, they encourage him to do it to prove that he is a man."

(Grade Eight Girls /Session One) .

Female learners also reported pressure from the female peers to accept the beating as an indication of a boy's (who was beating them) love.

"I know some of my friends say 'oh, that if he hits you he loves you'."
"They say, 'no, he loves you'."
"Maybe, sometimes when you are going out and for instance you are rushing somewhere and he wants to know where you are rushing to, and then he thinks you are rushing to another boy and slaps you and they say 'see he cares about you'."
"Its not only your friends, it the boy's friends as well. Like if they are talking to you, they will say to you 'if he hits you that means he loves you'. Because they like they think that if they hit their girlfriends its alright."

(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

This pressure to accept the beating and construe it as affection was coming from their female friends, from their boyfriend's friends as well as their

boyfriends. The grade nine girls' answers to the question of why their boyfriends

hit them was captured in the following statements.

> "They say if they hit us, they love us."
> "They still love us."
> "They loves us even more."
>
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Another observation was that the hiding that took place was often done in

view of others. It was not something that occurred in private. This would make

sense considering that there was peer pressure to bully and fight. Public

exhibition then demonstrated one's group cohesion.

> "Boys hit the girls outside, so that everybody can see."
>
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Boys also reported pressure from other people to engage in conflict.

Sometimes it had to do with their relationships with their girlfriends and

problems related to their relationship. Friends were very free to give advice and

often this advice was unsolicited.

> "Miss sometimes you don't ask for advice. They just come miss. Everyone comes and
> wants to tell you what to do, miss."   (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

4.9.2 Unwillingness to assist others in trouble: Learners in all groups

reported not being able to assist those that were in conflict. The same group

members, however, expressed the wish that someone would help them if they

were in the exact same situation. Their unwillingness to assist was due to various

reasons. Some did not want to get involved in what they considered to be not

their problem. Others were afraid of physical harm to themselves, as some

students carried weapons to school. Another feeling was that it was

inappropriate to intervene when you did not know what was happening and why

the conflict was actually taking place, in short, not knowing the full story.

> "Go and do something to help, especially if its your friend."
> "But you can't." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

When asked why they could not assist and what would happen if they did assist

others who were involved in the conflict. Their reply was the following

statement.

> "Its like if it's a boyfriend and girlfriend fighting, its their business what they are doing."
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

A grade nine girl recounted an incident that had happened to her, where

she had been sexually harassed by five male learners at the school during break

time. She and some of her friends had been playing with a ball, which she tried

to kick and fell over while doing so. It was then that these boys came up to her

and proceeded to molest her.

> "They came all over to me, they pull up my skirt and touching me, where I don't want
> to be touched." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

When asked what her friends did in the situation, her response was the following

statement.

"They ran away, miss. Some of them they were looking. Others ran away."
(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

One of the other group members had been present when this happened and she said that she had tried to assist her friend. She had gone to find a teacher who could help. When asked how she felt while watching the above taking place, her response was the following statement.

"Miss, I feel so bad because it's my friend." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The teacher that came to assist asked for a witness to identify the boys who were involved. This girl did not go forward. Her reason was that she had seen only five of them and she was unsure of how many had been involved. So she remained silent.

Another aspect that came to light during a session one focus group with grade eight female learners was the balance of power. It would appear that males had greater power than the females and as such the females were unable to assist when their friends were being bullied by male learners.

"They won't say anything because it's a boy."
"No miss, some of them are scared."
"Like if it's a boy he can come and hit you, he's got that sort of power."
"So he doesn't go for the other boys goes for the girls because he knows that the girls cannot hit back." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Thus it would appear that female adolescents at this school were in fact afraid of their male counterparts.

Apart from being unwilling to assist those in trouble, it would appear that watching people in conflict provided entertainment for some learners. Grade eight boys said that sometimes they would laugh when they witnessed a boy hitting his girlfriend. Just like the girls, they also said that they would not assist because they did not know what the problem was and who was at fault.

4.10 Boyfriend / Girlfriend relationships

4.10.1 Need for such a relationship: All focus groups made reference to it being normal to have boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. They, however, did try to explain why they had such relationships. It was felt that they needed, such interaction, because they were growing.

> "It's a feeling that comes to you."
> "Its just an experience."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

> "You need to be taken out, you need to go out."   Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Some grade ten male students, even went so far as to suggest that it was because they needed sex. The same response came from a grade nine girl, who felt that as teenagers they needed to make love, hence they entered into boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. One grade nine male said that it was because he needed the experience for later in life. By having a relationship with a girl now, he was gaining experience in what to do and say for when he was grown up and wanted to be with woman.

4.10.2 Dynamics within such relationships: During the grade nine girls group session the discussion addressed an interesting concept. That of proving one's love. Boys were asking girls to prove their love to them and vice versa. According to one of the group members, a boy who truly loved you, only wanted you to kiss him. He did not want to have sex.

> "Miss, when the boy wants to prove it to you, he only kiss you, not to have sex with you, miss. So the guy I marry miss, he only kiss me, he doesn't tell me we must go and have sex." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

This was the yardstick that she used to determine whether a boy was genuine in his affection for her. Other group members also described behaviours that would mean genuine affection from their boyfriends.

> "He takes you to his house."
> "Yes, miss if he does not forget your days of birth, miss."
> "They must have respect." (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The question of ownership also came up during focus group sessions. Grade nine girls said that boys thought that they owned them, if they were in a relationship with them. When asked if they felt that this was true, they responded in the negative.

> "No we don't belong to anyone."
> "You might belong but he doesn't own you." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

The word 'belong' here was taken to mean being in a relationship, being someone's girlfriend and did not mean ownership to the girls. Hence the feeling was that this was the boy's perception and not a statement of fact.

> "They say you belong to them, when you are going out with them. They call them your husband. You are their wife now and you mustn't go out with anyone."
>
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

It would appear from the above statement that this idea of belonging was used by the boys to prohibit their girlfriends from going out with anyone else.

Boys also seem to coerce girls into going out with them. This is done by trying to bully the girl or humiliate her into submission as demonstrated by the following statement.

> "Maybe miss, if the boy wants to go out with you and you don't want to go out with him, then he start calling you by names." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

The girls saw this as the boys trying to get their own way and to demonstrate to them that they are in fact 'men'.

Grade ten girls reported that once they were in relationships, their boyfriends wanted to have say over where they went and what they did. They attributed this to feelings of jealousy on the part of their boyfriends and the need to have control. This behaviour was also connected to the boys being afraid that their girlfriends would be 'taken' by other boys.

"Like if you want to go out with friends, then they tell you, you can't go because of this and this reasons. Then you say 'no, I want to go, I am not taking you with me, I am going alone'. Then they think that you are going out with other boys."

"Sometimes they don't want you to go to parties without them. Because miss, they know what parties are like. They know what their boyfriends do to other girls and what they say when you are not there." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

Dynamics also included the imbalance of power between male and female adolescents, within their boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. Grade ten girls reported that their boyfriends would hit them if they cheated on their relationship, meaning if they went out with another boy. However, if the boy did the same thing, there would be no negative repercussions to him from the girl. One group member told how she had been hit by her boyfriend, because she was going out with another boy. She went on to say that the only reason she was doing so, was because her boyfriend had been doing the same thing to her. This was her way of getting back at him.

"When we do something wrong they hit us, when they do something wrong we cannot do anything." (Grade Ten Girls / Session one)

They saw shouting at the boy as their only recourse, but that this also depended on the type of boy one was dating.

"It depends on what kind of a guy you got, maybe some of them, like if are shouting at them, they hit you for shouting at them." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

This situation shows the difference in what was allowed for males within the relationship, as compared to what was permissible for females. The same

situation applied to girls wanting to end a relationship. They were not allowed to

by threat of force or the actual use of force.

> "I want to tell them like 'I want to end the relationship', you scared because like they are going to hit you."

> "Yes. It's like you can't say no to him, everything must be yes."
> "You can't say that you don't love him."
>
> (Grade ten Girls / Session One)

It appeared that boys prevented their girlfriends from being friends with

other boys, this was according to the grade ten girls. This restriction was also

extended to girls who were considered to be 'bitchy'. When asked for

clarification regarding what this meant, they said that such girls had more than

one boyfriend and were noted for always saying 'yes' to any advances from the

boys.

All male focus groups made reference to financial demands that girls made

on them. According to the boys girls expected them to have money, to wear

expensive clothes, to carry cellular phones, to have a gold tooth (which appeared

to be a status symbol) and to wear jewellery such as neck chains. These meant

expenses that the boys could not afford and some boys at the school had been

known by their peers to go so far as to steal in order to finance this. Boys who

conformed to these request were much sought after by the girls. Hence material

possessions appeared to make the difference between who was popular with the girls and who was not.

When asked whether boys pressurised girls to have sexual intercourse with them, grade eight boys said that the older boys did that to the younger girls. The reason for that was that being older the boy had more experience than them and as such the girls liked them and went out with them. Members of this focus group said that it was difficult to go out with girls that were the same age as them, since they had the same amount of life experience as the girls and as such the girls were not impressed by them. The girls were also said to prefer older boys since they had more access to such things as money and cars.

4.10.3 Inter-racial relationships: It would appear that relationships did not occur across racial groups at the Rossburgh High School, where the learners are of different races. The learners saw this as normal and it would appear from what they said, that they did not put it down to racism.

> "The white boys they are not racist, but they say that they wouldn't even go near an African girl." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

The grade eight female learners when asked if they were offended with the white boys not wanting to date them, felt that this was okay. The reason being that they did not want to go out with them either.

"I didn't feel anything miss, because I also don't want to go out with them."
(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Another reason for the no dating policy between white learners and learners of colour was parental feelings. Grade eight female learners felt that white parents would disapprove of their children dating peers of colour, as such they did not. This was the opinion of focus group members where no white learners made up the group.

"Or they say that their parents won't approve of it. White parents want their children, you know how they want them to be, they must go according to this way or that way."
(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Dating between the race groups was looked at in a poor light by the learners themselves. It would appear that if such dating took place, peers teased and ridiculed those involved and saw them as trying to rise above their station in life.

"Some of them just talk with their friends and like an African boy will say that any girl who tries to sleep with a white will say I am a White, like an African girl or Indian girl."
(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

4.11 Parental advice and guidance

Most learners said that they did not talk to their parents about their relationships with the opposite sex and about dating. The grade eight females, thought that they should be able to talk to their parents about such issues. This freedom to discuss with their parents diminished as they became older, as their

older peers were very clear about the inability to talk to their parents. The younger girls also said that talking to their mothers was easier and that they did not talk to their fathers about such matters.

> "Not always. Some fathers are different and some are very, very traditional, miss."

> "Its easier if your mum can tell your father that you have a boyfriend. But not you go straight to your father and tell him that you have a boyfriend."

> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Information to fathers needed to be filtered via their mothers, for more positive results. One grade nine female described how her father had responded negatively to the news that she had a boyfriend, by not talking to her for a whole week. She and him had quarrelled over this. Then a while later he approached her with his permission to have a boyfriend and with advise on the choice of a boyfriend. When asked about this sudden change of attitude in her father, she responded that it had been due to her mother's intervention.

> "My dad talked to my mother miss. And my mum said I am growing up now and I need to have a boyfriend."   (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The older female group members said that they did not talk to their parents about their relationship, for fear of receiving a scolding. They reported that their parents had told them that they were too young to have relationships. If they then spoke to their parents about such things, it would imply that they had defied their parent's instruction and that would put them in line for

punishment. A grade eight female reported seeing a girl being hit by her mother for standing with a boy. The mother did not have any form of discussion with the girl and just hit her in front of the boy. The incident took place in area that the respondent lived in. The respondent felt that it meant that her mother saw her as being young still.

Grade ten female respondents felt that some of the reasons why their parents did not want them to have boyfriends were positive. One group member suggested it was because some parents had become parents at very young ages, such as at sixteen years old. As such parents did not want the same thing to happen to their children. Instead they wanted something better for their children. Another group member brought up the issue of sexually transmitted diseases, such as AIDS, which parents wanted to prevent their children from acquiring.

Female respondents felt that it was important to talk to one's parents about relationships. Due to cultural norms, this was not possible. They cited the African culture in particular as being closed with regards to discussion around dating, boyfriends and issues of sexuality.

"They always say you must pick the right boy, you must know. But you school work
has to come first before."
"Our parents don't tell us nothing."
"Ya."

"Especially African people, they say that you must finish school first and sort out your life."

<div align="right">(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)</div>

Information that came from one's parents was seen to be more trust worthy and of more benefit. They also felt that parents not talking to them lead to them not knowing what to do in situations and to them landing up with problems.

"Its better if you sit down with your own parents, not to let your friends tell you because they might tell you the wrong thing."   (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Where parents were cited for talking to them about sexuality, it was clear that they felt that the information given was inadequate. One female grade nine respondent said that her mother had told her to use condoms if she was going to have sexual intercourse. However, according to her that was not enough information, as her mother had not told her how to use condoms, when to use them etc. Learners also cited this lack of knowledge as being a contributory cause of teenage pregnancies.

"Its not a good idea, they must tell you what to do, especially if you're courting, they must just know, oh she is in high school and she's big, so lets sit down and tell her something about life. That's why most African girls get pregnant when they are young."

<div align="right">(Grade Eight Girls / Session One)</div>

Majority of male group members said that they did not talk to their parents about their relationships with girlfriends. One grade ten boy did say

that he spoke to his mother. This revelation was met with laughter by other group members at the time. Another grade ten boy said that he sometimes spoke to his father about these matters. Other male respondents said that they discussed these issues with friends, older brothers and male relatives.

Female group members reported being told by their mothers that boys could not and should not be trusted. Boys were apparently after only one thing from girls and that was to have sexual intercourse.

> "If the boy told me he loves me, I mustn't trust him. When he asks me out I must go with him. But when he says at home there is nobody, I mustn't go there."
>
> "She told me not to have boyfriends, because boys only want sex."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

> "Don't trust boys, they will dump you like dogs."
> "They make you pregnant and then they leave you."
> "They are born like that, to lie to you, they don't love you."
> (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

One female respondent also reported her father telling her something similar. This seems to have fostered a sense of mistrust amongst these adolescents.

Boys also seemed to have the same sense about the girls, except the reason was different. For the boys, girls could not be trusted because they probably had other boyfriends. Another reason was that girls were believed to be only after one thing from the boys, that is to use them to take them out and buy them nice things, in short, for their money. One grade ten boy's response to

the question of trust within in relationship showed evidence of introspection and analysis.

> "I would say that the reason that you can't trust her is because you know she can't trust you either." (Grade Ten Boys / Session One)

Demonstrating maturity on the part of this adolescent and the ability to see the reaction of others in context with his behaviour.

4.12 Discrepancies between male and female dating behaviour

Male group members believed that it was okay for boys to have many girlfriends, that it was expected and normal. One even cited the Zulu culture as allowing and tolerating such behaviour. Another respondent made reference to his uncle who had many girlfriends and from whom he sought advise about his own situation. Boys with many girlfriends were referred to as 'players' and were thought to be famous and notorious.

> "A player is someone famous."
> "Who has lots of girlfriends."
> "He charms the girls and the girls know each other."
> (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

Male respondents were clear that the same rules did not apply to female adolescents. Girls were expected to only have one boyfriend at a time and to limit the number that they had. According to both boys and girls at the school, girls with many boyfriends were regarded as 'bitches' and likened to female dogs that had multiple sexual partners when in heat.

The female group members also were of the opinion that girls could not date like boys. They reinforced what the male respondents had said about it not being okay to have many boyfriends. Feeling that it was bad for their reputations.

> "Like if it's your first boyfriend, I don't know. Its different, you see boys don't like girls who have too many boyfriends. But boys can have as many girlfriends as they like, because their friends got thousands of girlfriends and if you have one they say you are like 'slow' and that there."
> "If the one doesn't satisfy them. Like if you got a girlfriend and your girlfriend doesn't sleep with you, so he goes around finding another girlfriend."
>
> (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

Thus it would appear that females felt the need to hold onto their boyfriends, despite the treatment that they received. It would also appear that there was a discrepancy in how important males and females considered a relationship to be. Girls would stay in a relationship even when they were being beaten by their boyfriends. This could be attributed to the pressure from peers reported earlier, where girls took the beating as a sign of love. Female group members also felt that this was because the girl did not want to lose her boyfriend, therefore, she stayed.

Females were also pressurised into having sex by their boyfriends. If they did not want to comply, they were threatened with withdrawal of affection and being left. So in order to preserve the relationship, girls succumbed. Boys were

open about this and this frankness lead one to believe that they saw no wrong in

their actions.

> "Ya miss, if you are in love with her and you get sex with her. If she agree, you can get sex with her miss, but if she disagree, you just leave her, miss."
> (Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

Physical strength was another reason that boys were able to move freely

between relationships and girls were not. A boy could hit a girl if she did not

want the relationship anymore and make her stay in the relationship, by

threatening her with the use of force. When asked why she had been hit by her

boyfriend, a grade nine girl's response was the following statement.

> "Because I told him that I don't love him anymore."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Girls on the other hand did not possess enough physical strength to make any

impact on the boy with regards to coercion. Therefore, boys could leave them

whenever they choose and they could do nothing to stop it.

> "Ya, when there are two girls. If the boy don't like you, he won't tell you because he knows that you won't come back to him and punish him for what he has done. So they just dump us just like that."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

Male focus group were asked if they would get a beating from their

girlfriends if they started dating another girl, while still with the first one.

Their response was to laugh derisively at the notion. According to them this was

not possible as girls did not possess the physical strength to beat them, thus

concurring with what the girls had said earlier. They did state, however, that

the girl possessed the 'power' to leave them. This action would be meet with a possible beating. As in their opinion they had now wasted money on her and she was leaving them.

> "Miss, if its not for a good reason, you have to beat her. Because you lost everything now, money ...." (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

From the discussion it was clear that they did not see their action of dating another girl simultaneously as inappropriate, or the grounds for their first girlfriend leaving them.

Not all boys felt that having many girlfriends was necessarily a good thing. One grade nine boy when asked if a girl offered him sexual intercourse what he would do, responded that he would not necessarily accept. There were two things that he was worried about. Firstly, what if she was pregnant with someone else's child and was looking for someone to accept responsibility for her pregnancy. Secondly, he was worried about sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS.

Another interesting phenomenon that came to light, was the area of laying blame for the loss of a boyfriend. Females group members were not very clear as to who to blame when a boyfriend decided to leave them. Their first inclination was to blame the girl who they had been left for. To them this girl was 'stealing' their boyfriend. Not all females felt this way, one grade nine female said that

the fault lay with the boy. He could decide whether he wanted to go or not and it was not up to the girl pursuing him.

> "It doesn't matter if they fancy him. If a boy doesn't like that girl he will tell her."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

However, she was in the minority in terms of her opinion. Another respondent in the same group was of the opinion that a boy chooses to leave a relationship, and is not forced to do so by another girl who likes him. She was also met with opposition from other group members, who indicated their disagreement for this theory in chorus.

Majority of the grade nine girls felt that the major part of the blame lay with the other girl. Who knowing full well that the boy was going out with another girl, still decided to pursue him and make her feelings for him known. One of the group members put forward the idea that maybe the girl was unaware that the boy was going out with another girl. This idea was squashed as seen from the statements below.

> "No. She doesn't know that it's your boyfriend."
> "She knows."
> "She knows."
> "Hey wena."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

When asked what they thought the correct line of action would be in this type of situation, their solution was truly unique. The group members all agreed

that the boy was at fault and as such both girls, the current girlfriend and

prospective girlfriend, should come together and fight with the boy.

> "Ya. Miss they have to come together and fight the boy."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

There was unanimous agreement for the above measure.

Another solution to the problem would be for the boy to first tell the girl

that he was dating that he did not want the relationship anymore. Thus the

relationship would be finished and he would be free to pursue another one if he

chose to.

> "Sometimes when the boy don't like a girl anymore, he goes with another girlfriend. He don't tell this girl that I don't like you anymore before he moves on miss. They make a mistake, they supposed to tell this girlfriend and then go to another."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

The group members then decided after this line of thought that the fault

actually lay with the boy in the situation. However, when asked who they would

then fight with, given this, their answer was with the girl. This was surprising

and when asked why, they gave the reason as being because girls were scared of

boys. So they fought with the other girl instead.

> "They are scared of boys."
> "Because they are more powerful than us."
> "Boys they know that they can hit us, because we can't defend ourselves."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

They would then fight with the person, who they knew was not at fault, since they could not fight with the boy because he was stronger than them. They could not see the option of not fighting with anyone.

The grade ten girls were clearer on this subject. According to them it depended. If the girl knew that the boy had a girlfriend already and still went out with him, then it was her fault. If, however, she was unaware then it was the fault of the boy, as indicated by the following statement taken from their focus group transcript.

> "Like I was telling you, it depends. If the girl knew who his bitch is, or if she didn't know then it's the boy's fault."   (Grade ten Girls / Session One)

From the above statement it can be seen that girls used the term 'bitch' as synonymous with the word girlfriend. This is a derogatory term and one wonders why they see it as appropriate. Another group member did not agree that the fault lay with the girl who knew about the existing girlfriend. Instead she felt that the boy was the one who had to choose, and if he did not, he was to blame for any subsequent problems. The development of reason can be seen as the girls grow older by comparing the grade nine argument with that of the grade ten girls.

4.13 Conflict resolution

From the information given in the focus groups it would appear that the main form of conflict resolution, was a beating. If there was a problem this was the first form of action a boy would take.

> "Miss, boys like to see girls get hit, they always say, 'no hit her, hit her, she playing the fools with you."
> "Especially in front of their friends, its like they have power over the girl."
> "Yesterday they were hitting my friend by the bus stop and the boys were watching, they said, 'slap her, slap her how can she go out with another boy while she is going out with you' and she was crying." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

When asked what onlookers to the scenario were doing her reply was as follows.

> "Hit her."
> "And like if a girl doesn't want to go out with a boy, he like force her and hit her sometimes just to make her go out with him even if the girl doesn't like he boy." (Grade Eight Girls / Session One)

What also becomes clear from the above statements, is that not only did boys use physical force to solve what they considered a problem. There was consensus from their friends to do this. They also used physical force as a form of coercion, to persuade girls to go out with them.

Male adolescents freely gave information during focus group on how they dealt with problems during a relationship. Their first inclination was to hit the girl they did not seem to see this as wrong and it appeared to them to be the most natural course of action.

"When you have any problems, you have to hit the girl."
<div align="right">(Grade Eight Boys / Session One)</div>

According to them this was okay since you did after all spend money on the girl to take her out. As such the girl was making use of you and it was okay to hit her if she stepped out of line in anyway.

The acquisition of behaviours and attitudes related to the conflict in some ways contributes to how these adolescents resolve their problems and differences. It also seems to set the grounding for how adolescents react to one another. One of the influences is the home environment that these learners experience. Behaviour and attitudes are acquired from significant others. The following statements indicate some of the negative atmospheres that these learners live in.

"Sometimes my mother may be in bad mood, miss. When I come from school and tell her something, she just starts shouting at me, 'it's none of my business what happens at school'".

"And miss, I told my mum my results for this term. I got 45 and last time I got 45. And my mother said ' you got 45 again, you are just so stupid'. Miss, I felt so bad."
<div align="right">(Grade Nine Girls / Session One)</div>

This may be the reason that adolescent have learned to react with negativity to one another, rather than with positive responses.

During the session one focus group, grade nine male learners were asked what should be done in a conflict situation. One learners suggested that the problem be taken to the teachers. However, this was met with disapproval from another group member. According to him, some learners carried weapons to school for their protection and made use of these during a conflict situation. If one were to go the teacher first this would implicate the weapon carrier and he would be in even more trouble.

4.14 Balance of power

Learners in all focus groups were clear about the fact that male adolescents were more powerful than the females. The grade nine females even cited this as the reason for why boys fought with girls.

> "Miss, sometimes boys they think they are bosses."
> "They have power over girls."
> "They are more powerful than girls."
>
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

This imbalance in the power dynamics between male and female adolescent also resulted in the female adolescent being unable to defend themselves against their male peers when they were bullied. When asked why they did not hit back when boys were hitting them, their answer was the following statement.

> "Because boys they are stronger."   (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

This perception resulted in them accepting the beating. They also saw themselves as the scapegoat for problems that the boys had at home and elsewhere. According to the grade ten girls the boys then came to school and took out their problems on them. The reason for this was because of the boys being stronger and the girls reluctance to hit back.

> "Yes, like they think we are soft, like they hit us and we can't hit back."
> (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

While females had less power physically than males, they had power over male learners in another way. According to grade eight boys, that while a girl did not have power when she is being hit, she did have power once she disclosed what had happened to someone. This often resulted in the boy being disciplined, in the case of her telling teachers or parents, or being beaten up, in the case of her telling her older brothers or male friends.

> "But she has power when she tells someone."   (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

All male focus groups brought up the issue of girls having and taking the option of informing the teachers of the conflict that was taking place. For the boys this was unfair, as they would then be naturally punished as the instigators. According to them they were not always at fault and blame could be laid with the girls. However, teachers appeared to naturally take the girl's part. The boy's did not link this occurrence with their ready use of force to solve any problem.

They would never go to a teacher if there was conflict, especially not when it was with a girl as this was considered unmanly to them.

Another area of power struggle was seen between same sex individuals and groups. As mentioned earlier girls initiated fights with boys to show their female peers their power. Grade nine girls reported that this could take place between groups of girls as well. Where conquest over the other group's boyfriends, which translated as taking or stealing of their boyfriends, exhibited their power over the other group of girls.

> "Miss, sometimes there's a group thing which is ....where other groups want to take another group's boyfriends. Like there's a group there and we are a group and they think they are powerful than us, so they will try to steal our boyfriends."
> (Grade Nine Girls / Session One)

This indicates the presence of group activity and further gives merit to the influence that peers have over one another.

With regards to the demonstration of one's power within the school community, grade nine females disclosed the ways in which this was done by females. According to these group members, girls demonstrated their power by the ability to talk. This talking then became fighting. They were then asked what the fighting would entail for clarity. According to them it comprised shouting, swearing and the use of foul language, a lot of which was in Zulu. They also went on to say that if a girl did not know how to fight (according to their definition of

what this was) properly, she may then begin by hitting the other girl. This was done to prove that she was more powerful than her opponent.

From information provided by male focus group members, it appeared that a hierarchy of power also existed amongst the boys. Boys who spent time talking to girls and who talked and looked different from the other boys were classed as being gay. These boys were teased and bullied by the other boys and sometimes they were also hit by the other boys, for no specific reason. Younger boys were also bullied by their older male peers.

On the question of equality between the sexes, grade nine males were clear that they did not agree. To them females were physically weaker. According to them it had always been this way.

"The man is always strong miss, even with Adam and Eve, the man was strong."
(Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

They said that changes to the 'New South Africa' had brought about 'women's rights' and this was the reason that women could get good jobs now. This meant that women were taking jobs away from them. No where in the discussion did they consider the idea of actually competing with the women for the job and getting it on their own merit. For them it simply meant that women were taking over and that they did not like this occurrence.

This discussion was taken further and went onto the violence against women that is currently taking place in South Africa. When asked how they felt about this, the boys turned it around, with the man being the victim.

> "With this women's right miss, I am scared. They use their rights to bring the men down miss."
> (Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

They gave examples of famous sport stars, one was cricketer Makhaya Mthini who was accused of raping a woman and then acquitted of the charges. The boys felt that this had been a ploy by the woman to bring him down. They felt that he did not rape the woman concerned. When questioned about why they felt so, their justifications were the following statements.

> "He looks innocent."
> "He is shy miss, he don't talk too much."
> (Grade Nine Boys / Session One)

Not once in the discussion did the issue of whether the woman was telling the truth or not come up. To members of the focus group, it was clear that she was lying.

4.15 Sanctioning of beatings

Apart from beatings being sanctioned by male and female peer, as well as boyfriends, as discussed earlier, it became evident that some of the females sanctioned beatings that they received. Grade ten girls drew an analogy between themselves and dirty dishes, that for them explained the beatings.

"They gonna clean the dish. Like what I heard from yesterday at the shopping centre, that there is no way that you are gonna eat from a dirty dish. Every man must clean the dish before they eats. Which meant the boys, they want to clean us up."

(Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

When asked how this 'cleaning up' would be done and why it was being done, their answers were the following statements.

"By hitting us obviously, cause when they hit us they obviously know we gonna stop........"

"Whatever we are doing."

"We're not scared, we're just like respecting them. We're just respecting them, like you can't hit a guy, that's like the most disrespect you can give."

(Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

The strange thing is that the girls did not see their beating as a sign that the boys were disrespecting them. For them it was the boy's way of helping them and correcting their behaviour. However, they saw a physical retaliation on their part as disrespecting the boys. When questioned further, they said that the reason for the beating is what made the difference in terms of whether it was tantamount to respect or not. They then went on to say that it was never okay to be hit by one's boyfriend. There was clearly confusion about how they perceived this situation.

In a bid to gain clarity this line of questioning was pursued. According to this focus group, if your boyfriend hits you in public then he did not respect you. A private beating was okay. If you cheated on him then it was okay for him to hit you in return. Their reason for this was based on empathy, since they did not like

to see their boyfriends got out with other girls. They sanctioned the beating

saying that he had been driven to it by them.

> "Miss, the thing is we push them too far." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

The grade ten girls also felt that the boys expressed themselves by using

physical force as opposed to them, who used verbal means. This made it okay for

the boys to hit, as it was an expression of their anger.

> "By hitting us, because like we express the way when we get angry, like we shout, we talk. So their way it's just by hitting us." (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

Male learners also sanctioned beating of females. One grade eight male

learner described how his friend had hit his girlfriend because he had found her

smoking, as he did not smoke himself. The group was then asked how they felt

about this.

> "No, she has her own rights."
> "If she wants to smoke she can smoke."
> "But at the same time the boy was correct." (Grade Eight Boys / Session One)

As can be seen after deciding that the girl was well within her rights to smoke,

one of the group members still felt that the boy was correct to take the action

that he did. When questioned about how the action was correct, the group

member felt that by hitting the girl he was stopping her from smoking. So it was

a good thing since smoking was bad for her health. The actual act of hitting

appeared to be irrelevant. This is similar to an earlier recount by boys of how they assisted the girl's parents in disciplining their daughters.

4.16 Conclusion

From information given during focus groups it was clear that conflict did exist at the Rossburgh High School. It took place between members of the opposite sex, as well as between those of the same sex. The main cause were problems related to boyfriend / girlfriend relationships, and individual's inability to problem solve effectively without the use of force. One of the main forms of conflict resolution that boys employed was to hit the other party concerned. Girls on the other hand resorted to verbal means, such as shouting, swearing etc.

The influence of peers was great and caused boys to enter into conflict with others, even when they had not intended to initially. Girls on the other hand were influenced to accept the negative treatment that they received from their boyfriends. It would appear that both groups had stereotypical ideas about how members of the opposite and same sex should behave, which caused them to either react positively or negatively to individuals concerned.

Adolescents were greatly influenced in terms of their thoughts and behaviours by friends, television, the violence that they see, their home environments etc. However, they were reluctant to talk to their parents about

their relationships and their conflicts, for fear of reprisal. It was also not culturally acceptable to do so.

Boys saw themselves as being superior to the female peers. This was a perception that their female counterparts shared. As a result, girls were actually scared of the boys and of being beaten and embarrassed by them publicly. This led to negative self perceptions in the female adolescents and them being forced to do things that they did not want to and which could be potentially dangerous to them. This negativity does not augur well for the future of these girls, considering the background of violence directed at women against which people in South Africa live.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

As can be seen from the results presented in the previous chapter, there was definitely conflict taking place at the Rossburgh High School. It occurred between learners of the same sex as well as those of the opposite sex. The most conflict, however, was related to boyfriend / girlfriend relationships and was between boys and girls.

The data indicates that fighting, both verbal and physical was the main conflict resolution skill that learners made use of. They appeared not to possess any other form of skills to resolve conflict. Their social skills seemed to be greatly influenced by peers and other significant people. The social hierarchy within the school appeared to also contribute to the problems that learners encountered with one another. This chapter will attempt to make meaning of the data presented in chapter four as well as to answer questions as stipulated by the research objectives laid out in chapter one. In doing so, it hopes to examine the issues of role models, role behaviour, conflict resolution and power relationships, and how they contribute to the conflict. Recommendations will also

be made in the hope of helping to decrease this problem and foster harmony amongst learners at the Rossburgh High School.

5.2 Thoughts and Feelings of Gender Conflict

All focus group members agreed that conflict did in fact exist at their school between male and female learners. Some also reported that they had similar experiences at other schools that they had attended, which meant that this problem was in no way unique to the Rossburgh High School. Female learners were quicker than their male counterparts to report that conflict did exist. The needs assessment conducted by CRISP stated that "boys were bullying girls" (O'Brien, 1994), which could explain the differences in their responses about the existence of conflict. The boys being the aggressors were less likely to admit to the problem than the girls, who were on the receiving end.

What is important to note is the timing of such conflict. It would appear from data presented that both girls and boys were able to get on well until the onset of puberty and adolescence. Once this period commenced, so to did the fighting. This is possibly due to the fact that during early adolescence there tends to be same sex friendships and interactions, as opposed to later when there is interaction between members of the opposite sex (Head, 1997).

One cannot help but wonder if this should in any way dictate the timing of the commencement of interventions to decrease such conflict situations. Maybe, waiting till adolescence is too late. Conflict by that stage already exists and thrives, as it would appear from the data. Interventions need to be carried out that allow both females and males to interact in healthy ways, so as to foster understanding about each other. Parents also need to be included in this as their socialisation of their children, together with their interaction with one another in the home environment greatly influences how boys and girls perceive their respective roles and it's associated behaviours, thoughts and feelings.

From the results presented it is clear that both the girls and the boys have very different ideas about the issue of the gender conflict that exists between them. While both groups are very aware of the conflict and agree that it's main source are boyfriend / girlfriend relationships, they differ from each other as to why they fight. They also differ about how it makes them feel when they are involved or bearing witness to such occurrences.

The girls appear to feel that this conflict is a negative thing, with negative consequences as can be seen from Figure 3. They reported feelings of worthlessness and unhappiness when being fought with. Such negative happenings can have bearing on the self-esteem of these adolescent girls and influence their

identity development. Erikson (Adams et al, 1992) sees passive identity as a process whereby the adolescent accepts the role and self-image provided by other people, without attempting to judge or evaluate it. The negative behaviour of the boys towards the girls could influence their identity development and place them in roles that dis-empower them for life. As Raphael (1993) asserts, self-esteem and a good self-concept are vital to mental well-being.

From the information presented it would appear that conflict was not a private thing. Instead it was also a form of exhibitionism, with the aggressor looking to publicly humiliate another person and demonstrate his or her own power within the social structure of the school and it's surrounding environs.

Following on from this it would appear that girls felt more humiliated when their aggressors were boys. However, when the conflict was with another girl, while they felt that fighting was bad, they did not express the same feelings of embarrassment. This is probably related to the fact that they saw fellow girls as occupying the same rung on the social ladder as themselves. This difference in outcome could also be explained by the inclusion of members of the opposite sex in the social world as adolescence proceeds (Head, 1997). With it comes attraction and needing to 'look good' to members of the opposite sex. Hence girls

were embarrassed by altercations with boys, since it would make them look bad to other boys, who could be potential suitors.

The girls tended to see the boys as being superior to them in terms of physical strength as can be seen from Figure 3. Therefore, they were afraid to react to situations where they were being put down publicly. Reacting for them would mean that the boy could then go on to hit them and further embarrass them. They saw the boys as having an unfair advantage and this allowed them to abuse their apparent power.

Boys on the other hand seemed to see the conflict as a source of entertainment. They encouraged it, and stood and watched as it progressed. They pushed each other into situations where they would have to act aggressively (Figure 3) and used this as a means to enhance their own social standing within the school and to determine that of others. Inability or unwillingness to react to a tormenter was seen by peers as weakness. Head (1997) reports similar occurrences in schools in Britain. While the boys at the Rossburgh High School expressed enjoyment at watching others fight, they did say that they felt bad when someone verbally attacked them, and that was the reason that they felt compelled to fight physically. This was done in order to appear to have standing within their social environment as mentioned earlier.

Some of the boys actually managed to rationalise the conflict and make it appear as a positive thing, as was seen from the information given in chapter four by the grade eight boys. They seem to think that one of their functions is to parent the girls, especially in relationships. They felt that if they were hitting the girls for reasons such as cheating and smoking, then they were in fact helping them to modify their behaviour to the girl's benefit. This they also saw as being of benefit to the girl's parent, as they were helping to discipline the girl in the absence of her parents. From this it can be seen that the boys seem to have adopted a position of superiority over the girls, putting themselves into the roles occupied by parents. They could not see that they were on the same level as the girls who they were hitting.

There were also those who felt that this conflict between boy and girls was normal. That it was a natural part of growing up and could not be changed. They also saw it as not being harmful in any way. Given the negative effects that it could have as other group members have already pointed out, this statement may not hold true. As one grade nine girl pointed out, there is frequent carrying and use of weapons. This would mean that a fight in this context where weapons were used could prove deadly, for both the people involved as well as onlookers. The overall level of violence that exists in South Africa acts as the backdrop to

this conflict situation in the school, changing it from what may be perceived as normal adolescent conflict to something more dangerous, both now and in later years. This fear of one's own safety could also impact on the general psychological state of the adolescent and invoke states of depression and anxiety.

The conflict was also seen to affect one's school work. Teasing lead to adolescents not taking part in classroom activities for fear of being laughed at in the event that their contributions proved incorrect. This prevented students from testing what they thought they knew and understood against what was being taught. This may also impact on how the teacher perceived the learner. The ratio of learners per classroom is very high at the Rossburgh High School, with as many as forty learners and more per classroom. This prevents the teachers from being able to give individual attention to pupils. If a student was then to withdraw from interaction, it is more likely that he or she would be forgotten and receive no attention. Thus it may impact negatively on that learner's scholastic achievement and decrease that individual's chances of obtaining higher education and a successful career. This in turn would mean having low paid employment and a lower standard of living, with all of it's related problems.

The other reason that students were unable to concentrate in class was because they were worrying about what was to come after school. Problems that started at school could not be carried further on the school premises. Learners were afraid of intervention by their teachers, of possible expulsion and punishment. Therefore, threats would be made at school of beatings after school. So the learner who was to receive the beating would be thinking about it during class time and not be concentrating on his or her work. This leads to anxiety in that individual and this has negative consequences for one's mental well being.

5.3 Behavioural Manifestations of the Conflict

All groups reported verbal abuse (Figure 3) , ie. shouting and swearing to be part of the behaviour repertoire involved in the conflict. These were often the initiating behaviours. The grade nine girls said that fighting between girls started with talking and progressed to the other two activities mentioned above. Girls demonstrated their prowess and power by being a 'good talker' and by being able to adequately demean their opponents. According to them a girl who could not talk and use her mouth as a weapon would start by hitting her opponent. These altercations were a means to demonstrate one's strength and power

ranking to boys and other girls who were watching. So as a norm, girls did not usually hit.

5.3.1 Aggression in Adolescents

Fights between boys and girls involved hitting and this usually meant the boy slapping the girl. Girls did not hit boys, according to the girls this was not a good idea. The boy being stronger physically would have an advantage and use it to further humiliate them in front of others. They also felt that this was a sign of not respecting the boy, and this is according to grade ten girls.

> "We're not scared, we're just like respecting them. We're just respecting them, like you can't hit a guy, that's like the most disrespect you can give."
>
> (Grade Ten Girls / Session One)

It would appear that while the girls saw the hitting of boys by them as a sign of disrespect for the boy, they did not see the beating that they were getting as a sign of the boy disrespecting them. Which makes one wonder where do they learn this pattern of behaviour from. These are clear indications of how these girls see their role and value as opposed to how they perceive that of the boys.

It is also interesting to note that the younger girls, grade eight, did not bring respect into the discussion. For them refraining from hitting back was purely to prevent themselves receiving a larger beating. Somewhere along the line the girls managed to rationalise the beatings they received using the notion of respecting or not respecting. This idea of respecting boys and not seeing this

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as a reciprocal relationship is worrying. It means that these girls are being socialised into devaluing themselves as they grow older. This could be attributed to the development of identity, where girls learn to see themselves and give value to themselves according to others in their social context (Adams et al, 1992). It also means that they have learnt to accept the beating and not question it, and not defend themselves against it. As long as they accept it their male counterparts will continue with such acting out and not question their own behaviour.

5.3.2 Power relationships

Some of the females reported being hit by their boyfriends when they were as young as twelve years old. This was surprising for the researcher as most literature describes this phenomenon amongst older people. These girls, however, were often in relationships with boys that were much older than they were, which could explain the behaviour. In chapter four boys reported that their female peers wanted to go out with boys who were much older and more experienced, and who could provide them with material possessions. This would explain the age gap between the girls and their boyfriends and possibly the beating that they were receiving. Boys also reported their right to hit their girlfriends after they had spent money on her. It would appear that money spent

implied some sort of ownership of the girl concerned and the right to control her. Eder et al (1995) also reports the objectification of females by male adolescents and their proprietary attitude.

This conflict was due to the unequal power distribution within the relationships. Boys were often the initiators of the relationships and as such felt that they could dictate the terms of that relationship. According to male participants, a relationship was only over if they decided that it was. A girl could not end the relationship if she no longer wanted it, since after all the boy had been the one to approach her. Female participants also reported the existence of this, which created great frustration for them. Wanting to leave a relationship of their own volition would mean a beating from their boyfriends. However, he was free to end the relationship if he chose to. This aggressive approach to relationships was also observed by Connell in Eder et al (1995) who felt it's foundation may be linked to similar aggression during sporting activities.

The boy was also at liberty to go out with other people without ending his previous relationship first. The strange thing about this situation was that the other girl concerned was blamed for the break up of the first relationship by female focus group members. While they felt that the boy was wrong to commence another relationship, they were more likely to blame the other girl,

rather than him. One cannot help but wonder if this is not an indication of how they have been socialised into thinking and seeing themselves as women. Any one of them could have been the new girlfriend in the scenario, yet they still felt that the blame lay with the girl. It would appear that in their minds women are always at fault and are to be blamed if things go wrong. If one see's oneself as the source of problems this is sure to affect one's confidence. It will prevent the individual from being assertive and active in life. It also means that there is no group cohesion, that women do not stand together to fight for women's rights and women's issues. Which does not augur very well for the future of women. Going back to this example, even when it is clear that the boy is at fault, the group still wanted to blame the girl. However, the situation is not totally hopeless as one member did suggest that both girls get together and fight with the boy.

Male participants reported that they would hit a girl who spurned their affection or advances. While female learners reported being on the receiving end of such a hiding. When reference is made to hitting, the predominant behaviour was slapping, there were reports of kicking, pushing, punching and 'being poked in one's side', as well. This provides evidence to corroborate the findings of Everatt and Orkin (1993) of partner assault in South African young

people and to create a suspicion that their statistics may be an under estimation of the phenomenon.

With regards to their romantic relationships from information presented it would appear that females were socialised into thinking and accepting that men and women love differently and that different rules apply to the sexes. Head (1997) makes a similar observation, but from the male perspective, where a male adolescent perceives females as expecting more from a relationship and placing great meaning on their sexual partners. Both male and female learners expressed the opinion of the acceptability of males to have many girlfriends, while females should not have had many boyfriends. All groups made reference to these girls as 'bitches' and were quiet clear as to how a female dog and a girl with many boyfriends were similar.

Both Eder et al (1995) and Otis et al (1997) have found similar situations, with males being aggressor and females being passive and unable to control their circumstances with regards to male-female relationships. This historical view of men as the sexual aggressors and female as passive recipients is so aptly demonstrated by Head (1997, p.60).

> "The fact that female homosexuality has never been specifically a subject of legal constraint, in contrast to the situation with males, reflects the belief that women will not take a sexual initiative and their only role is to respond to a man".

Josselson's (Adams et al, 1992) theory on female identity and it's relationship to the individual's social context is very important. If girls saw themselves in terms of who they were in a relationship with and who they loved, then given the situation at Rossburgh it would make sense that there would be negative consequences to their identity development. These relationship seemed to give girls the message that they had no value. Their developmental need for this type of interaction was probably the reason that these girls could not get out of these harmful relationships.

Not all boys felt that it was a good thing to have many girlfriends. The threat of HIV / AIDS and relevant health education seems to have had some impact on their beliefs, and this was pleasing to note. One wonders if this is not peculiar to the African setting, with Kwa-Zulu Natal having alarming numbers of HIV positive people. Thus the increasing need for education programmes. Whereas for other communities in other countries the same may not be true and for male adolescents "sexual intercourse is a rite of passage, a hurdle on the road to adulthood which has to be conquered" (Head, 1997, p.60).

An area of concern, was the lack of emotional power or security that these girls expressed. The girls seemed to see their position in these relationships as precarious and hinging on their 'good behaviour'. They felt that

they had to hold onto their boyfriends, and that their emotional input into the relationships were far greater than that from the boys. That they had to work at making the relationships successful, while the boys only had to be present. This allowed the boy to pressure them into having sex, in order to ensure that the relationship survived. This phenomenon is in no way peculiar to this school setting as similar findings reported by Schofield and Lees in Head (1997).

When examined against the background of discrepancies in the number of partners males and females were expected to have, this insecurity makes sense. Since girls are expected to have fewer relationships or else they get a bad reputation, they work harder at making the one they are in work. Boys on the other hand do not have any fears of getting a bad reputation and so treat these matters more lightly.

The way in which these girl's perceive the circumstances in which they find themselves may be cause for concern. Given the seriousness of the HIV problem, the researcher is by no means suggesting that we encourage girls to increase the number of boyfriends that they have. At the same time, every relationship does not necessarily need to be of a sexual nature. Learners at Rossburgh did indicate that boys pressurised girls into having sex with them. Girls feeling the need to protect these relationships then relented. This is where

the contribution to the HIV problem comes in. So the suggestion is that we rear

males and females to perceive their opportunities in these types of relationships

to be the same. Girls would then be free to date, not be coerced into having sex

and see that they had the ability to make decisions that did not result in the

stigmatisation of them.

There is also pressure on male adolescents to have sex from their peers.

Boys at Rossburgh were expected to be 'players' and have many girlfriends, who

they 'charmed'. Head (1997) makes an interesting point in that the very thing

that liberates one can also be the thing that confines one. He examines

adolescence against the backdrop of sexual freedom and dissemination of

information regarding sexuality.

> "The effects of this greater openness on young people are complicated.
> They are better informed but, at the same time, they are more likely to
> have a sense of sexual norms to which they believe that they ought to
> adhere. A failure to have a sexual relationship, and to have sexual
> intercourse of a certain frequency and duration, may lead to social ridicule
> and personal distress."
>
> (Head, 1997, p. 58)

Another behaviour that arose from the background of conflict at this

school was stealing. There were two reasons given for this. The first was as a

means of carrying the conflict further. Students who were expelled from school

for fighting would then catch their opponents on their way to or from school and

would steal their possessions that were considered to have any value. So stealing was used as a form of further punishment.

Boys reported pressure on them to have material possessions. This would allow them to rise within the social hierarchy of the school and their peers. They would gain notoriety as a result. This in turn would make them well sought after by females adolescents within their social environments. Girls were reported to not be interested in boys who did not have material possessions and accompanying notorious reputations. According to the boys, girls wanted boys with experience. What is worrying is the frame of reference that girls and boys at this school use to determine what is success. Success appears to be linked with material wealth and the potential for crime. Boys did not just want to be famous, they wanted to be notorious. According to them, this is what the girls wanted too. The more notorious you were, the more successful you were to your peers. There was no thought given to the possible consequences of being caught stealing and the ramifications this would have on one's future.

Another interesting behaviour pattern adolescents exhibited was that of group action. They often did not act alone and this Head (1997, p. 29) explains is due to the "highly invested mutuality" that pervades during early adolescence. There was great peer pressure to fight, which will be discussed later in this

chapter. Adolescents often were part of gangs or groups and seldom existed as loners.

This impacted on their thinking and was evident during focus group sessions, where there was pressure from one another to agree on answers. This togetherness was also evident in their conflict related behaviours. If one individual was threatened, there would be group response. Group response from one quarter elicited a similar response from the other individual concerned. Thus the conflict spilt over and became bigger than was necessary. This also prevented the individuals concerned from resolving their conflict by talking it through, as others would see this as a sign of weakness. There was more potential for violence and harm when group confrontations took place, especially when it was a group against an individual. In order to gain notoriety and for protection weapons were also carried and used during such encounters, increasing the harm factor. Once other people were involved in the fight this meant that there was no walking away from it. Action had to be taken and carried through to the end. Sometimes such action involved people from outside the school itself, in the form of older brothers and friends.

So while group cohesion was necessary for identity development during adolescence it could also prove to be harmful to the individual or group members.

It contributed to adolescents delving into risky behaviours. These behaviours were also dictated by the stage of adolescence and who made up the social group at the time. During early adolescence it involved things like not backing down from a fight in the case of a boy. However, as the adolescent became older and members of the opposite sex were included into the social group the behaviours became more risky. Boys began stealing in order to gain notoriety and material wealth so as to be appealing to their females peers and girls risked sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy to remain in relationships and fit in with others. Head (1997) also describes similar findings with regards to the risk of AIDS and stealing.

On a positive note group functioning is important to adolescents being able to function in the larger world as adults. It is in this atmosphere that individuals learn to interact with one another, make friends, find their life partners, learning to work with other people (Head, 1997). These attributes are all necessary to having a successful life and should be cultivated. So the challenge is to get adolescents to interact and to develop these positive qualities and to try to minimise the negative effects of group cohesion.

5.3.3 Gender and Role Behaviour

Within groups, individual acquire roles which they are expected to carry and portray in other relationships (Head, 1997). It would appear that boys and girls had very definite ideas about what their roles were and what their behaviour should be. This distinction was formed along gender lines and was connected to how they perceived men and women and their respective roles.

While boys perceived themselves to be emotionally hard, aggressive and 'manly'. Girls saw themselves as quiet, gentle and 'lady-like'. These roles were reinforced by the social groups they formed at school. This could explain why when interacting with the opposite sex their roles and inherent behaviours remained the same. Thus boys were aggressive and domineering towards the girls, who in turn were accepting and effete. This is consistent with Archer's (Adams et al, 1992) findings where women tended to be more empathetic than their male counterparts and had less self-confidence.

There was also a case of 'them and us' with adolescents seeing the opposite sex in stereotypical ways. This view appears to be influenced by what they see at home, what they learn from various forms of information media, significant others and their peers. This feeling of separateness also applies to how they perceive their siblings of the opposite sex, as opposed to their peers of

the opposite sex. Different rules apply for one's family as opposed to one's peers. More respect and support is given to family members, even while seeing the differences. If only this philosophy of interaction could be applied across the board to all people that these adolescents come into contact with, there would be less conflict on the whole.

5.3.4 Conflict Resolution

When one looks at the data obtained and the trends of the behaviour exhibited it would appear that learners at the Rossburgh High School resolved conflict by fighting. Fighting was both verbal and physical, as was seen. Learners seem unable to resolve conflict in any other way. Sometimes, they were aware that there were other means to solve what they considered a problem as seen by the data presented in the previous chapter. This then leaves us with two questions. The first being, why have learners developed such poor conflict resolution skills, and the second deals with why they decide to fight when other options for resolution are available?

It would appear that their environment has a lot to do with how they acquire conflict resolution skills. From session three focus groups it was plain to see that learners experience a lot of violence and conflict in their residential areas. This would appear to make it a norm for them and prevent them from

seeing the reality of how bad this is. These experiences of violence could also cause stress in the adolescent and predispose them to pathology as described by Raphael (1993).

One's first place of socialisation is the family. It is where you learn to first interact and communicate with other people. The type of conflict resolution skills that your significant others possess, will greatly influence what you internalise and acquire as your own. Grade ten girls reported on how their parents interacted with them when they were annoyed. This was usually harsh and negative as was demonstrated by the one girl, whose mother called her 'stupid'.

Learners at this school did not come from adequate economic backgrounds. They tended to come from lower socio-economic families, where both parents worked in order to support the family. Economic hardship has been linked with parents displaying aggressive behaviour towards their children and to inconsistency in parenting styles (Skinner, 1992, Resnick et al, 1993). As can be seen from the harsh response the learner received from her mother in the paragraph above. This parenting style can be linked to aggressive behaviour in children, and may explain why learners at this school act out aggressively as their first form of action.

While some learners have no repertoire of appropriate skills to draw from, others do. Yet they still resort to fighting. This is probably due to the influence and pressure that peers assert. Learners sometimes react negatively, knowing full well that it is the incorrect thing to do. However, they do so to prevent themselves from being tormented and ridiculed by their peers who are watching the exchange.

> "It's like miss, I'm sitting here and he is going to say something bad about me, like chirp or something. Then I'm not going to like sit down and do nothing because they are all going to start laughing and I am going to get mad. Everyone will be laughing at me and I am going to look stupid. So if I hit him, he is going to look stupid. That's why I hit him, but I wasn't going to hit him in the first place."
>
> (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

Otis et al (1997) observes that women tend not to be 'thrill seekers'. While men on the other hand put themselves into dangerous positions. At the Rossburgh High School, females fought using verbal measures, while males used physical force. Maybe the difference in their role perceptions, which are reinforced by peers and society at large is the reason for the variation in conflict behaviour. Lack of self-confidence as discussed earlier could be the reason that women thought twice before hitting out (Adams et al, 1992). Lindeman et al (1997) also report a link between gender and conflict resolution. Males tended to be aggressive, whereas females responded by withdrawing from the situation altogether.

5.4 Effects of Age on the Conflict

As learners became older the nature of the conflict changed and so to did the behaviours that they exhibited. Firstly, the teasing that occurred from grade eight reports became more sexual in nature. Peer sexual harassment was also noted to exist by Mauro (1999) and concurs with recounts given by females group members in chapter four. So it would appear that this behaviour was not just peculiar to this school and the adolescents who took part in this study. When learners were younger it revolved around issues like mistakes made in class. However as they became older, the teasing was more related to issues around boyfriend / girlfriend relationships, promiscuity, and poor sexual performance, to cite a few. This is probably due to the fact that as adolescence progresses, members of the opposite sex become included in the social group. This leads to adolescents dating and becoming 'couples'. This new arena provides a new array of persecution and torment for victims and aggressors alike.

Female gossiping was related to friendships with other girls and the need to hold onto one's friend, when girls were in grade eight. By grade ten, gossiping was still continuing, however, it was now related to boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. Girls did talk about one another but it was linked to their relationships. They were attempting to keep a boyfriend or acquire another girl's

boyfriend. This shows the development of manipulation tactics as well. While gossiping amongst the younger girls did not seem to include the boys, nor affect them, the same cannot be said about that which occurred amongst the older girls. Gossiping here spilled over from the girls to include their boyfriends and boys reacted with embarrassment and anger to the situation. This served to increase the conflict taking place.

Head (1997) describes the peer social world during adolescence, where in early adolescence there is emphasis on same sex aggregation. This could explain the reason for the gossiping to be same sex related while learners are in grade eight. As adolescence proceeds, there is a move to include members of the opposite sex into the social picture, hence the gossiping changes it's nature and now begins to include members of the opposite sex.

Another area that revealed a change in thinking with age was with regards to girls not fighting back. The younger girls (grade eight) did not fight back when attacked, either verbally of physically by the boys because they were afraid of making the situation worse for themselves. The older girls, however, did not retaliate because they felt to do so would imply that they did not respect the boys who were fighting with them. Somewhere along the line the

girls thinking on this issue changed from concern about themselves to concern about how others perceived them and their actions.

As boys grew older, they were able to see situations from other angles other than their own. However, this did not change their behaviour for the better. Their identity was also very much wrapped up in their peers and their standing within this community.

During early adolescence, teenagers tend to agree with one another on all issues and there is a great need to belong to a group. As they grow older, there is development of individual thinking and ideas, and the need to conform to the group decreases (Head, 1997). This can be seen by the interaction between group members themselves. Grade eight boys tended to agree with one another during focus groups. However, by grade ten there was a difference, with individuals being able to insist on their own points of view, despite other group members' disagreement.

For the boys behaviour became more sexual, moving from teasing to physical things such as rubbing up against girls and touching them on their breasts, buttocks and genitalia. This is probably explained by the inclusion of females into their social world and the development of attraction to them. Boys also began to see their roles as more authoritarian with a need to control and

discipline their female counterparts. As they grew older they saw themselves as being more powerful and superior to the females that they were in relationships with. The boys were often in relationships with younger girls rather than girls of their own age. This could also be explained as a normal consequence of puberty and the delay in development between boys and girls. Girls tended to mature faster than boys by about two years (Head, 1997). This could be the reason that they seek out older boys who have already achieved a certain physical and psychological maturity. There was no data to indicate that a similar result would occur if they were in relationships with girls of their own ages.

5.5 Genesis of Gender Conflict

When probed further about what they considered to be the origins of the conflict, all focus groups gave the same answer. That it was predominantly due to romantic relationships between fellow learners or with learners from other schools or non-school attenders. It would appear that dating took place widely and often resulted in conflict between the couple.

So it was agreed that the major cause of conflict was the boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. However, deeper analysis needs to be done to get to the root of the problem. The roles that male and female adolescents adopt and portray are the reasons for them acting in such a manner. These roles are

learned and are very much dependent on the environments. This is probably due to what Erikson sees as passive identity, where the adolescent's role and identity is given to them by others, in this case their peers (Adams et al, 1992). When questioned further focus groups started to provide information about who they saw as role models to themselves and to others, in short where behaviour and attitudes were acquired from. They suggested that role models were parents, peers, relatives such as aunts and uncles, and older siblings. They also reported learning behaviour and attitudes from television programmes and being influenced by lyrics of music, as outlined in Figure 3.

5.5.1 Parents

As discussed in chapter two adolescence is a vital period in the development of one's identity. The world in which the adolescent lives, to a large extent influences that development, both negatively and positively. Adolescents need to have role models after whom they can model their behaviour as well as their thinking. One of the main role models that adolescents learn from are their parents.

From discussion with the different focus groups at the Rossburgh High School it became clear that these adolescents have difficulty communicating

with their parents about issues that are personal to them. One of the reasons that they gave was that they were afraid. If one looks at the issue of boyfriend / girlfriend relationships these adolescents had been instructed by their parents that they were not to have such relationships. So problems experienced within these relationships could not be discussed with parents. Thus a source of good advice and thought development was closed off to these adolescents as a result of this ruling by parents. Ngendane (1985) suggests that a lack of guidance during adolescence can lead to unwanted behaviours such as teenage pregnancies, which the girls at the Rossburgh High School agreed with.

Head (1997) asserts that teenagers and parents have a perception of distance from one another. The reason for this are the incorrect ideas that both groups have of the other's life. Adolescents see adults as having very unrestricted lives, where they are free to do whatever they want to. Adults never appear to have to answer to anyone for anything. According to Head (1997, p.26), "adults also have their myths". To him adults have a romantic notion that adolescence is a carefree period in one's life, with no worries and many good opportunities to make the best of one's future.

On both sides these perceptions appear to be incorrect. Adults lives are controlled by responsibilities, financial issues, legal restrictions etc. related to

daily life. Adolescence is a time of great confusion, of trying to decide who one is and where one fits in. Irrespective of how incorrect these perceptions may be, they impact on the gap that appears to exist between parents and adolescents. Thus preventing both the parties from talking and sharing information, ideas, problem, solutions etc.

Other factors also contribute to this lack of understanding between the two groups. Puberty appears to be occurring at an earlier age, with adolescents maturing earlier. At the same time there is more opportunity for higher education. Careers have to be studied for and this means that adolescents are dependent on parents for a longer time. This serves to delay "entry into adulthood" (Head, 1997, p. 26). As a result the young person is attempting to gain independence which is somewhat restricted by their unavoidable dependence, which can lead to frustration. This may not be totally applicable to this group of adolescents as economic hardship may make higher education unavailable to them. As a result they may need to leave school and start working immediately, gaining financial independence from their parents.

Frustration can also be caused by parents worrying over the safety of their children and thus restricting their movements. Head (1997) appears to think that this fear by parents is merely a perception rather than a reality.

Whilst this may be true for first world countries like the United States of America and England, as cited in his book, this is a very real thing for South African parents. The high crime rates and occurrence of violence that one hears of, sees and reads about on the South African radio broadcasts, television broadcasts and in local and national newspapers, speak for themselves.

There is another reason that ties in with the adolescent attempting to achieve independence and to seek acceptance by one's peers. As medical care advances and the lifespan of people increase, the gap between adults and adolescents increase. Adolescents, parents and grandparents may have opportunity to interact together. Adolescents shy away from such activities as they are afraid that their peers may see them as immature (Head, 1997). An example of a similar finding was cited in chapter four, where a boy was laughed at by the rest of the focus group for admitting that he talked to his mother about his relationship with his girlfriend.

According to Head (1997) adolescent gatherings have had less and less adult supervision. He cited the decrease in formal and organised gatherings like the boy scouts, girl guides and youth clubs as the reason. Adolescents seem to be more involved in activities that exclude adults. This results in adults and adolescents spending less time together, interacting less and as a result not

being able to understand one another. Thus two separate cultures develop. Family connectedness is vital to the formation of resilience in adolescent and affords them protection against negativity (Resnick et al, 1993). Therefore, it is essential that parents and children maintain cohesion during adolescence.

Another reason for the distance between parents and adolescents is the discomfort that adolescents began to feel with adults. This is due to their identity development and the process of decentring. At this stage, adolescent become more aware of other people in their social environment and become less egocentric. However, this also creates in them a feeling of being self-conscious, as they are not totally passed the egocentric stage of their life. Hence they assume that other people are focussing on them and feel discomfort at being under perceived scrutiny (Head, 1997). What is important from the data presented is that even though there is little talking taking place between parents and adolescents on the issues of relationships, adolescents at the Rossburgh High School do seem to value what their parents have to say. This argues well for future discourse.

Cultural unacceptability was another explanation for the lack of communication about personal issues between parents and children, with respondents citing the Zulu culture as being closed to discourse on these

subjects. It was also cultural differences that created an unease in adolescent girls towards discussion of personal issues with their fathers. As a result parents were not in the position to guide their children in terms of what is correct behaviour, appropriate and healthy attitudes, thoughts and feelings. This resulted in the adolescent looking to other people as role models.

This lack of communication between parents and children within the context of South African black families could be due to historical reasons. Black parents in order to make a living and keep their families provided for spent less and less time at home, resulting in decreased chances for interaction between parents and children (Stevens and Lockhat, 1997, Rutter, 1995). So even though the situation has changed, behaviour within the family still needs to be modified for the best result. This would mean having to work with both parents and children, to get them talking to one another.

Some mentioned older brothers and sisters, however, one needs to examine the age difference. As these older siblings could be not much more socially evolved than their younger siblings who they were advising.

> "Sometimes your brother. You go to your brother and you ask for advice, and sometimes he will tell you to hit her."   (Grade Ten Boys / Session Two)

There was also mention of aunts and uncles, who appeared to understand these adolescents as they themselves were still single and dating. From information presented it would seem that these were not always the best people to give advice and whose example to follow. One grade ten boy said that his role model was his uncle. He had learnt how to behave towards girls from his uncle, who himself had many girlfriends.

5.5.2 Peers

According to Head (1997, p 29), "one consequence of the deterioration of relationships with adults is a compensatory dependence on the peer group". While this is a very necessary thing in the life of the adolescent it can also have negative consequences. At the Rossburgh High School it would appear that peer influence does spill over into conflict related behaviours, where there is influence from peers to either hit, in the case of the boys or accept the hiding, in the case of the girls.

Both boys and girls spoke about boys being encouraged by their peers to hit their girlfriends or suffer ridicule by their friends. Girls were also telling each other that if your boyfriend hits you, it was a sign that he loved you. This type of reinforcement makes it difficult to effect change. Thus men grow up thinking that it's okay to hit women and women grow up believing that it's okay to

be hit. With the groundwork for such stereotypical thinking being laid so early, the struggle to empower women and prevent violence against them becomes more and more difficult. In light of this, the statistics for rape in South Africa presented earlier do not seem surprising.

Peers were also instrumental in same sex fighting. They egged one another on to pursue a fight and to demonstrate their power, as in the case of boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. This was often done publicly with the adolescent concerned being unable to withdraw from the situation without appearing weak. Adolescents also turned to peers privately for advice on how to handle conflict situations. The advice that was given was usually to fight. Hence there was a vicious circle, since they were not getting advice from older and more experienced people, with different ideas on conflict resolution. As a result adolescents were role modelling negative behaviour, thoughts and feelings, with no growth taking place.

Social context is imperative to identity formation. An unhealthy social context could lead to problems with identity development. What can be seen from the information presented is that there is a distance between parents and their children. This lack of communication is especially notably on the subject of boyfriend / girlfriend relationships. Adolescent were taking their information,

choices, beliefs and value from peers (Ngendane, 1985). According to Erikson and Blos this use of social context is normal and necessary (Adams et al, 1992). The adolescent is supposed to make his or her own choices and get confirmation and acceptance from one's community. However, they are looking at adult confirmation and acceptance. So it is imperative that adolescents and adults are drawn into the same social context, where adolescents can have more reliable role models from which to learn and thus, exhibit more socially acceptable values and behaviours (Rutter, 1995).

5.5.3 Others

As was mentioned earlier in this chapter, girls at the school saw material possessions as an indicator that a boy would make a good boyfriend. Peer groups during adolescence appear to place emphasis on notoriety, and give that person more group status. When this was looked into further, it was evident that the girls were taking their cue from the popular female music group 'TLC', who in their song entitled 'No Scrub' describe a man without material possessions as not being a worthy suitor. The song is about refusing the attention of a guy, who does not have his own car, who still walks to get to places, or travels in his best friend's car, who still lives at home with his mother, who appears not to have any

ambition and no job or money. This type of person is called a 'scrub' and the song says that he is unwanted and will not be able to get any love from the girls.

It would appear that the girls at the school have internalised this song and used it to help them judge what is acceptable and what is not in terms of who to date. Looking at the information presented in chapter two by Stevens and Lockhat (1997) this begins to make sense. During the apartheid regime, blacks were not allowed free access to capitalism and material wealth meant moving up the ranks of society. After the fall of apartheid the world of capitalism with it's benefits was now accessible by all. However, previous inequalities still had placed blacks at a disadvantage where they had difficulty acquiring these possessions.

Thus South African black youth looked to the West and identified with their lifestyles and wanted to aspire to that. This could be the reason that these adolescents put emphasis on material possessions, because it was a sign that, that individual had risen above the ranks of others socially and his lifestyle was closer to their American icons. He would then make a good boyfriend who would be able to help his girlfriend aspire and get to the same level, thus improving her status. Stewart (Lieblich and Josselson, 1994) gives concurring examples of situations where historical events have impacted on how adolescents perceive the world in which they live in.

Figure 3: Dynamics of the Gender Conflict
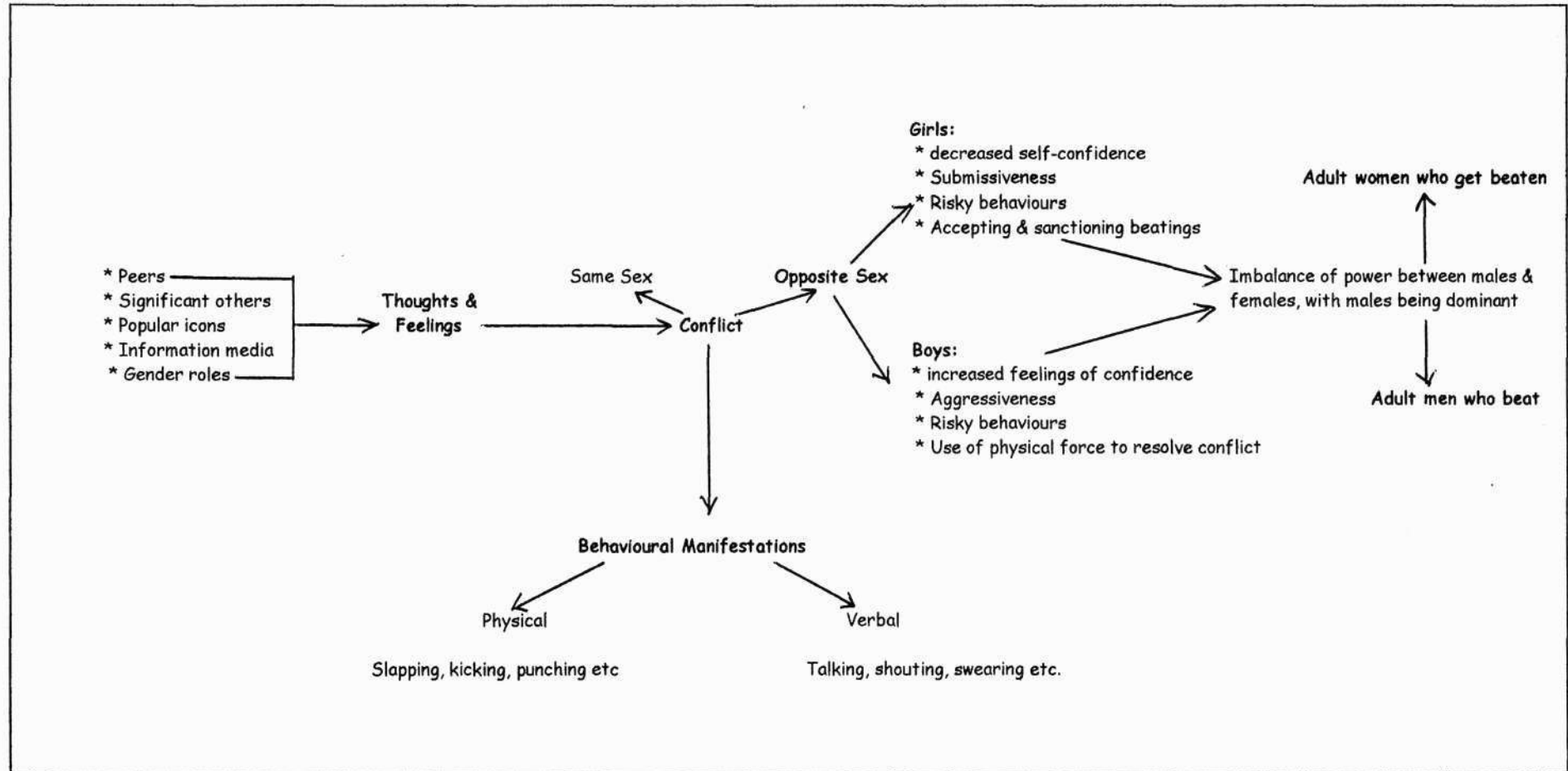
5.6 Recommendations

5.6.1 Service: Clearly programmes need to be developed to get

adolescents and the parents to interact. These significant others are vital to

their identity development and can only monitor and support this process if

closeness is achieved. From data presented it was clear that children and

parents were not talking, especially not about relationships with the opposite

sex. A recommendation to aid this process of discourse would be to organise

more social gatherings where learners and parents would get the opportunity to

interact and learn about each other. This would create comfort and encourage

communication and openness.

Adolescents also have difficulty talking to adults about intimate issues

such as sexuality and related topics, as they may not possess the language skills

to explain themselves and their needs. Head (1997, p. 28) suggests that in order

to overcome this problem, "one of the roles of formal sex education is to expose

the young to the appropriate discourse so that they feel able to talk to adults".

Thus formal sex education programmes need to be put into place to make

adolescents feel more at ease discussing such matters.

Interaction between adults and adolescent is very important to the

identity development of the adolescents. So emphasis needs to be placed here to

encourage this process. However, it would appear that there are cultural

barriers to this process which have negative consequences on adolescent identity development. So it is clear that the parents of these adolescents need to be involved in any programmes or interventions to assist positive identity development. In that way the benefit is two-fold, for obvious reasons to the adolescent and secondly to the parents, who may have not had the benefits of such interaction with their own parents. Thus adolescent would be able to develop their own identities, make their own decisions, but yet still be supported by their parents and other significant adults (Adams et al, 1992, Head, 1997). It would appear that both boys and girls had very definite ideas about their roles, which were dependent on their gender. Interventions need to be aimed at changing how they see themselves and each other, if they are to get along with one another and a balance of power is to be attained. Stereotypical behaviour and thinking needs to be modified to create greater understanding between the boys and the girls at this school. Males and females also need to be encouraged to interact with supervision and learn about each other's 'world' and perceptions. Communication is also important in getting males and females to understand one another.

While peer togetherness is normal and to be encouraged during adolescence, it is also important that adolescents be involved in activities with supervision by adults. This would prevent or help to decrease at the very least

risky and negative behaviour. Programmes involving sport, music, art, drama etc. can allow learners to have positive experiences of accomplishment and would go a long way to improving their self-esteem and self-confidence. These activities also need to be centred on conflict resolution, development of appropriate skills and role behaviours, as learners need to learn how to resolve conflict amicably and without harm to one another.

5.6.2 Research: Previous research has done much to create an understanding of adolescence and it's effects. However, it would appear that we have just managed to scrape the surface of this important period in the life of human beings. We seem to have an understanding of the social interactions that occur and their likely effects. This allows us to be able to predict outcome to some extent. It would then seem natural that the focus of further research should be on attempting to change outcome, for the benefit of the adolescent and society at large. Research should be aimed at adolescent programme development, interventions to foster healthy attitudes and behaviours, evaluation of such programmes and the effects thereof.

More research also needs to be done in the area of adolescent beliefs, attitudes and feelings as it is obvious that it effects behaviour both positively and negatively. Studies should focus on what these beliefs, attitudes and

feelings are, what affects them and what are the results thereof. Greater knowledge would make it easier to intervene timeously and appropriately.

From the literature review and the information presented in this chapter it is clear that the environment does influence how adolescents think, feel and behave. Having said that, it would then be appropriate that further avenues for research should include studying adolescents of different backgrounds and seeing if their environments have different effects on their thinking, feelings and behaviour. One would then be able to see if results can be replicated or if they differ. This would go a long way in assisting to create environments that are conducive to socially acceptable outcomes.

5.7 Conclusion

While adolescent may not have the power to decide on their environments and it may be selected for them, due to family setup, financial constraints, racial and ethnic background etc, they are not prisoner to their social contexts (Rutter, 1995, Stevens and Lockhat, 1997). Adolescent still have the ability to monitor and control their responses and behaviours within their environments. Hence the aim should be at getting adolescents to accept responsibility for themselves and their actions, and to give thought to the consequences before acting out. Hopefully, this will help to create better understanding between the men and women of tomorrow for the benefit of society on the whole. Thus the

aim of programmes geared at the adolescents of the Rossburgh High School

should be the creation of resilience by activities that make them feel more in

control of their own lives.

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Annexure
1

Focus group questions

Session one (thoughts and feelings)

1. What do you understand by the term conflict?

2. Does conflict occur between the girls and the boys at this school?

3. Who fights or has conflict with who, ie. boys with girls / girls with boys / boys with boys / girls with girls?

4. Why do you think that conflict exists?

5. What do you think about the fighting / conflict that is taking place?

6. How do you feel about the conflict?

7. Have you experienced the conflict personally?

8. How did this make you feel at the time it was happening?

9. Have you watched this type of conflict taking place?

10. What did you think and feel while watching the conflict taking place?

Focus group questions

Sessions two (behaviours related to the conflict)

1. When conflict is taking place at this school between learners, what types of behaviours are they displaying?

2. Give me examples of situations that demonstrate the behaviour.

3. What do they say to one another?

4. What does what they are saying mean to you?

5. What do they do to one another?

6. What does what they are doing mean to you?

7. Where are these behaviours taking place?

8. Do you think that they are doing harm to one another?

9. Do you feel safe at the time?

10. Is there pressure from others to display this type of behaviours?

11. If so, from who and in what situations?

12. Does the behaviour affect your school work and in what way?

Focus Group Questions

Session three (other experiences of violence)

1. Please tell me what other experiences of conflict or violence you have had, besides that seen or encountered in school.

2. Please tell me where these incidents took place.

3. What were your feelings and reactions towards the violence or conflict taking place?

Annexure
2

28 July 1999

For Attention: The Principal
Rossburgh High School
Durban

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: **Research Study on Gender Conflict**

In a needs assessment that was done in your institution in 1998, the "Crime Prevention in Schools Project" (University of Natal) discovered that some form of conflict existed between male and female learners. This was described by Ms. O'Brien in her 1998 report as "boys bullying girls". This is of concern, as we in South Africa appear to have statistics of violence against women that are amongst the highest in the world. What could begin during adolescence as girls being bullied by boys, could in effect sow the seeds for violence against women in adult life.

I, in conjunction with the "Crime Prevention in Schools Project", propose that a research study be undertaken to understand and document this problem. Once this is done, intervention strategies can be developed to firstly, prevent this type of conflict from occurring and secondly, to resolve conflict of this nature where it exists. Thereby, contributing to a harmonious relationship between male and female learners, and towards decreasing violence against women in the future. As such I am writing to you to request permission to conduct this study at your institution.

Please find enclosed a research proposal outlining the study to be undertaken, which I am sure will answer any questions that you may have. However, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries regarding this matter.

Yours faithfully,

_____
Ms. Ravani Chetty
Researcher

University of Natal
School of Nursing
Research Proposal

"Gender conflict amongst adolescents at the Rosburgh High School, Durban."

Introduction

Adolescence is a time of great change in the life of a human being. The physical and emotional changes that occur can result in conflict within the individual, as well as with those interacting with that particular individual. Conflict if not detected and resolved can have far reaching consequences for the individual and society as a whole.

In 1998 the Faculty of Community and Development Disciplines (CADD) embarked on a project entitled "Crime Prevention in Schools, A Pilot Project of the University of Natal: Office of Community Programmes, Linking home to school and school to community". This project is aimed at intervention with crime prevention at schools (both primary and secondary).

A needs assessment was conducted in the three schools where the project was to have its main focus. One of the problems that came out of the Rossburgh High School was the conflict that appeared to exist between male and female learners at the school. The problem was verbalised and documented as "boys bully girls in

school" (O'Brien, 1998). Given this, what may start off as simply 'boys bullying girls' may have far reaching consequences for those involved as they reach adulthood. The need that arose from this problem was for an intervention strategy to bring about a "change in boys' behaviour towards girls" (O'Brien, 1998). Thus bringing to the fore the need to understand the events that surround the problem and the need to intervene timeously.

Theoretical Framework

The cognitive framework will guide this research study since this approach anticipates that a person's thoughts have an influence over their feelings and this in turn will influence that individual's behaviour (Uys, Pietersen and Middleton, 1994). Uys, Pietersen and Middleton (1994) cite the application of this framework as being suitable for interpersonal conflicts.

Research Objectives

In examining the problem of gender conflict, the researcher hopes to fulfill the following broad objectives:

(i) To describe the thoughts and feelings of gender conflict that exists amongst the adolescents.

(ii) To describe the behavioural manifestations of the conflict.

(iii) To ascertain whether the extent and nature of the conflict undergoes a change as adolescents become older.

(iv) To analyse the genesis of the gender conflict.

Methodology

A phenomenological qualitative research design will be used for this study, since according to Burns and Grove (1995), this approach attempts to describe experiences as they are lived by the participants. This approach is used when one is trying to understand or study a particular phenomenon that is taking place, which in this instance would be 'boys bullying girls'.

The school will be divided into junior secondary and senior secondary categories. Junior secondary will be made up of standards six and seven, whilst senior secondary comprise standards eight, nine and ten. Approximately ten male learners and ten female learners will be selected from both junior and senior secondary categories, thus making up four groups. These participants will be selected on their willingness to take part in the study and on whether they have experience of the phenomenon that is being studied, ie. where they have been involved in conflict of this nature or have been witness to it. As a result the number of participants will be approximately 40 in total. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size is not seen as a primary consideration.

Data Collection

Data collection will take place by means of focus groups. There will be four focus groups and these will be made up of participants as follows:

(i) Group one: approximately ten females learners from the junior secondary category,

(ii) Group two: approximately ten male learners from the junior secondary category,

(iii) Group three: approximately ten female learners from the senior secondary category, and

(iv) Group four: approximately ten male learners from the senior secondary category.

By creating such distinct categories and separating participants it is hoped that variations in information provided, due to gender (sex) and age, may come to the fore. This division into categories of gender and sex is also necessary for purposes of triangulation.

The researcher will be instrumental in facilitating group process, by means of probing questions, to illicit information. The focus groups will be held at the Rossburgh High School, during term time by arrangement with the school and the necessary education authorities, for easy access to the learners. All focus group sessions will be tape recorded to make data capture effective. This will also prevent disruption of flow during the focus group, which may take place if the researcher attempts to make copious notes during the group session. Focus groups will be a maximum of two hours in duration.

Each focus group will be asked to participate in three sessions. According to the

cognitive framework that is being utilised, the first session for each of the focus groups will concentrate on eliciting data related to individual's and group thoughts and feelings relevant to the gender conflict. The second focus group session will focus on behaviour manifestations of the conflict that exists at Rossburgh Secondary School, that is personal and observed. The final focus group session will attempt to elicit data related to incidents of conflict and violence that group participants may observe on their way to school or in the communities in which they reside.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research the processes of data collection and data analysis go hand in hand. As data is being collected the researcher will attempt to identify themes and patterns that would assist with further data collection, and to sort information into categories to form some sort of picture for presentation. For all data obtained from the focus groups, the unit of analysis will be the whole statement. Nud*st software will be utilised to analyse the data obtained, to identify themes and categories that emerge. This software was developed specifically for the analysis of qualitative data and will enable the researcher to manipulate the large volume of information that will be obtained, thereby identifying text segments, placing these segments into appropriate categories and showing the relationship between categories as they emerge.

Verification

It is hoped that internal validity of information will be achieved by the different

focus groups themselves. Other group members will be listening to accounts and will

be able to vouch for the accuracy of 'accountee's' story / information and they will

also be able to establish whether it fits into what they perceived as reality.

Verification of information will also be conducted by 'feedback' to informants.

They will then be asked to comment on the accuracy of the conclusions. Due to the

nature of the study, external validity and reliability cannot be ensured and may

result in difficulty in replicating this type of study.

Ethical Considerations

Once participants have been selected, they will be asked to give verbal consent to

participate in the study. Since the learners are legally under the age of being able

to give consent, written consent will be sought from their parents.

Anonymity will be maintained by using only the first names of the participants

during focus groups sessions, and data capture. No personal details will be asked of

participants. In order to put the reader into the broader picture of the

participants some general demographic data will be provided. This information was

obtained by the 'Crime Prevention in the Schools Project'. Confidentiality will be

maintained with regards to information obtained from participants. All information

obtained during focus groups will be used specifically to understand the problem

that exists and for the development of appropriate intervention strategies after the study is complete. This will be conveyed to participants.

Reporting of Findings

In keeping with the phenomenological approach, a descriptive narrative will be produced. This narrative will be discussed in light of relevant theories and current literature on the issue of adolescent gender conflict. The final product will attempt to give the reader an idea of the thoughts, feelings and behaviours surrounding the conflict as perceived by the informants.

Annexure
3

Dear Parents,

RE: **Research study on Gender Conflict at the Rossburgh High School**

In 1998 the "Crime Prevention in Schools Project" at the University of Natal carried out a needs assessment at the Rossburgh High School, which your child attends. The idea was to find out what problems faced the learners, the teachers and the school as a whole, that could contribute to increased crime. One of the problems that exists at this school is that girls are being bullied by boys.

In South Africa we appear to have a lot of crime or violence against women. In fact, we have the highest rape statistics in the entire world, at the moment. What could start out as 'boys bullying girls' during adolescence, could later become violence against women in adult life.

I, together with "Crime Prevention in Schools Project" would like to undertake a research study at the Rossburgh High School, to understand and document this problem. After the study is complete, we might be able to help solve this problem where it does exist. The hope is to get male and female pupils to interact without bullying or fighting, making the school a safe and pleasant place for all.

The research will be conducted during the month of August. Pupils will be asked to volunteer for the study. These pupils will be those who have experienced this problem themselves or who have witnessed it take place. Your child has volunteered to participate and we would appreciate it if you give written permission to allow your child to take part in this study.

The study will take the form of group interviews, where your child will be a group member, together with other pupils. Your child will take part in three such group interviews. During these interviews you child will be asked about their thoughts and feelings regarding the problem, as well as to describe behaviours that they may have seen related to this problem. These group interviews will be conducted at the school, during school hours and will not be longer than two hours in duration. If after one or two sessions your child wants to withdraw, he or she is free to do so.

All information given by your child will be confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this study. No personal information will be asked of your child. Your child will remain anonymous, as only the first name of your child will be used in interviews and false names will be used in the written document. Your child's participation will in no way affect their school life.

At the end of the study a written documented will be drawn up, detailing the problem of 'boys bullying the girls'. A copy will be made available to the school, and will be available for you to see if you so wish to do so.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries regarding this study. I can be reached during office hours at: 031 - 260 3317.

Thank you for your assistance with this matter. Please fill out the attached form, giving permission for your child to take part in this study.

Yours faithfully,

_____

Ms. Ravani Chetty
Researcher

Title of proposed research study:

"Gender conflict at the Rossburgh High School, Durban."

Consent Form:

I _____ (mother / father) of _____

hereby, give permission for my child to take part in the above mentioned study being conducted

at the Rossburgh High School. I have read the 'information to parents' and understand what the

study is about and the role my child will be expected to play.

Signature: _____   **Date:** _____

✂*Please tear off and keep, for future reference*

Researcher:

Ms. Ravani Chetty

☎ 031 - 260 3317

Please do not hesitate to contact the researcher if there are any questions that you need answered.

Thank you!