

The pain of exclusion: Towards a theological ethic of inclusion
for a faith-based independent girls school in South Africa

by

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ABSTRACT

The pain of exclusion: Towards a theological ethic of inclusion for a faith-based independent girls' school in South Africa

In this study, social exclusion in an independent, faith-based girl's school in South Africa was investigated. Bullying is widely recognised as being unacceptable and is addressed by many schools in the form of anti-bullying policies. However, on ongoing basis, girls are being socially excluded from relationships and because this behaviour is often so subtle, it is neither recognised as a form of bullying nor is it being addressed within schools. Theologians argue that educational institutions ought to evaluate the ethical dimension of knowledge construction and that a focus on moral norms, values and virtues need to be a fundamental part of such communities, so that the well-being of its members is fostered. Unless problems such as social exclusion are understood from a theological-ethical perspective, it is unlikely that there will be a permanent change in girls' behaviour. Changing societies that accommodate bullying requires changes in perspectives, attitudes and behaviour, and schools can make a significant contribution in providing a community in which every child feels accepted and is afforded dignity.

This study offers a theoretical-ethical perspective of social exclusion and draws on insights from the fields of theological ethics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. The reasons why girls are socially excluded, the girls' and the school's systemic patterns of behaviour and what educators can do to develop an inclusive community are identified. To determine to what extent the theory was supported, alumnae were asked to complete the questionnaires and be interviewed. Some staff members also completed questionnaires and agreed to be interviewed.

The findings of the empirical research indicated that the theoretical research was largely supported. Some interesting observations emerged from the questionnaires and interviews

that expanded the understanding of social exclusion. One important finding was that the girls who are being excluded from social relationships feel that they are to blame and that they somehow deserve to be excluded. They experience strong feelings of shame as well as loss of self-esteem. This prevents them from discussing or reporting the problem and therefore the structures that are in place for such reporting are not effective. Another important finding was that there is a disconnection between the girls and the staff regarding the effectiveness of current interventions. Therefore, based on the theoretical research and the findings of the empirical data, this dissertation makes recommendations for establishing a community that promotes the well-being and dignity of all.

Key Terms: Social exclusion, moral development, spiritual development, social development, faith-based independent schools, girls' relationships, bullying, power, stigmatisation, prejudice, peer pressure, community, Ubuntu, Sinai covenant, Jesus' inclusivity, theological ethics.

OPSOMMING

Die pyn van uitsluiting: Op weg na 'n teologiese etiek van insluiting vir 'n geloofsgebaseerde, onafhanklike meisieskool in Suid-Afrika

In hierdie studie is ondersoek ingestel na sosiale uitsluiting in 'n onafhanklike, geloofsgebaseerde meisieskool in Suid-Afrika. Treitering word wyd as onaanvaarbaar erken en word deur baie skole in die vorm van anti-treiterbeleide aangeroer. Dit is egter so dat baie meisies voortdurend op sosiale vlak uit verhoudings gesluit word en omdat hierdie gedrag so subtiel is, word dit nie as 'n vorm van treitering erken nie en dit word ook nie in skole aangespreek nie. Teoloë voer aan dat opvoedkundige instellings die etiese dimensie van kenniskonstruksie behoort te evalueer en dat 'n fokus op morele norme, waardes en deugde noodwendig 'n fundamentele deel van sodanige gemeenskappe behoort te wees sodat die welsyn van gemeenskapslede bevorder kan word. Tensy probleme soos sosiale uitsluiting vanuit 'n teologies-etiese perspektief hanteer gaan word, is dit onwaarskynlik dat daar enige permanente verandering in die meisies se gedrag sal wees. Om samelewings wat treitering

akkommodeer te verander, vereis verandering in perspektiewe, houdings en gedrag en skole kan 'n aansienlike bydrae lewer om 'n gemeenskap te vestig waarin elke kind aanvaarding en waardigheid ervaar.

Hierdie studie bied 'n teoretiese-etiese perspektief ten opsigte van sosiale uitsluiting en steun op insigte uit velde soos sosiologie, sielkunde en antropologie. Die studie identifiseer redes waarom meisies sosiaal uitgesluit word, die meisies sowel as die skool se sistemiese gedragspatrone, en wat opvoeders kan doen om 'n inklusiewe gemeenskap te ontwikkel. Om te bepaal tot watter mate die teorie ondersteun word, is oudleerders gevra om vraelyste te voltooi en om aan onderhoude deel te neem. Sommige personeellede het ook vraelyste voltooi en tot onderhoude ingestem.

Die bevindinge van die empiriese navorsing het getoon dat die teoretiese navorsing grotendeels ondersteun word. 'n Paar interessante waarnemings het uit die vraelyste en onderhoude geblyk. Hierdie waarnemings het die verstaan van sosiale uitsluiting heelwat verbreed. Een belangrike bevinding is dat meisies wat van sosiale verhoudings uitgesluit word, voel dat hulle die blaam daarvoor moet dra en dat hulle om een of ander rede verdien om uitgesluit te word. Hulle ervaar sterk gevoelens van skaamte sowel as verlies aan selfwaarde. Dit weerhou hulle daarvan om die probleem te bespreek of te rapporteer en daarom is sodanige rapporteringstrukture nie doeltreffend nie. 'n Ander belangrike bevinding is dat daar nie 'n uniforme begrip is tussen die meisies en die personeel ten opsigte van die doeltreffendheid van huidige intervensies nie. Daarom, gebaseer op die teoretiese navorsing en die bevindinge van die empiriese data, maak hierdie dissertasie aanbevelings ten opsigte van die skep van 'n gemeenskap wat die welstand en waardigheid van almal bevorder.

Sleutelwoorde: Sosiale uitsluiting, morele ontwikkeling, geestelike ontwikkeling, sosiale ontwikkeling, geloofsgebaseerde onafhanklike skole, meisies se verhoudings, teistering, mag, stigmatisering, vooroordeel, portuurgroepdruk, gemeenskap, ubuntu, Sinai-verbond, Jesus se inklusiwiteit, teologiese etiek.

ISISHWANKATHELO

Intlungu yokubukulwa: imizamo esebenzisa inqobo yezelizwi yokudibanisa, kwisikolo samantombazana esisekelwe elukholweni emzantsi afrika

Kwesi sifundo kuphandwe ngokubukulwa kwisikolo samantombazana esizimeleyo nesisekelwe elukholweni eMzantsi Afrika. Ububhovubhovu buthathwa jikelele njengento engamkelekanga kwaye kuyaliwa nabo kwizikolo ezininzi ngokusebenzisa imigaqo nkqubo yokulwa ububhovubhovu. Noxa kunjalo, kuyaqhubeka ukubukulwa kwamantombazana kubudlelwane obuthile. Ngenxa yokuba lo mkhwa usenzeka mayana kakhulu, awuqondwa njengobubhovubhovu kwaye akukho nto yenziwayo ezikolweni. Iingcali zakwaLizwi zithi amaziko emfundo kufuneka ayivavanye inkalo yolwazi lwesimilo esinyulu, agxininise kwiinqobo zokuziphatha, nezexabiso lobuntu ekufuneka zibe yinxalenye esisiseko kwabahlala kula maziko, ukwenzela ukuba baphatheke kakuhle bonke abahlala apho. Ukuba iingxaki ezifana nokubukulwa aziqondwa ngokwenkalo yezokholo nobunyulu, mhlawumbi akungekhe kubekho umahluko ekuziphatheni kwamantombazana. Ukuguqula uluntu olwamkela ububhovubhovu kufuna ukutshintshwa kweembono, izimvo nokuziphatha kwaye ke izikolo zingafaka igxalaba kakhulu ekumiseleni imiphakathi apho wonke umntwana eziva amkelekile, aphaatheke ngesidima.

Esi sifundo siveza inkalo yokucinga esekelwe kwingcingane yobunyulu yokubukulwa, kwaye ithabathela kwizimvo zezifundo zobunyulu bezokholo, ezentlalo, ezobume bomphefumlo nengqondo, nezeengcambu zoluntu nezizwe. Izizathu zokubukulwa kwamantombazana ekuhlaleni, imigaqo nkqubo yezikolo nokunokwenziwa ziititshala ekuphuhliseni imiphakathi edibanisayo yimiba echongiweyo. Ukuze kubonwe ukuba ingaba le ngingane inenkxaso engakanani na, kwacelwa abafundi bakudala beli ziko ukuba baphendule uluhlu lwemibuzo, bavume nokudlana indlebe nabaphandi. Bakhona nabanye abasebenzi beziko abaluphendulayo uluhlu lwemibuzo, bavuma nokudlana indlebe nabaphandi.

Okwafunyaniswayo kuphando olusekelwe kubungqina babonisa ukuba ngokwenene, ingcingane yophando yayinenkxaso kakhulu. Kwavela amanqaku anomdla kwiimpendulo zemibuzo nodliwano ndlebe, kwaye oko kwalwandisa ulwazi malunga nokubukulwa

eluntwini lwendawo. Okunye okubalulekileyo phakathi kwezinto ezafunyaniswayo yaba kukuba amantombazana abukulwayo kubudlelwane nabanye babeziva ngathi banetyala, kwaye bafanele ukubukulwa. La mantombazana ayeziva engathi asehlazweni kwaye ayengazixabisanga. Le nto yenza ukuba angayixeli le mpatho, angafuni nokuba kuxoxwe ngayo. Ngoko ke imiqathango ebekelwe ukuxela lo mkhwa ayisebenzi. Kwaphinda kwafunyaniswa ukuba kukho ukungadibani phakathi kwamantombazana nabasebenzi malunga nempumelelo yemiqathango yokuwakhusela. Ngoko ke, ngokukhokelwa luphando lwengcingane nobungqina obufunyaniswe kuphando, le ngxelo yophando inika iingcebiso zokuseka umphakathi okhuthaza ukuphatheka kakuhle nangesidima komntu wonke.

Amagama aphambili: Ukubukulwa ekuhlaleni, ukuphuhlisa kwesimilo, ukuphuhlisa kwezomphefumlo nomoya, ukuphuhlisa kwezentlalo, izikolo ezizimeleyo ezisekelwe elukholweni, ubudlelwane bamantombazana, ububhovubhovu, amagunya, ukuhlaza, ukugxeka okungenasizathu, uxinzelelo lwabalingane, umphakathi, ubuntu, isibhambathiso seSinai, ukubandakanya kukaYesu, iinqobo zesimilo zakwaLizwi.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, people have built walls: the Great Wall of China was built to protect the country from invaders from the north (Mark n.d.); Hadrian's Wall in England was built to protect the Romans from the "barbarians" in Scotland (History of Hadrian's Wall, n.d.); and the Berlin Wall separated the eastern part of Berlin from the western zone after World War II (Berlin Wall: History, dates and the fall, 2019). When Mr Donald Trump became President of the United States of America in 2017, one of his key promises was that a wall was to be built along the entire border between the USA and Mexico to prevent Mexicans from entering the USA illegally (BBC 2019). In many homes in South Africa, it is impossible to see into the gardens because high walls surround the properties. A "wall" can be a fence, a moat, or even a ditch – any physical means of keeping "them" out and "us" in. "The human passion for walls, fences and ditches is no accident – it is a material manifestation of our need to manage inclusion and exclusion" (Abrams, Hogg & Marques 2005: 4).

However, we are also likely to encounter metaphorical walls in our lives – those that affect our social relationships and our interactions with others. We erect metaphorical walls between "us" and "them" – but we are social beings. We need to be in relationships with others and it is through our relationships that we find our identity (Osler & Vincent 2003: 9). According to Abrams et al. (2005: 4), "social life is played out within a framework of relationships where people seek inclusion and belongingness". Abrams et al. (2005: 28) maintain that the need to belong is one of the most fundamental of human needs, and Hicks (2011: 5) notes that it is in relationships that we grow and develop: "Scientists have demonstrated that human connection is crucial for survival and that our survival is inextricably linked to the quality of our relationships". Being in relationship is a fundamental theological concept: Biggar (2011: kindle loc 928) maintains that to be fully human involves reciprocity – listening to and hearing what others have to say and that this reciprocity brings people into a common life.

The very nature of relationships means that there is the potential for exclusion. Even very young children are aware of this reality. From the time we first start interacting with others,

we learn about being excluded and that we cannot always choose our social relationships. Sometimes such exclusion is painful, yet understandable: we are not selected for the hockey team or we do not get a part in the play for which we auditioned. Other forms of exclusion are painful and understandable, yet they are not part of daily lives: people are imprisoned by the courts for breaching the laws of the country or pupils are excluded from their school for breaking certain school rules, for example. However, according to Major and Eccleston (2005: 64), in every society there are those individuals who are stigmatised and thereby are “systematically devalued and excluded from a broad array of social relationships and social domains”. What is not often recognised is that being excluded can be as painful as physical violence (Hicks 2011: 5). Thus, any exclusion we experience which in the process affects our interaction with others will always be painful. Those who are excluded are made to feel they have less value than others (Hicks 2011: 5).

At schools, there are children who, when they are at perhaps the most vulnerable stage of their lives, are excluded and socially isolated. These are the pupils who find school difficult, who are denied healthy social interaction and who feel the pain of being excluded. However, it is not always clear why a pupil or group of pupils is excluded and the experience of being excluded can perhaps be as painful as any physical violence.

Gobodo-Madikezela (2015: 16) used the phrase “insidious acts of violence” to describe a certain kind of behaviour. She notes that often violence is associated only with physical acts, but that it should also be associated with the behaviour that is used to undermine the dignity of others and their sense of self-worth. These “insidious acts of violence” can be described as bullying, which is an experience of many children every day of their lives (Aleudse 2006: 37).

It was only in the 1970s that bullying began to be understood as more than normal childhood behaviour when the work of Olweus (1978) forever changed perceptions of bullying (Beaty & Alexeyev 2008: 1). At a time when bullying was considered to be normal behaviour in children, Olweus was the first to do empirical research into the behaviour and recognised how serious it was to the health of children. He identified that bullying could be direct (open attacks – physical or verbal) and indirect (exclusion, spreading malicious

rumours, etc.) (Hamburger, Basile & Vivolo 2011: 1). Never again would bullying be acceptable; never again would it be “normal” for anyone to bully another person. Bullying has been taken very seriously in schools across the globe, with many schools instituting formalised anti-bullying programmes and policies. However, according to Bradshaw, Sawyer and O’Brennan (2007: 27), staff often underestimate the extent of the bullying taking place in the school and they do not know how to handle effectively the more insidious forms of bullying, much of which is not noticed, is ignored or is deemed a normal aspect of children’s interactions.

It may be that the social exclusion of girls in schools is a hidden, covert form of bullying but a very prevalent part of the lives of many, and that the pain and hurt caused by this form of bullying deserves more attention than it seems to have been accorded. According to Dupper (2013: vii), “bullying is one of the most prevalent and insidious forms of violence in schools today”. Cram (2003: 48) maintains that bullying is “a behavioural manifestation of a spiritual crisis”. As a Christian, I believe that alienation, deliberate or unintentional, is the antithesis of the fundamental message of our faith. Fedler (2006: 10) maintains that the heart of Christianity is that God loves and cares about each one of us and that we are created to be in community with God and each other (Fedler 2006: 11). Biggar (1997: 133) notes that it is the Christian belief that “what makes an action right or wrong is whether or not it promotes ... things like life, friendship and the knowledge of the truth”.

1.2 AIMS OF THIS DISSERTATION

Bullying is widely recognised as being unacceptable and is addressed by many schools in the form of anti-bullying policies. However, it is perhaps the case that girls are being excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships and that this social exclusion is a form of bullying which is neither recognised nor specifically addressed. Many interpretations, explanations and validations of the students’ behaviour have been offered, as well as criticisms, and psychologists, sociologists and anthropologists have applied their theories to bullying behaviour. However, I believe that unless these problems are understood from a theological-ethical perspective, it is unlikely that there will be a permanent change in girls’ behaviour. According to Kessler and Kretzschmar (2015: 5), theological ethics is “primarily concerned

with one's overall ethical worldview, what is considered to be loving, right and good (moral norms and values), the application of these norms in personal and social life, and the formation of moral character and moral conduct". The question can be asked: why theological ethics? Why not devise a moral code for a specific community? Christians believe that "reality is fundamentally and ultimately spiritual and not just material; that there exists a personal God who created and sustains the universe and who loves his creatures" (Biggar 1997: 133). Bangs (2014: 1) maintains that "[w]ith the decline of some faiths and the expansion of others, schools have become the only places where common values, transcending faith ... are promoted and enforced. In fact ... schools are uniquely moral places". It is my view that independent faith-based schools need to ensure that their underlying theological message is one of inclusion.

In this research, I investigated the social exclusion of girls at school as a form of bullying. To do this, I asked alumnae of a girls' faith-based independent school in South Africa (hereafter "the school") to complete questionnaires and be interviewed. I also asked some members of the staff to complete questionnaires and to be interviewed (details on the reasons for this approach and how subjects were selected are given in Chapter 3). My aim was to offer a theological-ethical perspective and draw on insights from the fields of theological ethics, sociology, psychology and anthropology. The reasons why girls are socially excluded, the girls' and the school's systemic patterns of behaviour that maintain the behaviour, and what educators can do to develop a community within which all girls feel included need to be identified and addressed. Klein (2012: 205), referring to the crisis of bullying in American schools, maintains changing the society that accommodates bullying would require changes in perspectives, attitudes and behaviour, but that schools can make a significant contribution in providing a community within which every child feels accepted and is afforded dignity.

In the school referred to in this research, as in probably every other school, there are systems, traditions and patterns of behaviour that support and perpetuate certain attitudes, perspectives and behaviour. Some of these systems, traditions and patterns of behaviour are sound and are to be encouraged. However, it is possible that some are contrary to the

Christian ethic. If these can be identified and addressed from a theological-ethical worldview, the mission statement¹ of the school in this research could become a reality.

1.3 EXPLANATION OF TERMS

1.3.1 Theology and Ethics

Theology is a discipline that refers to the human perception of ultimate power and the qualities and characteristics that can be attributed to the ultimate power (Gustafson 1975: 8). Christian theology, according to Gustafson (1975: 9) has historical dimensions and is rooted in an understanding and experience of God being the “I am who I am” (Ex 3: 14) and “I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Ex 3: 5). Our life experiences understood within our Christian faith and the authority of God always have a subjective and a transcendent dimension. Therefore, according to Gustafson (1975: 9), Christian authority is not a package of revealed theology. Rather, it reflects on the reality of God and how God is experienced in our lives according to the history, myths, symbols and concepts of the Christian faith.

Ethics, like theology, is a discipline which reflects on the moral dimensions of human experiences and focuses on those aspects of human behaviour that are prescribed, governed or judged by moral values and principles. Christian ethics has to do with an awareness that actions are not only a response to other persons, events or things but also a response to the “ultimate power who sustains and stands over all creation” (Gustafson 1975: 13). Venter (2009: 95) concurs with this, claiming that “[t]heological ethics grounds moral and ethical values in the authority and absolutes of God and His word”. Kretzschmar (2014: 1) maintains that Christian theological ethics is also concerned with how moral character is formed and how moral action is to be encouraged.

¹ The school’s mission statement declares unequivocally that the Christian faith is a corner stone of the school and fundamental to the school ethos.

1.3.2 Bullying

It is the premise of this thesis that social exclusion is a form of bullying. Defining bullying can be difficult because a single definition cannot cover all aspects and there can be an overlap in the concepts of bullying, harassment, abuse, and violence, for example (Aleudse 2006: 35). According to Dake, Price and Telljohan (2003: 173), bullying can be identified when a person or a group of people who repeatedly engage in behaviour that causes hurt to another who is less powerful. Bradshaw et al. (2007: 136) include teasing, name calling and deliberate exclusion in their definition.

In this research, the concept of social exclusion includes ignoring a person, deliberately leaving her out, physical distancing, and making a girl feel unwanted or unwelcome. An essential factor to be considered is that the abusive behaviour is unprovoked by the victim (Bullock 2002: 130).

1.3.3 Moral, Spiritual and Social Development

There has been much research on how people develop from infancy to adulthood. Psychologists have established norms of physical, cognitive and social development and sociologists have investigated how children's development is influenced by their context. Moral and spiritual formation, like physical, cognitive and psychological development, is a developmental process that occurs within a social and relational context (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 1–9).

Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017: 1–9) point out that it is not always easy to understand what is meant by the term "morality. This dissertation takes the definition offered by Connors and McCormick (1998: vi) as foundational, in which morality is "seen in terms of genuine human flourishing. In the Christian context ... this entails growing into the likeness of Christ, living in a Christ-like manner and bearing witness to the reign of God." Moral formation "involves growth in knowing, being and doing which together lead to moral relationships, moral living and the flourishing of humans and all creation in harmony with God" (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 1–9).

As many theologians have noted, moral formation and spiritual formation are closely connected. Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017) maintain that the moral life and the spiritual life

cannot be separated. Spirituality is an ongoing encounter with God and the effect of such an encounter on our inner selves and the way we live our lives. Collicutt (2015: 5) notes that the term “spirituality” can be understood in many ways, but that Christian spirituality refers to “life in God’s Spirit and a living relationship with God’s Spirit”, and that spiritual formation refers to “the transforming work of the Spirit in every aspect of the life of the believer”.

1.3.4 Community

A community can be defined as an “organised association of persons which have established ways of behaving (known as structures, systems and institutions)” (Connors & McCormick 1998: 11). Connors and McCormick (1998) state that it is important to understand the moral structure of communities because we live in communities. From the time we are born, we are part of communities and it is within communities that we become fully human. Further, we are profoundly influenced by the communities we live in, for good or bad. Connors and McCormick (1998: 12) note that communities tend to have their own identity which is “shaped by their social structures, systems and institutions, and seen in their social customs, expected roles and rules of action”. Finally, Connors and McCormick (1998) note that we can have a profound impact on our neighbours by means of the actions we take within the structures and systems of our communities.

1.3.5 Exclusion

The Oxford Dictionary defines to “exclude” as to “deny (someone) access to a place, group or privilege”. It usually involves unequal power relations and the excluding of individuals or groups of people from activities or engaging in social life (Rispel, Molomo & Dumela 2008: 1). “Social exclusion is facilitated by activities of individuals and institutional processes” (Hungwe & Gelderblom 2014: 75). Those excluded are often members of devalued groups, or who are devalued as individuals (2014: 75).

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE RESEARCH

Schools have the potential to play a significant role in the moral and spiritual development of children, and therefore of society as a whole. Skwambane (2012: 29) notes that while no individual or group can independently solve the problems in society, organisations such as schools can play an important role in developing its pupils to be moral citizens who work

towards promoting the common good of all. If we are to become schools where every person is valued as being created in the image of God, rather than stereotyped on the basis of race, gender, class, economic status, or by just being different, we are going to have to interrogate honestly and openly what patterns of behaviour are being maintained as “normal”.

This research is important to me on a personal level. When I commenced my BTh degree, I was exposed to ethical issues from a theological perspective and I became increasingly concerned about abuse, especially of women and children – the powerless in society. In reflecting on my own life, I understood that some of my experiences as a child, which I had presumed were because of my own deficiencies, constituted social exclusion from my friendship group with life-long consequences. Until recently, I was a non-teaching member of the staff at the school where I interacted with the staff from all departments – teachers, psychologists (clinical and educational), administrative staff and support staff – at various levels and heard reports and stories about vulnerable people: those who are marginalised and excluded; those who feel they will never fit in. In the light of my academic studies, I recognised that some of the behaviour was not being recognised for what it was – bullying. I would like to contribute to the conscientization of all members of the school community so that social exclusion can be seen for what it is: insidious violence. I am convinced that there will only be fundamental changes when abuse is understood to be a theological-ethical problem. There will never be fundamental changes until we all recognise who each person is – created in the image of God and loved unreservedly.

It is hoped that the exploratory theoretical and empirical research conducted as part of this dissertation will give some indication of the extent of the problem, provide recommendations, and offer indications of avenues for further research.

1.5 THE VALUE OF THIS RESEARCH

This research will be of academic value as it contributes to the discipline of theological ethics by broadening the concept of communities and the importance of relationships.

Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017: 1) note that “to be fully human is to be in relationship” and that the doctrine of the Trinity “symbolises the relational character of God as a community

of individuals related to each other in mutuality". It will also be of educational value for schools as it highlights previously disregarded yet potentially harmful aspect of young people's behaviour. It is only relatively recently that bullying has been identified as a serious problem in schools. However, the subject of social exclusion has not received the same attention as overt bullying. At best, it is referred to within the broader context of bullying; at worst, it is not recognised as behaviour that needs to be purposefully addressed.

Extensive research on bullying in the psycho-social field has failed to identify exclusion as a central theme of girls' bullying (Osler & Vincent 2003: 93) or how these "insidious acts of violence ... destroy the psychological and spiritual integrity of others" (Gobodo-Madikizela 2015: 15). Research has indicated that being isolated is extremely stressful for girls as it is within friendship groups that they establish their identity and sense of belonging. Therefore, the withholding of friendship and exclusion can be one of the most powerful ways that girls use their power over each other (Osler & Vincent 2003: 55).

This research will furthermore be of value to faith-based schools as it grounds the behaviour in the moral and the spiritual. Kretzschmar (2018: 113) notes that it is the remit of theologians in educational institutions to evaluate the ethical dimension of the knowledge construction and that the teaching of moral values and virtues need to be a fundamental part of such communities in terms of fostering the well-being of the members of the community. Bullying (and, indeed, any form of emotional abuse) is not often considered to be a theological concern per se. However, Ronald Cram (2003: xiii) believes that bullying is the outward manifestation of a spiritual crisis and that fundamentally, social justice is compromised in the case of abuse. Further, bullying is the antithesis of the teaching of Jesus to love God and to love one's neighbour (Luke 10: 27–28; John 13: 34–35) and the importance he placed on relationships with God and with others (John 15: 1–17).

While bullying has been identified as anti-social behaviour, this dissertation argues that teachers and students neither recognise nor understand the full extent of the problem of exclusion and its impact on the girls excluded, the people who are excluding and the school community. I believe that it is in the best interests of the all the girls at the school, the teachers and the parents, that aspects of social exclusion be understood. Such an

understanding will allow for compassion, empathy and a spirit of inclusion to be developed among all the girls and the staff.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research will attempt to find answers to the following main question:

How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls' school?

1. The pain of social exclusion can only be understood within the context of the importance girls attach to their relationships. Therefore, the research question incorporates:
The importance of relationships to girls: how can social exclusion be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically?
2. The pain of being excluded needs to be understood as an aspect of bullying. Therefore, the research question incorporates:
An understanding of bullying: can social exclusion be considered as an insidious form of bullying?
3. The patterns of behaviour, systems and traditions that exist in the school (and in the society of which the school is part) need to be considered. Therefore, the research question incorporates:
What traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour of the school maintain or resist social exclusion?
4. As the research question considers the behaviour of schoolgirls, an understanding of the moral and spiritual development of children will give a greater understanding of what can be expected of girls. Therefore, the research question incorporates:
How do individuals, specifically girls, develop morally and spiritually?
5. The research question has to do with social exclusion, which *de facto* involves the community. We live in communities, are influenced by the communities in which we live and we in turn, have an influence on our community. Theologically, what is a moral community? What does the Bible teach about the sort of communities we should aspire to build? Therefore, the research question incorporates:

What is a moral community?

What Christian principles can be applied in a girls' faith-based independent school so that it becomes including of every girl rather than excluding of some?

Each of these sub-questions of the main research question will be considered in the literature review in Chapter 2 and inform the empirical research in Chapter 4. Conclusions reached from the theoretical research and the empirical research are presented in Chapter 5.

1.7 HYPOTHESIS

It is hypothesised that there are girls in an independent faith-based girls' school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. As this anti-social behaviour is not fully understood either by the girls or the teachers as being a particular form of bullying, those systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are permitted to persist.

1.8 METHODOLOGY

This research offers a theoretical investigation of exclusion within a theological-ethical paradigm and draws on the secondary disciplines of psychology and sociology from sources in the literature and on prior empirical studies. Much research has been done on bullying, anti-bullying policies, and social factors such as the use of power in the fields of psychology and sociology. However, less specific research seems to have been done on exclusion. I therefore consult a wide variety of sources to acquire as full an understanding of these perspectives as possible.

This study, drawing on the theoretical research, also offers empirical research into social exclusion among girls in a faith-based educational institution to determine to what extent the perceptions and experiences of the staff and the girls at the school support the theoretical investigation. It offers a theological-ethical understanding of the problem in order to offer practical, constructive interventions to the school to mitigate social exclusion and develop a community that is including of all rather than excluding of some.

1.8.1 Orientation and Approach

This study takes its orientation from the field of theological ethics. We make moral judgements according to our belief in what is good and right, and the task of theological ethics is to reflect critically on the moral dimension of human behaviour (Salzman & Lawler 2013: 903). Further, theological ethics is understood from the point of view that actions are not merely responses to other people, events or things but are also a response to God who is active in history and is revealed to us through the life, atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Ryan 2006: 26).

Ryan (2006: 26) notes that theological ethics has to do with how we reflect on our beliefs, norms and values and how these inform our behaviour and decisions. Kretzschmar (1994: 16–21) maintains that there are three dimensions to the task of theological ethics: reflection (which refers to an analysis of our own personal experiences, the institutions we belong to, our social groups, our loyalties, and so on), declaration (which refers to our commitment and beliefs) and action (which refers to the transformation of the individual and the community to which they belong).

As this dissertation focuses on an independent school, a theological-ethical approach from the perspective of social ethics is used to determine what constitutes moral education, specifically with reference to schools. Social ethics “reflect[s] on human conduct and social organisations as well as norms and values” (Kretzschmar & Hulley 1998: 123) and draws on other fields such as philosophy, sociology, psychology and pedagogics. This is an important aspect to consider as Mott (1982: 13) maintains that “... social life consists of group ways of thinking and acting in which every individual participant’s decisions are but a small portion of the development of the whole”. Ethical problems need to be considered at the level of both the individual and the group.

1.8.2 Type of Investigation

This study offers a theoretical and empirical investigation into the research question.

As this research is intended to be exploratory it was necessary to consider the many and various factors that could reasonably answer the research questions. The theoretical

investigation therefore considered the literature and previous research conducted in the various fields.

1.8.3 Literature Review

An investigation of a broad spectrum of topics is presented in Chapter 2, and considers each of the six sub-questions of the main research question. In the first sub-section (the importance of girls' relationships and the pain of exclusion) reference was made to the work of Vescio et al (2009) and Twenge and Baumeister (2005). Collicutt (2015) and Lester et al (2015) offered valuable insights, as did the work of Besag (2006). There has been much research into bullying in schools and the consequences of the behaviour. I referred to the work of Ross (2002) and Hazler and Denham (2002) among others, and with reference to the moral and ethical component of bullying, I drew extensively on the work of Kretzschmar (1994, 2002, 2005, 2007, 2014, etc.) and Dupper (2013). This research investigated various structures and traditions that may contribute to social exclusion in schools and in this regard, the work of Anderson (2010), Nelson (2016) and Ridge (2002) was investigated. In the section on communities, I drew on the work of Brueggerman (2010), Connors and McCormick (1998) and Kretzschmar (2002, 2005, 2010, etc.), while Metz and Gaie (2011) provided an understanding of Ubuntu.

To add to the literature review, I was given permission by the head to refer to various documents at the school. These included:

- A report from a workshop conducted at the school to discuss subjects that are of concern to girls, among which was social exclusion;
- Feedback from an informal survey conducted with the girls and their parents on various aspects of life at the school.

Further, I refer to informal discussions I had with girls and members of staff while I was employed at the school.

It was felt that the experiences and perceptions of the staff and the girls at the school in question would be valuable in corroborating or contradicting the findings of the literature review. Therefore, it was decided to conduct empirical research. This section offers a

preliminary description of the empirical investigation undertaken. The processes are more fully explained in Chapter 3.

This is a descriptive study as the research is intended to be exploratory and determine directions for further research. As the study is concerned with social, cultural and individual factors which are understood subjectively and are not easily quantified, a qualitative method was appropriate. Questionnaires were used to obtain the data. The questions were derived from the theoretical research and to clarify answers given to the questionnaire, I conducted semi-structured interviews. Open-ended questions were asked, and all the interviews were recorded and transcribed by a person who transcribes court proceedings.

Before the questionnaires were sent to the respondents, a pilot study was conducted to ensure the questions were clear, could be easily understood and were not ambiguous. No changes were suggested or recommended.

As this is a descriptive study, no inferential statistics were needed. The web-based survey tool used (SurveyMonkey®) presented the findings of the closed questions, and the data from the open-ended questions was analysed using the content analysis method, as was the data from the interviews. As reliability and validity in qualitative research is not always easy to determine, I used the method proposed by Noble (2015: 34): participants were asked whether the findings arrived at accurately reflected their thoughts and opinions on the subject being investigated.

To obtain participants, non-probability sampling was used, and target groups interviewed, as I wished to interview a specific population. The first sample was the staff. Purposive sampling was used for this group as I wanted to target specific members (explained in more detail in Chapter 3). The second target population was that of the alumnae. As I wanted to interview young women who had had specific experiences at school, snowball sampling was used.

1.9 STRUCTURE OF THIS DISSERTATION

The structure of the dissertation is shown in Figure 1-1.

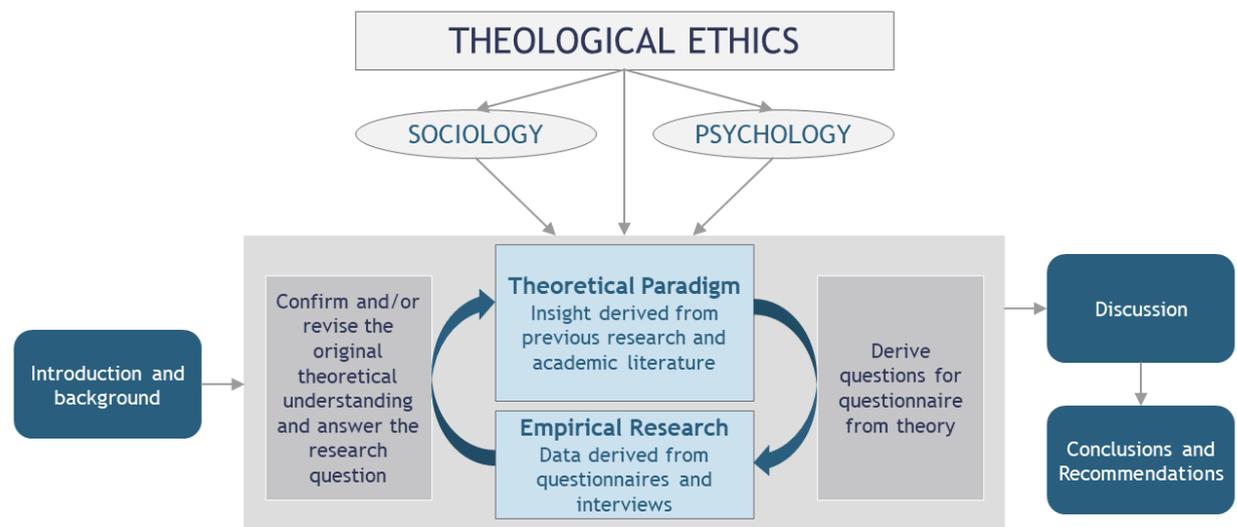


Figure 1-1: Structure of this dissertation.

This first chapter introduces the topic, the reasons for doing the research and the value of the research.

In Chapter 2, a theoretical investigation of bullying was conducted to present a coherent view of abusive behaviour as manifested in social exclusion in order to answer the research question: *How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls' school?*

The six sub-questions incorporated in the research question, as presented in Section 1.6 were each considered, inter alia: the importance of relationships, an understanding of bullying, traditions and systems that could maintain social exclusion, moral and spiritual development, and the importance of the community.

The importance of relationships to girls was investigated and how social exclusion can be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically. An overview of bullying was offered including the role of teachers and other adults in terms of their understanding of bullying behaviour, their ability to recognise it and the role of teachers as bullies themselves. It was important to investigate traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour that maintain or resist social exclusion because, as Hays (2001: 192) maintains, if we are to co-exist with people of different cultures, we need to first examine our own values, beliefs and social

contexts and recognise the impact our own culture has on us as well as the other's culture. As this dissertation takes its orientation from the field of theological ethics, an important component was to consider how individuals develop morally and spiritually. Young girls are still developing cognitively, emotionally, socially, morally and spiritually and without an understanding of this and what behaviour can be expected at different ages, an assessment of the various behaviours being presented would be incomplete. Further, an understanding of moral and spiritual development is essential if there is to be a change in the patterns of behaviour and systems present in the school. Finally, the question of moral communities was addressed. Cahill (2002: 3) maintains that the "faith-based nature of Christian life is intrinsically communal". She also maintains that it is in community that a person's individual identity is formed and that a Christian community is characterised by "faith active in love" (2002: 3). Gorman (2002: 19) claims that as humans live in community, "theological reflection must take community seriously".

While there has been much work done on bullying in schools and there is widespread awareness of its consequences, research has failed to identify social exclusion as a central theme of girls' bullying (Osler & Vincent 2003: 93). I felt it was important to ascertain the opinions and experiences of girls and staff at the school and to determine to what extent the theoretical research was corroborated. Therefore, empirical research was conducted. As this is a descriptive study and intended to be largely exploratory, a qualitative method was appropriate. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The process followed is described in Chapter 3, before the findings of the research are presented. Although Chapter 3 is a short chapter, I felt it was important to describe the methodology at this stage of the dissertation to ensure clarity and continuity in discussing the findings of the data.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the findings of the empirical research with reference to the information obtained in Chapter 2, and discuss how and to what extent the empirical research supports the theoretical investigation. I also address the final component of the research question by discussing ethical and normative principles that can be applied in the school so that it becomes including of every girl in the school rather than excluding of some.

In Chapter 5, based on the information from the previous chapters, I offer some suggestions for changing patterns of behaviour that are maintaining the social exclusion of some girls and offer recommendations that may help the school to develop a school within which every person feels valued and is accorded dignity. The research questions are answered, and conclusions reached as to whether the hypothesis has been supported. Limitations of the study are identified, and suggestions for further research provided.

2 A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The main research question is: “How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls’ school?” The aim of this theoretical investigation is to consider primary and secondary data and present a coherent view of abusive behaviour as manifested in social exclusion.

This research drew on diverse and broad sources in the literature and prior empirical research in order to offer a thorough understanding of social exclusion as abusive behaviour. The five sub-questions of the research question that were presented in the previous chapter were considered in this chapter.² Further, information that may contribute to an understanding of the research question from the following sources was referred to:

Source 1: Workshops held with the girls at the school: Towards the end of 2016, a workshop was conducted at the school to assess attitudes and experiences around various issues that were causing the girls some distress and to help resolve some of the issues. Among these were exclusionary behaviour. All the girls from Grade 8 to Grade 11 were included.³

Source 2: An informal internal survey was conducted among the girls and the parents. In April 2016, all the girls in the school were asked to complete an online survey about various aspects of their school life. Some of the questions asked are relevant to this research.⁴

Source 3: Informal, undocumented discussions held with girls and staff during my time at the school.

The first sub-question referred to the importance of girls’ relationships and how exclusion can be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically. An understanding of the nature of girls’ relationships and the enormous importance girls place on their friendships

² As the theory presented in this chapter is extensive, each subsection will be summarised at its conclusion.

³ Notes made at the end of the workshop were used with the permission of the workshop facilitator.

⁴ I was given access to the surveys and permission to use the information by the head of the school.

2. A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

clarifies why social exclusion tends to be so painful. After this, I addressed the second sub-question: “An understanding of bullying: can social exclusion be considered as an insidious form of bullying?”. I surmise that the social exclusion of girls can be abusive and is therefore a form of bullying. Theologically, such abusive behaviour contradicts the biblical injunction that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matt 19: 19). There is also the anthropological component regarding who we are as human beings. The second section of this theoretical investigation will therefore consider the subject of bullying.

The next sub-question is “What traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour maintain or resist social exclusion?” Social exclusion by its very nature involves the community. We all live in and are shaped by our communities, and our behaviour in turn influences our communities. Connors and McCormick (1998: 57) note that it is possible to judge the moral character of whole communities. Therefore, it is important to address not only the attitudes and character of individuals but also the laws, systems and customs of the society within which the individual is living. The third section considered the patterns of behaviour and systems that are part of the school’s structure as well as the wider community that can contribute, directly or indirectly, to a girl being marginalised and/or excluded.

The fourth component of the research question has to do with the moral and spiritual development of people. While we live in communities and tend to adopt the norms and values of our communities, as individuals our personal spiritual and moral development will contribute to our communities. An understanding of girls’ development and how to encourage moral behaviour is important. Moral and spiritual development was considered in section four of this chapter.

In the fifth section, the importance of community is discussed, and an alternative community will be presented. Gorman (2002: 12) claims that our heritage is important and if we are to act as Christians, our uniqueness as children of God is part of our heritage. Moses (2015: 147) notes that Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, declared that rather than measuring human action against abstract principles or rules, the Church should be a community the hallmark of which is selfless concern for others. The importance of the community is that it has its foundation in the Bible: Connors and McCormick (1998: 57) note

that from the prophets in the Old Testament to Paul in the New Testament, the call has been for not just personal transformation but that whole communities need to be transformed.

In this section, I describe how under the guidance of God, communities were formed that were different from those of the larger society and which reflected God's will for all communities. First, I investigate the social structure that was instituted at Sinai and the prophetic call to the people of Israel to honour the demands of the covenant, before discussing the teaching of Jesus in the Gospels regarding social justice and compassion.

The culture and perspectives of the school are essentially Western; therefore, a 21st century understanding of social structures and community were considered from a Western perspective. As the school is in South Africa and has an increasing number of black girls in its pupil body, the concept of *Ubuntu* for understanding communities will be presented. Both perspectives have positive and negative considerations.

It is my belief that within this school, personal formation and an understanding of the importance of community can be encouraged as a counterbalance to the individualism that is a marked aspect of Western thought.

It is perhaps pertinent at this point to describe the school to add context to the research. (To ensure complete anonymity of the school, the girls and its staff, the information is somewhat limited). The school being investigated is under the auspices of the Anglican Church. The staff are not required to be practicing Anglicans (or to adhere to any faith) and girls of all faiths are accepted; in fact, diversity in the pupil body is encouraged. There is a full-time chaplain and chapel services are held weekly while younger girls receive religious instruction as part of the syllabus. It was my experience that the school is first and foremost regarded as an academic institution and that the spiritual component is one of many components (such as sport, drama, music, etc.). I discuss this aspect later in this dissertation with reference to the findings.

2.2 GIRLS' RELATIONSHIPS AND EXCLUSION

Without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods. — Aristotle

2. A THEORETICAL INVESTIGATION OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

Being in relationship is a fundamental theological concept. Biggar (2011: kindle loc 928) maintains that to be fully human is to enjoy reciprocity in our relationships and Hicks (2011: 5) notes that science has established that not only are relationships crucial for our survival but that the quality of these are also important. People will work very hard to develop and maintain social relationships and the breakdown of a relationship will have negative emotional effects (Hicks 2011: 5).

In Genesis 2: 2–25, we are told that God created us in the divine image. The account of Adam and Eve, showing their close relationship with God, with each other and the environment, clearly indicates that interacting as individuals and our treatment of each other relates to this God-image (Major & Eccleston 2005: 63). Venter (2009) explains that when they disobeyed God and were banished from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were excluded from relationships in three ways: from God, from each other and from creation. Covering themselves shows that they felt alienated within themselves. Thus, in this Genesis story we are introduced to the concept of relationships being God-given and necessary for our well-being, and that exclusion is linked to sin and a breakdown in relationships. All people, regardless of race, sex, culture and beliefs, are equal and worthy of dignity and any form of discrimination that denies people dignity, compromises their self-image and allows them to feel inferior to others is contrary to the goodness of God’s creation (Venter 2009: 145).

2.2.1 The Need to Belong

“The core human motive is to belong and be legitimate” (Vescio et al. 2009: 253) and people will try hard to be liked and to belong to a group (Twenge & Baumeister 2005: 28). Belonging to a group gives a person a sense of identity and self-esteem (Collicutt 2015: 163) and the breakdown of a relationship can result in real feelings of distress. Further, adolescents have an increased need to be independent;⁵ therefore, as they separate from their parents, the

⁵ While adolescents desire greater independence from adults, they still look to adults for support. Hall (2008: 90) maintains that adults need to continue to play an important role children’s lives in

social support of their friends becomes very important to them (Hall-Lande et al. 2007: 265). Girls of this age, seeking independence, often look forward to the transition to high school but can also feel daunted by the new social structures they will be experiencing and can be anxious about having to establish their identity in a new social group (Lester, Mander & Cross 2015: 1). They fear being isolated, and friendships are perceived to be valuable resources as they offer protection from exclusion and are a source of support (Ridge 2002: 133). Further, Lester et al. (2015: 1) confirm that adolescence is a period of enormous physical, emotional, cognitive and social change, and that the different rates at which girls mature may have an impact on their status in the community.

Those who are popular, particularly skilled and/or wealthy tend to hold power and have high self-esteem (Collicutt 2015: 113). Conversely, there are some children who have characteristics that make them more prone to being excluded or attacked in some way. These can include introversion, timidity, anxiety and poor social skills. Some children show weak resilience and will find certain situations more stressful than others or will react more forcefully to a perceived attack. Other features that render a child more vulnerable include intellectual disability, physical disability, and ADHD (Rigby 2010: 59). These girls, then, have an insecure sense of belonging and will consider the external sources of self-esteem (such as popularity, wealth, etc.) to be very important (2010: 59).

2.2.2 The Influence of the Group

Teenagers are highly influenced by their friends and peer pressure is a real force (Besag 2006: 19). Ncube (2013: 4) notes because belonging to a peer group is so important to adolescents, influencing their evaluation of themselves, their sense of belonging and their self-esteem, the girls will determinedly adopt the norms, values and behaviours of the group in order to be included. It is the most influential and powerful groups in the school that girls look to, and which influence the way girls behave (Besag 2006: 19). Besag (2006: 19) also

terms of "monitoring and filtering adolescents' interactions with their peers". Further, Hall-Lande et al. (2007: 25) maintain that meaningful connections to adults could be very important for girls who do not have close friendships with their peers.

points out that initiatives to change anti-social behaviour among adolescents have failed because they are adult driven.

In these groups, there is a constant evaluation process to determine which girls are accepted and which girls are to be excluded. As part of the ongoing evaluation process, girls judge each other constantly in terms of conformity to the group norms and rules. Clothing, behaviour, physical appearance, popularity and other factors determine such evaluations and ostracism can be harsh and unforgiving (Hall-Lande et al. 2007: 265). Bazelon (2013: 45) argues that bullying often occurs in front of other children to get the attention and admiration of others and to obtain higher status in the peer group. The closeness of the bonds in the small groups and the need for acceptance can be very effectively used by those intending to hurt another girl and girls are likely to use social manipulation. Many girls may not be intent on causing hurt or distress and may simply not understand the impact of their behaviour. However, there are certainly some girls who use these tactics aggressively as a power strategy to attack others.

2.2.3 Group Behaviour

As Collicutt (2015: 163) argues, “The groups we belong to tell us something about who we are”. Pickett and Brewer (2005: 96) note that it is the differences between groups that define the groups. The individuals within the group must ipso facto share common attributes in order to maintain the integrity of the group and to identify the expected differences between the in-group and the out-group (2005: 96). Within the larger peer group, girls will want to be part of the high-status groups. Status is accorded on the basis of perceived markers: wealth, ability, physical attributes and popularity are important. (Other markers are discussed in Section 2.3.5 below.)

Pickett and Brewer (2005: 89) note that those who are most insecure about their position within the in-group are the most likely to demand the exclusion of others, and those who are on the margins of the in-group may experience feelings of anxiety about being rejected by the group and excluded. In such cases, an individual may take certain actions to cement her inclusion in the group, such as changing behaviour to identify fully with the perceived

stereotype of group members or to define clearly in-group and out-group members (Pickett & Brewer 2005: 93).

2.2.4 Consequences of Social Exclusion

Ridge (2002: 142) has noted how important children's experiences of friendship are, both in making friends and sustaining friendships. Successful relationships are important for children's wellbeing and social identity and, in adulthood, childhood experiences can have an impact on economic and social status. Girls who are socially excluded tend to feel threatened and to lack self-esteem (Hall 2008: 87).

Adults may neither realise the importance of friendship groups and how volatile they can be nor understand how girls signal exclusion. Further, the subtle behaviour involved in inclusion and exclusion makes it almost impossible for girls to report that they are being abused or to believe that an adult would take it seriously. Hall-Lande et al. (2007: 265) claim that adolescents' painful emotional reactions to social isolation would make it very difficult for the affected children to perform to their academic potential.

Apart from the need to belong, it has been noted that peer acceptance influences children's development and it is within the school context where most of the children's socialisation occurs (Ncube 2013: 1). Gibbs (2003: 45) claims that children learn to understand the perspectives of others mainly through peer interaction and that participating in groups leads to the development of moral judgement. It stands to reason that children who are socially excluded or are denied close social relationships will be compromised in terms of their moral and social development.

2.2.5 An Alternative

Collicutt (2015: 37) explains that Jesus shows us a different way. She says that in our individualistic society, we are reluctant to breach the walls that others – individuals or groups – have built around themselves and to reach out to others. We wait to be invited into the group. But often those inside the walls will not issue an invitation to "the others". Jesus showed a welcoming hospitality to those who would not normally have been easily received into the homes where he was a guest (for example, Zaccheus (Luke 19: 1–10) and the woman who anointed his feet (Luke 7: 36–50)). He included those who were discriminated

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against: widows (Mark 12: 41), lepers (Mark, 1: 40; Luke 17: 11-16), foreigners (the Canaanite women (Matt 15: 21-28), beggars and those possessed by demons (Matt 12: 22). Jesus also related to those who were highly regarded in society: he healed the daughter of Jairus who was a ruler of the synagogue (Mark:5: 21-36), had a meal with a Pharisee (Luke 14: 1) and met Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Jewish ruling council (John 3: 1). According to Wright (1996: 166), Jesus, in his interaction with the woman at the well (John: 4: 4–26) “crossed three socio-political and spiritual divides, challenging strongly held stereotypes” and breached the in/out group divisions:

- As a male, talking to a woman in public
- As a Jew, talking to a Samaritan
- As a Rabbi, talking to a morally questionable woman

Collicut (2015: 37) claims that the essential message of Jesus’s welcoming hospitality is that all are to be accorded dignity and respect and as though they were part of our own group.

2.2.6 Summary of Sub-Section

This section has drawn attention to girls’ relationships and how important these are to their emotional, social and psychological health. It was found that relationships are extremely important, and that people will work very hard to be accepted and feel that they belong. Peer pressure is strong. Some girls’ characteristics render them prone to exclusion. It was noted that girls who are excluded feel threatened and lack self-esteem but that the exclusionary behaviour is so subtle that adults do not recognise its insidious nature. Social exclusion was contrasted with the example set by Jesus who showed a welcoming hospitality to all.

In the next section, bullying will be considered.

2.3 AN UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION AS INSIDIOUS BULLYING

2.3.1 Introduction

Everyone will experience exclusion at some time in their lives, but not everyone will experience or perceive social exclusion as bullying behaviour. In this section I discuss bullying by drawing on sources from psychology and sociology. However, bullying always has to do

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with how people relate to each other and therefore will also be considered from a theological perspective.

Bullying has often been regarded as normal and perhaps even a necessary developmental phase for learning resilience to face life's challenges (Ross 2002: 105). Ross (2002: 105) describes how in the 1970s Olweus (1978) began to question the acceptance of bullying as normal behaviour. Thanks largely to his work, bullying is now recognised as being a form of interpersonal violence and is being accorded the gravity it warrants (Carney, Jacob & Hazler 2011: 238). While innocuous teasing, rough play and playground disputes are a normal part of growing up, there is much behaviour that is abusive and can be very hurtful.

Many schools are aware of the problems that bullying can cause and have anti-bullying policies in place. However, bullying incidents are not clear-cut and they often involve more than one child (Edwards 2003: 18). Further, the causes and manifestations of bullying are complex and must be understood from various perspectives.

2.3.2 Definition of Bullying

Broadly stated, bullying is a form of abuse involving one or more individuals trying to control another or others, using fear, violence and intimidation (Bradshaw et al. 2007: 361; Dupper 2013: v; Hazler & Denham 2002: 404; Kretzschmar 2001: 137). One of the problems when trying to deal with bullying, however, is that there are various ideas of what is meant by bullying. Ross (2002: 114) notes that it is often the case that three factors need to be present for behaviour to be deemed bullying:

- 1 Unprovoked attacks that are intentional and are intended to cause hurt or harm. Smith (2014: 16) points out that virtually all definitions of bullying include the idea that the acts are intentionally meant to harm. However, he believes that this is not necessarily always the case: hurtful acts can be unintentional, taking place within the prevailing power structures of the school (2014: 96).
- 2 There is always a power imbalance between the victim and the perpetrator. The acts may be physical, emotional, verbal, relational or technological, and the power exercised may take various forms. The bully may be physically stronger, be verbally more fluent, be more socially skilled or have higher social status (Rigby

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2010: 14; Smith 2014: 16). The victim may lack self-esteem, be outnumbered, have few friends and hold low social status (Smith 2014: 16).

- 3 Some definitions include the fact that the activity needs to be repetitive, while others have not insisted on this aspect (Ross 2002: 114; Smith 2014: 17).

Different people see bullying from different perspectives: Rigby (2002: 28) claims that bullying has to do with attitude; but others such as Ross (2002: 114) argue that attitude is not a consideration and that bullying is to be judged by the impact of actions on the victim. There are those who have tried to distinguish between bullying and aggression, and here the role of provocation is important: if there was no provocation, the action is deemed to be bullying (Rigby 2002: 30). However, Rigby (2002: 33) points out that it may be very difficult to establish whether there had been provocation. Rigby further notes that the concept of power is not always clear-cut and that over time, balances of power may change. Others have maintained that power imbalances are not always a factor, as a person with no power over another person can still spread rumours, which is a covert form of bullying (Rigby 2002: 30). Although there is not always consensus on what constitute bullying acts, it is agreed that a wide spectrum of behaviour and actions can be considered to be bullying, including “[n]onverbal harassment such as stares and glares, cruel teasing, social ostracism ...” (Ross 2002: 144).

Rigby (2002: 49) distinguishes between malign bullying, which is deliberate and intended to hurt, and bullying which does not have these characteristics. In the latter, a powerful girl or group of girls may exert power and oppress the target, but the motive is not to cause harm. In fact, the perpetrator may be unaware of the hurt being caused. This form of bullying is probably due mainly to the perpetrator being unable to put herself in the place of the other. Further, Rigby (2002: 41) believes that bullying should be considered along a continuum of severity. At one end is serious hurt causing a great deal of harm, while at the other end is “insensitive, but relatively harmless teasing” (2002: 41).

For the purposes of this dissertation, the key factors regarding bullying are that:

- the behaviour is always hurtful;

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- there is a power imbalance, as perceived by the girls (what constitutes power will be discussed later);
- covert abuse is as harmful as overt acts of aggression.

2.3.3 Incidence and Prevalence

It is not easy to give exact figures for incidences of bullying as there is much discrepancy in definitions of bullying, the methods of assessment and who is included in the sample. Smith (2014: 22) reports on research conducted in which children were asked “What do you think bullying is?” Of the respondents, only 4% included social exclusion and a mere 2% included verbal behaviour such as rumour spreading. Smith (2014: 22) also found that adults were less likely than children to identify social exclusion as bullying behaviour.

In terms of frequency, Ross (2002: 116) points out that actual numbers are not always clear-cut due to differences in definition, but consistent statistics over time and across countries (USA, England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Spain, Finland and Japan) have emerged: 15% to 20% of students will experience some form of bullying while they are at school and 10% to 20% consider it to be a serious problem. In a survey⁶ conducted in the school (Source 3), 30% of girls reported being bullied physically, verbally, emotionally or through cyber bullying.

Individuals or groups can be bullies and bullying can also be embedded in the social system of an organisation (Cowie 2011: 34). Increasingly, bullying is being recognised as a group phenomenon and that it can only be addressed by considering the peer group processes (Dupper 2013: 2). It has recently been posited that there is a significant connection between bullying and factors such as peer and family support systems, self-efficacy, and the school environment (Dupper 2013: 2). It has been presumed that boys engage in more bullying than girls, but this view is increasingly being disputed: it may be that bullying among

⁶ An informal survey was conducted in March 2016. Girls were asked to complete a questionnaire online. The respondents remained anonymous.

girls has been underestimated because of the covert nature of girls' bullying (Ross 2002: 118).

2.3.4 The Effects of Bullying

Evidence has established unequivocally that the effects of bullying are often severe throughout individuals' schooling, but that they may lessen in adulthood (Carney et al. 2011: 238; Dupper 2013: 19; Ross 2002: 106;). It is not only the victim of bullying who can be negatively affected: hostile actions are now recognised as having both a short-term and long-term influence on bullies, on their victims and even on bystanders who may not be directly involved (Hazler & Denham 2002: 404).

The effects of social exclusion and the effects of bullying are virtually identical and findings of research in neuroscience have indicated that the effects of psychological bullying can be as severe and long lasting as physical abuse (Dupper 2013: vii; Cowie 2011: 33). Espelage and Swearer (2004: xii) note that bullying has been linked to children's emotional development and behaviour and can seriously impact their academic progress as well as their ongoing relationships with adults and peers (2004: xii). The effects can include depression, lowered self-esteem, increased anxiety, problems with conduct, health problems and even suicide. It has been observed that even after bullying has ceased, the effects can continue (Dupper 2013: vii; Cowie 2011: 33).

2.3.5 Forms of Bullying

There are various forms of bullying.

Physical abuse refers to anything one person does to another that causes physical pain.⁷ As this form of bullying is not the subject of this research, it will not be discussed.

⁷ Physical abuse includes hitting, pushing, tripping, pulling hair, etc. It also includes such behaviour as deliberately breaking, spoiling or taking another's belongings.

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Emotional abuse (verbal and relational), which manifests as calling a person hurtful names, taunting and malicious teasing (Dupper 2013: 9), is recognised as a significant social problem less often than is physical abuse, but as mentioned above, the effects can be as painful as physical abuse (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 15). While often overlooked (Fast 2016: 7), a major result of emotional abuse is shame, which is the painful experience of believing that one is flawed and therefore not worthy of acceptance and belonging (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 6, 9). Although shame resulting from criticism of actions or behaviour can be positive, shame that results from a criticism of who one is, is toxic (Fast 2016: 7).

More recently *relational aggression* has been identified. Rather than direct confrontation, this form of bullying involves “the hurtful manipulation of peer relationships and/or friendships that inflict harm on others” (Sanders & Phye 2004: 65) and involves mainly the purposeful social exclusion of girls and non-verbal body language such as eye-rolling. It occurs within friendship networks (Daniel & Quigley 2014). Ross (2002: 114) maintains that malicious gossip and social ostracism are the forms of bullying most frequently used by girls. Because group identity is very important, girls adopt tactics to assert that they are “in” by showing that others are “out” (Ross 2002: 114) and by destroying the highly valued intimacy girls seek, enormous hurt is caused. For example, a group of girls may give another girl the silent treatment, making sure she knows that she is being excluded (Ross 2002: 114).

Cyber bullying, defined as “the repeated use of computers, cell phones and other electronic devices to harm, harass, humiliate, threaten or damage the reputation and relationships of the intended victim” (Dupper 2013: 28), is emerging as an insidious adolescent problem that few adults understand. While this form of bullying can be devastating and is increasingly being recognised as a serious problem, the lack of face-to-face interaction in cyberbullying raises complex issues that are specific to this form of bullying. In my informal conversations with girls (Source 3), it emerged that negative feelings of social exclusion are being compounded on social media. Girls who are not accepted into others’ social media networks, and whose social media posts do not receive positive responses, suffer feelings of exclusion equal to or greater than those occasioned by off-line forms of bullying.

Bias bullying is "... when children are bullied because of some aspect of their social identity, whether that's race, gender, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation" (Hope, Mulvey & Shipman 2018). This form of bullying is directed at people who are part of a particular group, often those who are marginalised or disadvantaged. Individual characteristics are not the provoking feature (Dupper 2013: 10) and it has been found that this form of bullying can be particularly harmful, especially when the victim is targeted on the basis of more than one identity (race and gender, for example) (Hope, Mulvey & Shipman 2018).

2.3.6 Participants

The focus of bullying is normally on the victim of bullying – *the pupils*. While it has been presumed that bullying is more common among boys than girls, it is apparent that bullying among girls is increasing (Beaty & Alexeyev 2008: 36) and that girls tend to use more covert forms of bullying than boys. It is not always easy to identify which girls will be the bullies although girls who engage in bullying behaviour are often those who are popular. There are various types of popularity: perceived popularity has to do with how socially prominent an individual is. It is linked to high levels of relational aggression, where efforts are made to socially isolate and exclude victims from social groups and events (Dupper 2013: 22). Sociometric popularity, in contrast, has to do with how well liked an individual is. Some students bully others to achieve dominance and use covert methods such as "ostracism, ridicule and gossip to attain social status" (2013: 22).

It is not always the popular girls who are the bullies and the converse can also apply – girls who by their attributes make others feel inferior can also be targeted (McAndrew 2019). As mentioned above, social status can be very important, and some children bully others in order to establish their social status among their peers by marking the difference between their high status and the lower status of their victims (Dupper 2013: 22). These are often girls who are on the margins of the high-status group and want to cement their place within the group.

Research has shown that *witnesses* are not necessarily just uninvolved *bystanders*. Bullies derive their power from the reactions of the witnesses, which gives them feedback about whether the bullying should be diminished or developed further (Dupper 2013: 23; Hazler &

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Denham 2002: 404). Many witnesses experience a dilemma: they know that bullying is wrong and they should do something, but they feel intimidated and fearful that if they intervene, they may also be bullied and experience the same effects as the victims (Dupper 2013: 24).

Dupper (2013: 24) maintains that *teachers* and other *adults* are often ineffective in dealing with bullying in schools. They either underestimate the problem (Dupper 2013: 24) because few incidents of bullying take place in view of adults, or they do not recognise the behaviour as bullying and may shrug it off as normal adolescent behaviour (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 3; Dupper 2013: 25; Hazler & Denham 2002: 404). Cowie (2011: 35) notes that teachers and children often have different views of what bullying is and how prevalent it is, and teachers are inclined to underestimate the extent of psychological and relational bullying. It may be that because the bullies are often popular members of the pupil body and are the de facto leaders in the class, teachers may fail to recognise verbal abuse, social exclusion and other forms of bullying.

Bradshaw et al. (2006: 363) note that there seems to be a difference in perception between students and staff about the extent to which teachers intervene in instances of bullying: teachers tend to overestimate the assistance they give, when students' perceptions are taken into account. Further, many students feel that the situation is exacerbated by teachers' interventions, and they prefer to discuss problems with friends rather than adults (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 364).

Relatively little attention has been paid to teachers who are bullies although some studies indicate that bullying by teachers may be more of a problem than reported (Dupper 2013: 66). Because of the vast power differences between students and teachers, teacher bullying often results in students having little or no ability to defend themselves (Dupper 2013: 64). Teacher bullying includes shouting at students, ignoring them, making fun of them, teasing them in a hurtful way or humiliating them in front of their peers. The teachers will often justify their behaviour as being necessary to maintain discipline or to motivate students. There are few if any consequences for teachers who bully students, and often school policies neither recognise teacher bullying as a problem nor provide any formal mechanisms to deal

with students' complaints about abusive teachers. There is a tacit acceptance of the teachers' behaviour (Dupper 2013: 64).

2.3.7 Isolation and Exclusion as Bullying

Social exclusion can be considered to be bullying, with all the associated consequences. However, when a girl is deliberately excluded from the group, this behaviour is often not recognised for what it really is by the girl herself, the other girls or the adults who are part of her life. Volf (1996: 66) notes that humans are inter-relational and we find our identity through our relationships with others. However, when we exclude someone from a system of relationships, we cut the bonds that connect us, making us independent of the other. The "other" then becomes the outsider or the enemy – someone who is superfluous and can be disregarded. Further, Volf (1996: 66) claims that exclusion renders the excluded inferior.

Young people who are excluded can easily become isolated and feel marginalised and unaccepted without adults and – perhaps even more importantly – peers to support them (Hazler & Denham 2002: 405). When girls are humiliated in front of others, they will often opt to withdraw from social interactions to avoid further humiliation. In so doing, they are more likely to be further isolated by their peer group (Hazler & Denham 2002: 405). If bystanders begin to support the exclusion, the victim's feelings of isolation will be intensified (2002: 405).

It can be argued that social exclusion is fundamentally more insidious than physical or verbal bullying. With the latter, there is recognition of some form of relationship, albeit a toxic one. The perpetrator recognises the presence of the victim and thereby, the victim's personhood. In social exclusion, there is a denial of a person's humanity at a fundamental level. The action of rendering anyone invisible must rank as a denial of personhood.

2.3.8 Bullying as a Spiritual Problem

Bullying is a spiritual problem. Christian spirituality has to do our ongoing encounter with God and the impact of this relationship on our own lives and our interactions with others. Christian spirituality is not just a set of beliefs; it is a way of life (Kretzschmar 2005: 43). Mahoney (2010: 677) claims that the Trinity conveys that God is relational and that we are created in the image of the community represented by the triune God. Therefore, we are

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created to be in relationship with God and with each other and a component of spirituality is loving our neighbour. Bullying affects our relationship with God and with each other.

In cases of social exclusion, there is a denial of the *Imago Dei*. The *Imago Dei* has to do with the concept that the image of God is imprinted on humans and therefore fundamentally affects our orientation to God and others (Mahoney 2010: 677). Because we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 16–27) and are loved by God, we are worthy of dignity and respect and need to recognise the *Imago Dei* in “the other” (not just those who are like us or whom we like). Jesus was uncompromising in his declaration that all human beings were created equal and warranted equal dignity and worth (Nolan 2006: 52). The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30–37) explains what we can understand about being a neighbour.⁸ The priests and Levites, who held power and high status in the community, were not necessarily uncaring people: perhaps they just wanted to get on with their lives and not be side-tracked by someone of lower status and on the margins of society. The Samaritan was a member of a group that was marginalised and looked down upon by the powerful. But he showed compassion.

We are conditioned by our cultural traditions and expectations and put up man-made barriers, but we walk the Jericho road daily. There will always be those who need help. Do we walk on the other side of the road because we are too busy, or the person needing help is not a member of our group? Or do we stop and help wherever we can? Wherever there is injustice, whenever anyone is robbed of their dignity or value as a human being, we need to offer compassion and care. Jesus embraced and ministered to the people who were traditionally excluded from society (Simmonds 2010: kindle loc 7), many of whom lived on the margins of society.⁹ We can do no less. Gibbs (2003: 95) claims that our humanity is

⁸ This exposition was given during a service in the Cathedral of St Michael and St George, Grahamstown, by Fr Gary Griffith-Smith on 10 July 2016.

⁹ Examples are those with leprosy (Matt 8: 1-3); the unclean woman (Matt 9: 20-12), the blind and the mute (Matt 9:27-34), and the widow’s son (Luke 7: 11-15).

inextricably linked to our acknowledgement and affirming of the humanity of others – all others.

Volf (1996: 69) maintains that the only solution to social exclusion is to make the cross the centre of our lives. The centre of the self needs to be de-centred and re-centred by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ (Romans 6: 5). The new self, described by Paul (Romans 6: 11), is open to others, is willing to give selflessly to others and to receive the other open-heartedly. Volf (1996: 72) explains that in the society Jesus lived in, “sinners” included not only the “wicked” but also the social outcasts such as those who were involved in unacceptable trades, Gentiles, Samaritans and those who did not observe the law. When Jesus sat down and had meals with people who were traditionally excluded, he indicated who the sinners were: not those who were excluded but those who were doing the excluding (Luke 5: 29–32; Luke 7: 36–50; Matt 26: 6–10).

2.3.9 Summary of Sub-Section

In this section, I have presented a theoretical explanation of bullying, with special reference to relational bullying. It was shown that because there are various definitions of bullying, in this research, bullying would be behaviour that was hurtful, there was a power imbalance as perceived by the girls and that covert abuse is as harmful as overt acts of aggression. It was noted that witnesses and bystanders form an important component of bullying behaviour and that adults do not always respond appropriately to bullying. Finally, it was noted that bullying can be considered to be a spiritual problem. While bullying refers to different forms of behaviour, hereafter, the term “bullying” is to be taken to refer to relational bullying and specifically social exclusion rather than the full spectrum of bullying behaviour, in line with the focus of this study.

In the next section, I discuss the systems and patterns of behaviour within the school and society that are important to consider in addressing the third sub-question of the research question: What traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour maintain or resist social exclusion?

2.4 TRADITIONS, SYSTEMS AND PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOUR THAT CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION

2.4.1 Introduction

Historically, the pupil body has comprised mainly white, English-speaking girls from economically advantaged families. Girls of other races and nationalities have been in the minority.¹⁰ The school has more recently instituted a vigorous scholarship programme to ensure diversity in terms of race, culture, geographical location and economic status. However, it is perhaps understandable that long-standing traditions, habits and methods tend to persist.

Bullying does not occur in isolation. Therefore, according to Callahan (1991: 205), we need to consider the school community and its patterns of behaviour and systems. Callahan (1991: 205) argues that schools have the obligation to impart knowledge to children as well as teach them about what it means to be moral people. Schools also have the obligation to ensure their structural processes encourage self-esteem, moral agency and moral responsibility (1991: 205). Langdon and Preble (2008: 488) and Hobgood (2009: 1) maintain that we can only develop just communities when we understand the systems in our lives that maintain injustice. Once we understand what patterns of behaviour are operating in our societies, we can then assess how these support or undermine just social relationships which will witness to the nature of God (Hobgood 2009: 2).

Callahan (1991: 201) maintains that self-esteem is essential for living a moral life because we can only care for others if our own self-esteem is well developed. However, Callahan (1991: 201) notes that in the face of prejudice and stigmatisation, people's self-esteem can be damaged and that to be respected and honoured by one's peers is highly valued. We all need approval and recognition (Callahan: 1991: 203). Therefore, any negative categorisation, prejudice, or stereotyping of racism needs to be identified and addressed.

¹⁰ I am not aware of the actual demographics in 2019, but it seems likely that white girls from economically advantaged families are in the majority.

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When Jesus became aware of untenable situations, his response was usually to take some sort of action: feeding people, raising the dead or healing the seriously ill. He was critical of the interpretation of the Torah by the powerful in the society which allowed structures and systems to inflict suffering on those without power – the elderly, married women, widows (Matt 5: 4-6) (Collicutt 2015: 39). In this section I discuss the patterns of behaviour and structures in the school and the wider society that may be seen to facilitate social exclusion.

In this section, the following perspectives that contribute to this research are discussed: power, hierarchies, traditions, status markers, categorization, stereotypes, prejudice, racism, white privilege, and stigmatization.

2.4.2 Power

Hobgood (2009: 25), quoting Christian ethicist Beverley Harris, states that all theological ethics has to do with questions of power. One of the definitions of power given by The Oxford Dictionary of English is “The capacity or ability to direct or influence the behaviour of others”. This includes social control and influence over others within a certain context. Vescio et al. (2009: 248) add to this definition by noting that the influence of others is exerted by the giving or withholding of rewards and punishments. Power is an important concept in our understanding of relationships: if shared and exercised for the common good, it promotes social justice and contributes to the flourishing of all, but if used negatively can be dominating and controlling (Hobgood 2009: 25). In a community such as a school, groups have varying status and concomitant social power, and individuals will pick up social signals that help them identify status of the groups (Guinote & Vescio 2010: 25). Kretzschmar (2002: 52) notes that power can be personal and social and that we need a nuanced understanding of how power is exercised, as shown in Table 2-1 (adapted to show the exercise of power in the school) (Whitehead & Whitehead (1986) in Kretzschmar 2002: 52).

2.4. Traditions, Systems and Patterns of Behaviour That Contribute to Social Exclusion

Table 2-1: Five Types of Power (Whitehead & Whitehead (1986) in Kretzschmar 2002: 52)

Mode	Experienced as	Needed in
Power on (or in)	Initiative and influence	Adult competence
<i>Power on</i> is the power exercised by the teachers in the school who are entitled to use power as they have specific competences. However, teachers can abuse the power in the classroom.		
Power over	Coordination and control	Organisational leadership
<i>Power over</i> is appropriately used by those to whom authority has been delegated such as prefects and team captains. This power is necessary to ensure that the school is properly governed and is a safe place for children. This power can be abused and those in leadership positions become bullies.		
Power against	Competition and conflict	Assertion and negotiation
<i>Power against</i> can be a positive factor in girls' lives. Healthy competition can motivate girl to improve their standards and give of their best. Abuse of this power can cause hurt and distress.		
Power for	Service and nurturance	Parenthood and ministry
<i>Power for</i> is what should be nurtured in schools. It is within this framework that empathy and compassion develop.		
Power with	Mutuality and collaboration	Interdependence and dependability
<i>Power with</i> allows people to reach out to each other and involves negotiation and consensus, rather than one person or group dominating another.		

Power is always a factor in bullying. While there are clearly identifiable systems of power in the school, as shown in Table 2-1 (teachers, prefects) and are recognised, within school communities there can be a subculture whereby power is accorded to individuals and

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groups. The holders of power are not always easy to identify, and it is not always clear why a particular girl is accorded power by the group, whose decisions may be fairly arbitrary. Further, while popular girls are normally those who are accorded power, they cannot take their power for granted as power is constructed through their social relationships with others (Dytham 2018: 212). Girls who are perceived to hold little value will tend to be excluded but it can possibly happen that in an attempt to become valued, low-power people will do whatever high-power people ask of them and thereby contribute to and perpetuate the bullying behaviour.

Within any group of people there will be leaders and followers. Jesus, who was recognised as a leader, set the example of how power should and can be used (Collicutt 2015: 32) as is shown in Satan's temptations of Jesus in the wilderness (Matt 4: 1–11). As the son of God, he could have exercised special powers and felt himself entitled to special privileges but chose not to do so (Phil 2: 6–11). Throughout his life, Jesus recognised that his ministry was one of service: "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve" (Matt 20: 28; Mark 10: 45). This attitude is confirmed by his refusing to be made a king by force (John 6: 15) and by washing the feet of his disciples (John 13: 1-7). Not only did Jesus live a life of service to others, but he impressed on his followers that they were to follow his example and to use their power to help others, rather than expecting to be privileged (Collicutt 2015: 34).

2.4.3 Hierarchies

One of the strongest themes to emerge in the workshop (Source 1) was the strong informal hierarchical structure present in the school. According to a comment in the survey (Source 2), no one wanted to be seen with a girl who was lower down in the hierarchy. There were girls who felt excluded and that they were often invisible to those who were part of the groups deemed to hold high status.

In 1944, C.S. Lewis, in delivering the Memorial Lecture at London University, referred to "inner rings" that exist in any organization and are present throughout our lives. There are no explicit rules about how the inner ring is constructed or what the criteria of membership are. Some are definitely in and some are definitely out, but there are always others who are on the borderline. Lewis, in this talk, maintains that people always want to be part of the inner

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ring and the fear of being excluded is extremely strong. When this is applied to the school, a girl's need to belong may be so strong that she may say and do things that she knows in her heart to be wrong. A girl may choose belonging to the group over any concern for the loneliness and humiliation that may be the experience of the outsiders.

It is recognised that inequality, disrespect and discrimination such as racism, sexism and ageism are unacceptable. However, Fuller (2003: 1) identifies a less recognised “-ism” – rankism. Fuller notes that “Rankism is what people who take themselves as ‘somebodies’ do to those they mistake for ‘nobodies’”. Whether directed at an individual or a group, rankism aims to put targets in their place and keep them weak” (Fuller 2003: 2). Fuller (2003: 2) believes that all the other -isms are just subspecies of rankism, and that all are based on perceptions of who holds power. Rank rightfully earned serves a useful purpose in institutions, especially in identifying role models, but the problem arises when people are ranked as a “nobody” or a “somebody” and nobodies are denied dignity and respect (Fuller 2003: 3).

Undergirding the abuse of rank could be inherent narcissism, which is a person's or a group's belief that they are special and therefore entitled to special privileges (Collicutt 2015: 117). We are perhaps all vulnerable to the temptation to be narcissistic – Satan tempted Jesus to be narcissistic (Matt 4: 5-6) but Jesus resisted. In Matt 16: 22-23a, Peter was rebuked by Jesus for tempting him in the same way. The Christian message is clear: Paul in Romans 12: 3-5 writes “I say to every one of you: do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgement in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you”.

2.4.4 Traditions

Dussel (1988: 31) maintains that in any system, the traditional ways of doing things will be deemed to be good and moral and will not necessarily be questioned in terms of their morality. It is easy, then, to understand why the claim of “tradition” can be almost impossible to criticise or change. Lester et al. (2015: 3) maintain that there is evidence that bullying can become institutionalised in a school if not recognised or if due diligence is not exercised to ensure the safety of the girls. They further maintain that the language used to

describe behaviour such as “tradition”, “initiation”, “integration” or “team-building” just detracts from what is in reality, abusive behaviour. These practices are further maintained by a culture of non-disclosure and a narrative being presented around rites of passage (Lester et al. 2015: 3).

2.4.5 Status Markers

Collicutt (2015: 163) maintains that a person’s social identity is not value-free and identity markers become very important.¹¹ Girls expressed the opinion that they were assigned to different groups according to their status markers. The rich, clever, athletic, blond, thin girls hold the most power (although black girls with all these attributes except the blondness were accorded high status). The perception was that these powerful girls did not know that girls who had few or none of the valued markers even existed.

2.4.6 Categorisation

Gaertner et al. (2016: 435) discuss the normal psychological processes that accompany the development of in- and out-groups, and the us/they thinking that accompanies such perceptions. While categorisation is a normal process for making sense of our world, it also maintains social biases, in terms of attraction or prejudice. We are attracted to those who are most like us and we categorise people according to previously held assumptions (Gaertner et al. 2016: 435). Also, the similarities between people in the group tend to be

¹¹ Among the girls, certain markers carry more status than others. The opinion was expressed (Source 1 and 2) that if girls did not meet certain norms, they tended to be excluded. It was noted that “[t]here is so much prejudice because of wealth, race or just being different” (Source 2).

Among the status markers identified in Source 2 were: possessions (clothes and top of the range smart phones); activities (such as being strong academically and playing certain sports, especially being in the 1st team); popularity (especially with the boys, and being invited to the important parties); extraversion; economic status (available cash) and physical attributes (being thin was the most important). Not mentioned by the girls but nevertheless obvious status markers are those that are officially awarded – badges for academic, sporting and cultural achievements and items of clothing marking prefectship, for example, are displayed on the uniform and are a daily declaration of status.

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emphasised, as do the differences between groups (Gaertner et al. 2016: 435). Gaertner et al. (2016: 435) note that this process of group distortion and identifying groups leads to a person placing themselves firmly within one social group and removing themselves firmly from the other group, which leads to further distortions and increases the emotional significance of the group.

Social identity theory suggests that a positive self-identity is promoted by membership in a prestigious social group and the lower status is accorded to those in less preferred groups can be very damaging (Gaertner et al. 2016: 435). The difficulty with this sort of categorising behaviour is that girls are not accorded individuality: they become just one of a group and are easily ignored or overlooked. Collicutt (2015: 165) maintains that Jesus set the example by breaking down the barriers between in- and out-groups. Paul reminds the Ephesians that there was a time when they, who were Gentiles, had felt excluded from citizenship in Israel, “But now in Christ Jesus, you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Eph 2: 13). Paul goes on to write that it is Christ who “has destroyed the barrier ... His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, making peace ... to reconcile them both to God through the cross ...” (Eph 2: 15-16).

2.4.7 Stereotypes

“Stereotypes are the traits that come to mind quickly when we think about the groups” (Stangor 2000: 4). While stereotyping is a natural process that allows us to make quick decisions on the basis of limited information (Collicutt 2015: 162), the process encourages us to label and categorise people (Venter 2009: 91). Collicutt (2015: 162) believes that humans have a natural tendency to form social groups that seek to be in power over other groups.

People’s stereotypes tend to influence how they respond to others. In this, they focus on information that will confirm their expectations (Garcia & Crocker 2016: 73). This gives rise to “stereotype threat”, which is the assumption that a person’s behaviour will confirm the commonly held stereotype (Shapiro, Aronson & McGlone 2016: 88). Stereotype threat is not necessarily limited to traditionally stereotyped groups such as black people or women; the threat can be experienced by anyone who finds themselves in a situation where they are stereotyped or being evaluated and will then underperform (Shapiro, Aronson & McGlone

2016: 88). To avoid the stereotype threat, people tend to withdraw from the situation, such as excluding themselves from interactions rather than dealing with the burden of the threat.

Collicutt (2015: 166) maintains that one of the best ways of challenging stereotypes is by encouraging different groups to become more familiar with each other. "If we are to be formed in the likeness of Christ we must as individuals and communities not only be open to others in theory but actively seek out the company of the other" (Collicutt 2015: 166).

However, the very nature of stereotypes requires that it is the responsibility of "the other" to change, to become more like "us" (Collicutt 2015: 166). This is not the way of Jesus – he accepted people unconditionally and they changed in response to his unconditional acceptance, as indicated in the account of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1–10).

2.4.8 Prejudice

"Prejudice is a negative attitude towards a group or toward members of a group" (Stangor 2000: 4). While a school culture may be regarded as "normal", in fact it is only normal for those who make up the majority of the population (Michael 2015: 35). Minority groups in a school tend to find themselves marginalised and excluded from their peer networks due to their different cultures and histories (Cowie 2011: 36). Other girls may be excluded from their peer groups by their appearance, characteristics and behaviour.

Prejudices are not based on reality but on unexamined beliefs (Venter 2009: 90). They may be directed at a girl who belongs to a minority group, or one who belongs to a group that carries low social status. Prejudice may also be directed at people who behave in a way that is perceived to be different (Rigby 2010: 59). Rigby (2010: 59) also believes that children who are isolated are likely to be socially disadvantaged. This isolation may be due to a child being unwilling or unable to make friends or isolating herself by her behaviour.

Anderson (2010: 12) believes that we are all involved in prejudice in some form or another as we all are part of a system that values certain groups and devalues others. He notes that nowadays, although few people would express overtly prejudiced ideas or values, this does not mean that there has been a reduction in prejudice. It has merely become more subtle (Anderson 2010: 8). Subtle prejudice is insidious because it is difficult to identify and is resistant to change. While many people believe they are not prejudiced and go out of their

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way to claim this, when under stress or inadvertently, their words or actions contradict their claims (2010: 8). While both the powerful and the powerless can exhibit prejudice, Anderson (2010: 11) maintains that those who hold power in the community tend to be prejudiced against the less powerful, seeing the powerlessness as being the fault of the weaker person. Further, those who hold the power have an influence over cultural messages about who is valued, who is normal and who is acceptable (Anderson 2010: 11).

2.4.9 Racism

Racism always involves unequal power relations. “It is understood in terms of the collective – how individuals, because of their membership in particular racial groups, are privileged or disadvantaged by the structural and cultural factors in society” (Iseke-Barnes 2006: 143) and by “the power to enforce and act on their prejudices” (2006: 143). While many people will insist that they are not racist, they fail to understand the difficulties the children of different races and cultures experience at schools that are predominantly white. As Iseke-Barnes (2006: 143) notes, these children have to become expert at the way white people do things; many of them will only be taught by white teachers; they will learn all their subjects through a Western lens in a second language. Therefore, their workload is much heavier than that of their white counterparts.

Iseke-Barnes (2006: 103), in examining racist hierarchies of power in educational institutions in the USA, believes that if racism is not addressed in these institutions, the discourse of dominance, exclusion and non-acceptance will “continue to reflect current societal biases” and girls who do not fit the perceived norm will continue to be “othered” (2006: 103).

McIntosh (2010: 1–4) makes the point that racism consists not only “in individual acts of meanness”, as is often assumed, but also “in invisible systems conferring dominance on [one] group”.

Any behaviour which deems a person or a group of people as inferior is contrary to the will of God. In Deuteronomy 10: 18, the Israelites are told that God loves the aliens and that they

are to do the same.¹² In the time of Jesus, there was strong ethnic prejudice shown to the Samaritans, but Jesus challenged this: the Samaritan's actions were favourably compared with those of the priest and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 30–37). Jesus also broke various cultural expectations by speaking to the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4: 1–42) and showing her respect. It was a Samaritan who thanked Jesus for healing him – the only one of ten lepers to do so (Luke 17: 11–10). Paul confirms this in 1 Cor 12: 13 and in Galatians 3: 28 where he declares that in Jesus, there are no longer divisions between previously divided groups.¹³

Racism in South Africa must be understood from the perspective of white privilege. As Iseke-Barnes (2006: 143) notes, failure “to recognise the structural roots of racism and [one's] white privilege is a way of denying [one's] own racism, the benefit [one] derive[s] from its existence and [one's] responsibility for participating in changing it”.

2.4.10 White Privilege

Liu, Pickett and Irvey (2007: 194) define privilege as “a special right, benefit or advantage given to a person, not from work or merit, but by reason of race, social position, religion or gender”. They further explain that those who are privileged are often unaware of this; they claim their privilege as their natural right because their social identities are considered normative. Those who do not belong to the privileged group are deemed to be the outsider.

“Privilege, particularly white or male privilege, is hard to see for those of us were born with access to power and resources. It is very visible for those to whom privilege was not granted” (Kendall 2002: 1). While most white people are prepared to admit that racism disadvantages some people, they are not prepared to accept that the corollary of this is that their whiteness has given them an advantage (Kendall 2002: 2).

¹² Deuteronomy 10: 18-19. “He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing. And you are to love those who are aliens for you yourselves were aliens in Egypt”.

¹³ Gal. 3: 28: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”.

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Despite apartheid ending in 1994, white people have continued to be privileged (Schutte 2013: 1). Many white people try to convince themselves and others that they do not notice race and that they are colour blind. However, for whites, such purported “colour blindness is a denial of the unfair power imbalance, allowing whites to deny their privilege while still receiving its benefits” (Anderson 2010: 264). Anderson (2010: 264) believes those who deny white privilege have not considered the following:

- The subordinate groups are required to subordinate their own cultures and characteristics to blend in with the dominant group (2010).
- There is a denial of power imbalances, privilege based on whiteness rather than fairly earned, and domination.
- There is a denial of the structural favouritism of whites that is still in existence.
- There is the expectation that those who are not white are somehow responsible for their situation and that they should find their own remedies.

2.4.11 Stigmatisation

Garcia and Crocker (2016: 66) define stigmatisation as “a deeply discredited attribute that reduces a person in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted and discounted one”. Garcia and Crocker (2016: 66) note that just having an attribute that situates a person within a certain context will increase the chances that the person will be stereotyped and be denied the chance of developing a positive self-image. Garcia and Crocker (2016: 68) note that when a person or group’s identity is threatened, they will perhaps react to interactions accordingly. Thus, they will look for cues in interactions and interpret these cues as being undermining. They will interpret ambiguous events as being threatening. Those who feel stigmatised in their social interactions may react with mistrust, feel anxious and tend to avoid interactions by withdrawing from them (Garcia & Crocker 2016: 69).

2.4.12 Intergroup Interactions

Research has shown that members of both the in-group and the out-group believe that those in the other group are not interested in interacting. However, the main reason for this perception is that people fear being rejected (DeMoulin, Leyens & Davido 2009: 67). Further, these authors (2009: 67) find that people tended to be pessimistic about relationships and

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often relied on their own perceptions and stereotypes to come to conclusions about the other groups.

2.4.13 Summary of Sub-Section

In this section, I have presented various systems and ways of behaving that can be identified in the school and our society. *Power* is always part of relationships and if used for the common good can be a positive force. The example of Jesus was given, where he showed power exercised as servant leadership. It was noted that as well as the natural *hierarchies* present in any organisation, there are strong informal hierarchies that are used to confine girls to specific strata in the organisation. The concept of *rankism* was discussed and how it allowed people to believe they were privileged. This was contrasted with the example of Jesus who never gave into any form of narcissism. In any organisation, *traditions* and ways of behaving can persist. Some of these are good and are fundamental to the fabric of the organisation but others perhaps need to be abolished. Identification by means of designated *status markers* contributes to the social exclusion of some girls as they become *categorized* according to certain attributes. *Racism, prejudice, stereotyping* and the concept of *white privilege* are known to be unacceptable but may be present in subtle ways.

Much of the research on bullying does not take into consideration that the behaviour is often being manifested by children who are still developing and maturing. A better understanding of stages of development will facilitate the development of age-appropriate interventions for anti-social behaviour. This will be discussed in the next section, with reference to sub-question 4 of the research question: the moral and spiritual development of individuals and the relevance of this to social exclusion.

2.5 MORAL AND SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT: RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION

2.5.1 Introduction

The function of a school is to educate its pupils, but the question to be asked is: What is education? Van der Ven (1998: 2) maintains that education should incorporate moral and theological aspects, and Kroflič (2013: 15) maintains that the main aim of education is to develop moral values. Moral education requires discipline and socialisation, among other things, and is linked to moral values and Jesus' instruction: "So in everything, do to others as

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you would have them do to you” (Matt 7: 12). Education that includes moral motivation such as citizenship, unselfishness and developing a moral identity can have an impact on anti-social behaviour (Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 154). Further, in a faith-based school, education that encourages the spiritual development of the girls should be as fundamental as their academic development.

The fact that girls are still developing morally and spiritually as well as physically and cognitively is perhaps not given enough consideration by schools. Work has been done in the theological field on moral and spiritual development and in the field of psychology, theorists such as Piaget, Kohlman, Erikson and Hoffman have developed theories of cognitive development and the development of moral judgement.

In this section, I discuss moral and spiritual formation and development as well as moral character. Moral and spiritual formation and development are essentially part of the same process, although for clarity, they are presented separately.

2.5.2 Moral Character

Connors and McCormick (1998: 10) define character as being the person we are at the core of our being, and it includes our habits (both good and bad), attitudes, beliefs and what we like and dislike. Importantly, our characters can develop and change (1998: 10) depending on the choices we make. A person’s moral character is evidenced in their inclination to think, feel and behave in an ethical¹⁴ or unethical way (Cohen & Morse 2014: 2), and whether a person consistently chooses the moral option (Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 163). It is important to bear in mind that people have free will and the intellect to make choices about the actions they will take: whether to respond compassionately or to ignore their neighbour. The choices people make in terms of their actions will have an impact on their communities. By reforming the moral character of the individuals that constitute them, communities will be transformed (Connors & McCormick 1998: 23).

¹⁴ The terms “morals” and “ethics” are used interchangeably in this dissertation.

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The creation of personal moral character is part of a journey of healing, integrity and moral courage (Kretzschmar, Bentley & Van Niekerk 2009: 67) and can be manifested in various dimensions:

Cognitive: The individual shows self-reflection and moral reasoning, which includes support for social justice and an understanding of social problems (Schwartz 2007: 4). Kohlberg refers to the importance of recognising the value of all human beings and that justice is imperative for reciprocity in relationships (Schwartz 2007: 4).

Affective: The individual shows empathy and moral concern for others (Schwartz 2007: 5). “Care is considered of vital importance to human development and ultimately to one’s ability to treat others ethically” (Schwartz 2007: 7). Further, care is relational and it is important to consider moral ways of life rather than merely the inculcation of virtues in individuals.

Action: There is congruence between moral understanding and actions. The individual engages in actions that indicate a commitment to and care of others (Schwartz 2007: 8).

The converse of moral character is described by Brooks, Narvaez and Bock (2013: 153) who discuss various manifestations of anti-social behaviour. Generally, such behaviour is associated with theft and violence (in some form – not always physical), dishonesty, and a disregard for social norms. However, those engaged in anti-social behaviour do not always recognise their behaviour as such and they can blame others, regard their behaviour as being legitimate, refuse to recognise the pain their behaviour has caused, and/or believe that moral norms do not apply to them (Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 153).

2.5.3 Moral Formation and Development

As given in Section 1.3.3, moral formation is the “growth in knowing, being and doing which together lead to moral relationships, moral living and the flourishing of humans and all creation in harmony with God” (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 3). Moral principles, such as caring and justice, are first established in the home, but are also learned from lectures, sermons, admonition, etc. (Gibbs 2003: 95). Norms and ways of behaving are constructed from the environment, the culture, socialisation and peer relationships (Gibbs 2003: 101).

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It has been established that cognitive reasoning plays a definite role in moral functioning, implying a developmental component to moral behaviour (Walker 2004: 2). As children develop the capacity for abstraction, they are more able to consider other viewpoints and take actions that are moral but this is not necessarily always the case: even if a person fully understands the situation, they will not necessarily take an appropriately moral action (Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 152). Moral judgement depends on a person having the skills to implement the behaviour judged to be moral and being motivated to behave morally, according to Rest's theory of the emergence of moral behaviour (Rest & Narváz 1994: 23). This includes four components:

Sensitivity refers to a person perceiving the moral dimension of a situation and the appropriate response. It requires empathy, discernment and an awareness of how others would be affected by the action.

Judgement (reasoning) refers to whether a person can assess the benefits or otherwise of certain actions and the ability to choose the best option. It also involves the ability to anticipate outcomes of actions and the impact of these on others.

Motivation refers to the extent to which a person will take moral action despite being offered alternatives. It requires prioritising moral action.

Implementation refers to a person having the strength and skills required to carry out the action. It requires competence and perseverance.

From a theological perspective, moral development involves becoming an ethical person and learning how to live in accordance with the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ. According to Kretschmar (2005: 25–27) to act morally we need:

- A moral framework: This is the means by which we can discern what is right and good and is derived from the Bible and Church traditions.
- A moral identity: Who am I and how am I defined? This identity develops over time and is related to the development of moral character.
- Moral motivation: This has to do with what induces people to behave in a certain way – morally or immorally.

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- Moral formation: This involves the influences that shape the development of moral character, and can be the family, the Church, teachers or other significant adults.
- Moral commitment and action: Does behaviour reflect convictions? Moral commitment certainly requires moral courage to stand up for beliefs.

It is understood that physical growth and development is dependent on factors such as good nutrition, exercise and enough sleep. Similarly, children's cognitive development is the concern of teachers in the classroom. What is perhaps not as clearly understood is that a child's moral development requires focused attention, and there are examples of growing and developing spiritually in the Bible (for example, 2 Thessalonians 1: 3¹⁵ and 1 Peter 2: 2¹⁶).

2.5.4 Stages of Moral Development

Psychologists have long maintained that there are clear stages in people's development that can be identified according to specific norms and behaviour. Attempts have been made to determine whether moral reasoning is also developmental, and Piaget and Kohlberg maintain that judgement is essential if a person is to recognise behaviour as moral or immoral. Thus, as Swanson and Hill (1993: 711) maintain, we can assume that moral judgement and moral behaviour are linked.

Piaget was one of the first psychologists to describe the strategies children use to make sense of their worlds. He held that moral reasoning is connected to cognitive development and that children do not merely absorb character traits from adults. Part of the developmental process is making sense of moral behaviour, which is promoted through interaction with others and through encountering various perplexing situations (Wilhoit & Dettoni 1995: 57). Although there are those who disagree with his views (Gibbs 2003: 23), Piaget maintained that maturity brings broader perspectives, permitting more empathetic and caring relationships with others (Wilhoit & Dettoni 1995: 55).

¹⁵ "We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing".

¹⁶ "Like new-born babies, crave your spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation".

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According to Lawrence Kohlberg, predictable patterns are discernible in the development of an understanding of right and wrong, the source of moral authority, the value of persons, justice, and the motivation to do right (Wilhoit & Dettoni 1995: 72). Young children, with their limited memory capacity and immature language, show little or no ability to consider the perspectives of others (1995: 72) and are only able to focus on the here and now. In their egocentricity, they make superficial moral decisions (Gibbs 2003: 16).

Erik Erikson believed that development comes from interacting with others and that the human personality is influenced by a variety of factors. At each stage of development, depending on what the child experiences during that particular stage, there can be a positive or a negative outcome. Each stage is the building block on which the next stage is founded (Wilhoit & Dettoni 1995: 100).

Lev Vygotsky maintained that the child can only be viewed in his/her context and that culture plays a formative role (Wilhoit & Dettoni 1995: 100). Vygotsky also referred to the “zone of proximal development”, referring to how adults and children together develop a child’s competencies. During the process, the child internalises what she has learned.

Hoffman also maintains that moral development occurs in stages (Gibbs 2003: 85). As individuals develop cognitively, they are more able to understand social concepts, and acquire the ability to understand another’s distress as well as the distress of an “entire group or class of people” (Gibbs 2003: 89). This is probably the highest level of moral development and requires both cognitive ability and well-developed language competence (2003: 89).

According to Gibbs (2003: 89) The various modes of development that are important for a person to develop moral judgement include:

- *Decentration*: The child begins to understand the viewpoint of others.
- *Social construction*: This refers to social interaction and the consideration of the perspective of others. It is only learned through socialisation (Gibbs 2003: 89). Gibbs (2003: 34) refers to the work of Ann Kruger and Michael Tomasello who compared groups of children who met with adults and with groups of children comprising only

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their peers and found that children responded very well in terms of developing moral judgment when interacting with their peers.

- *Moral reciprocity*: An understanding of real reciprocity, such as accepting the Golden Rule (Do to others as you would like done to you), only develops with maturity.
- *Citizenship* is associated with attributes of honesty, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness. People who manifest these traits help develop communities and regard the common good as being more important than individual self-interest. They are fully engaged in their communities, especially helping people who are worse off, and understand that moral behaviour contributes to the well-being of the whole community. (Gibbs 2003: 44)

Kretzschmar (2002: 9) points out that there have been critics of the developmental approach. Cognitive development does not necessarily lead to morally right conduct, and while developmental psychologists such as Kohlberg tend to prioritise some values, as Kretzschmar (2002: 10) asserts, many values are important.

Part of being human is to be able to live and act in moral ways and make moral decisions. When people are marginalised, coerced and frightened they are dehumanised and their human agency is limited or destroyed. In contrast, the development of moral agency focuses on the formation of moral convictions, identity, courage, and actions as a necessary foundation for engagement in society (Kretzschmar 2008: 67). Biggar (2011: kindle loc 884) maintains that morality merges with spirituality, which is about our relationship with God. In the next section, I will discuss spiritual development and formation.

2.5.5 Spirituality

Spirituality is concerned with the shaping, empowering and maturing of the spiritual person that Paul identifies as the fundamental aspect of the life of faith (1 Cor 2: 14–15) (McGrath 1994: 33). “Christian spirituality refers to a living relationship with God’s Spirit” (Collicutt 2015: 5) and it affects every aspect of our lives. Biggar (2011: kindle loc 884) notes that humans can understand themselves once they understand God; when they understand themselves, they understand others around them and will accord them the respect they deserve. Referencing the work of Karl Barth, Biggar maintains that the Christian’s view of

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God the creator, forgiver and redeemer engenders in us feelings of humility, gratitude and hope (2011: kindle loc 913).

Jesus had a living relationship with God. He regularly went off to a quiet place to pray to God (Matt 14: 22; Mark 1: 35), spoke to God in the hearing of others (Matt 11: 25) and encouraged his disciples to develop a personal relationship with God in Matt 8: 6 – “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father...”.

2.5.6 Spiritual Formation

Spiritual formation is a process the goal of which is maturity in Christ (Kretzschmar 2005: 118). Pope (2006) in a lecture delivered at Boston College, noted that according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, spirituality is the formation of the human conscience as a process of transformation. In Gal.4: 19, Col. 1: 28 and Rom 12: 2, Paul defines spiritual formation as a “lifelong process of becoming, of being formed and developed in the likeness of Christ” and is the work of the Holy Spirit. However, the process of becoming spiritually mature involves prayer and worship on the part of the person which will lead to developing a relationship and an increasing desire to love and serve God. As a person is spiritually formed, meaningful and healthy relationships can develop with God, with the self and with others (Kretzschmar 2002: 57).

Another important aspect to consider is the corporate dimension of spiritual formation. In 1 Cor 12: 7a, Paul tells the Corinthians that “to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”. Collicutt (2015: 8) points out that it is easy to consider transformation from the perspective of the individual, but that community is also an essential aspect of the Christian life. “The formation of an individual only makes sense in the context of the faith of communities of which the individual is a part” (Collicutt 2015: 9). This was also the view of Bonhoeffer (Pope 2006) who maintained that transformation takes place on two levels – personal and communal. It is fundamentally the process of moving from being “men and women for ourselves” and becoming “men and women for others”.

Spiritual formation is very closely linked to moral formation because it exposes us to God’s gaze, and enables repentance, forgiveness and healing (Kretzschmar 2002: 57). Kretzschmar

(2002) maintains that “... as spirituality is formed, the values of integrity, justice and compassion are displayed, rather than falsity, partiality and selfishness”.

Collicutt (2015: 3) notes that the whole message of the Kingdom of God has to do with radical transformation, as reflected in the work of Jesus: water to wine, disease to health, want to plenty, social exclusion to welcome, sinner to saint, death to life. The consequence of spiritual formation results in radical freedom, in which a person becomes a fully authentic person and fully herself (Collicutt 2015: 6).

(Pope: 2006) maintains that the question posed by Bonhoeffer – “Who is Jesus Christ for us today?” – is posed to every generation. We can only see the world as God sees it if we are transformed and become authentic Christians (Pope 2006). How do children become compassionate, understand justice and learn to act with wisdom in their interpersonal relationships? It is not possible to grow spiritually without also developing morally. Spiritual development leads to the internalisation of Christian norms and values (Kretzschmar 2012: 11).

2.5.7 Christian Norms, Values and Virtues

Moral norms are principles that are contained in codes of conduct, but can also be more general, such as “Do not oppress the alien, the orphan and the widow” (Jer 7: 6), a modern application of which is to show compassion and justice to those who are powerless and marginalised. Values, which are derived from our norms, are the principles that govern our actions and attitudes and have to do with what we admire and desire for our lives (Kretzschmar 2005: 122; 2012: 31). Christians base their norms on those of the Bible, such as “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt 5: 44). These norms are:

- Respect for human dignity. All people should be treated as bearing the image of God rather than according to their perceived social status. When humans are accorded such dignity, they will not be humiliated or bullied. In Section 2.2.7, it was noted that Jesus accorded dignity and respect to everyone he met, regardless of their social status, but girls who are bullied are not accorded this respect or dignity.
- The ability to resist the powerful interests of social groups and a consideration of the values of all social groups: loyalty to a group that socially excludes others would not

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constitute a sound moral value. In Section 2.1.2 it was noted that girls are very strongly influenced by the norms of the peer group and often their behaviour is guided by the strongest in the group. Some girls' participation in the group results in unkindness to those girls who are being excluded.

- The use and abuse of power: service is the opposite of the abuse of power. It was noted in Section 2.3.2 that power when used appropriately can be affirming and promote social justice, but the abuse of power can cause pain and hurt.

Norms and values that have become part of our character and conduct are virtues if commendable; or if anti-social, vices resulting in an alienation from self and God. The Greek philosophers described what they called the cardinal virtues according to which people should live their lives. Theologians, particularly Thomas Aquinas, added the theological virtues. The virtues are listed in the following table (Kretzschmar, Bentley & Van Niekerk 2009: 27):

Table 2-2: Virtues

Theological virtues	Cardinal moral virtues	Other moral virtues
Faith	Prudence (wise judgement)	Honesty
Hope	Courage	Respect for others (Imago Dei)
Love	Justice	Compassion
	Wholeness (temperance)	Respect for creation

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		Reverence for human life
		Peace making

In the consideration of wholesome relationships, all the virtues are required. A girl needs to exercise wise judgement when she is faced with the moral choice of whether to be kind to a girl who is being excluded by others. She will need courage to stand against the influence of the group to include someone who is being excluded and the conviction that what she is doing is right. Her behaviour will be driven by the *Imago Dei* of the other and respect for all God’s creation. However, with reference to social exclusion, it is perhaps the virtues of love, compassion and justice that are the most important.

Love: Van der Ven (cited in Kretzschmar et al. 2009: 114) points out that the expression of God’s love is more important than loyalty or solidarity with the social group, and certain people need to be given particular consideration. In the context of bullying this would include those who are being excluded, teased or hurt in some way. He points out that “love is the essence of God and the most fundamental moral virtue, hence, love for God cannot be separated from love for others” (2009).

Compassion: “Compassion is the emotion most commonly attributed to Jesus” (Collicutt 2015: 38). The ministry of Jesus was epitomised by his concern for the disempowered and the excluded in society. Jesus not only healed people with leprosy; he laid hands on them (Mark 1: 40–42). He also engaged with those excluded from the community; his conversation with the Canaanite woman is an example of this (Matt 15: 21). However, his compassion extended to everyone. In Matt 15: 32, Jesus said to his disciples, “I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me for three days and have nothing to eat”. Other examples of Jesus declaring his compassion are found in Matt 9: 36 and 15: 32; and Mark 6: 34 and 9: 32.

Justice: Social justice is required in all areas of our lives: personal (which has to do with who we are as people), social (which has to do with our interpersonal relationships) and institutional (what are the structures that permit and maintain certain patterns of

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behaviour). In Matthew 22: 37–40, Jesus answers the question “Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in Law?” Jesus’ answer expresses Christianity’s conception of social justice: we are to love God and to love our neighbour. Luke 10: 29b indicates that there are no limits to who can be considered our neighbour and in Matthew 5: 44, Jesus extends the requirement of love for one’s neighbour by telling us that he expects us to love our enemies as well.

According to Ogletree (2005: 38), justice is recognising the dignity of all human beings and according every person his or her due. Foster (1998: 27) refers to Amos the prophet, who was passionate about what he perceived to be the abuse of power in the country. He declared that God was not interested in the feasts, sacrifices or worship of a people who were denying justice to those who needed it the most.¹⁷

2.5.8 Developing Compassion and Empathy

Compassion involves being open to the suffering of others in a non-judgemental, non-defensive ways. It also involves the desire to remove suffering (Gilbert 2005: 1). Empathy is broader than compassion. Compassion means to “suffer with”, so we have compassion for those who suffer but empathy allows us to translate the emotion of compassion into action. We can relate to people and share all their feelings – “we love those who love, cry with those who cry and struggle with those who struggle” (Nolan 2006: 163). Empathy develops through socialisation, but sometimes the child’s egotistical needs over-ride empathy. This is especially the case in younger children whose need for safety or peer acceptance may dominate. Further, younger children are motivated by their immediate desires, such as pleasure, anger or fear (Gibbs 2003: 100).

¹⁷ Amos 2:6-7 “They sell the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals. They trample on the heads of the poor as upon the dust of the ground and deny justice to the oppressed”.

Amos 5:21–23 “I hate, I despise your religious feasts. I cannot stand your assemblies. Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring me choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them”.

Amos 5:24 “But let justice roll like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.

The development of empathy has been shown to be the best antidote to bullying and it has been shown that children respond well to training in compassion and empathy (Cram 2003: 2). Jesus did much of his teaching of moral values through the use of parables: he told people stories set in a context they could relate to and that they could understand. Often, he discussed the meaning of the parable afterwards and then told the listeners to “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10: 35). Jesus also showed by his actions what he wanted his followers to learn.

2.5.9 Development of Conscience

Callahan (1991: 14) describes conscience as “a personal self-conscious activity, integrating reason, emotion and will in self-committed decisions about right and wrong, good and evil”, while Spohn (2000: 4) maintains that people’s consciences are developed in and formed by their communities – those we are born into and those we choose. People become accountable to those in their group and aspire to the norms and values of the group. Spohn (2000: 4) notes that values are more strongly communicated in peer-to-peer relationships than in child to adult relationships. Spohn (2000: 9) further notes that children need to be given a moral vocabulary to help their consciences to develop as too often they are exposed mainly to the personal vocabulary of self-interest and advantage.

Young people are being exposed to the mass media and social media in an unprecedented way. Before the advent of social media and the internet, children were exposed to the moral values of only their immediate community: parents, teachers and other influential adults. Now, at the click of a button, they can be exposed to a plethora of views that are seldom subject to moral scrutiny or criticism.

Further, in our pluralistic society, according to Wright (2000:7), because there is little consensus about our ultimate beliefs and values, it is important for schools to include the development of pupils’ spiritual knowledge and insight. In view of this, therefore, conscience formation in the school context becomes ever more important and the values of the institution need to be strongly reinforced.

According to Connors and McCormick (1998: 140), emotions play an important role in the development of conscience because to behave ethically and care about the wellbeing of

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others requires passion and commitment. Emotions are developed by interacting with others (Kretzschmar et al. 2009: 120) and are closely linked with moral and spiritual development. Paul in Galatians 5: 19–26 describes the “old nature” as being one marked by anger, strife, jealousy and quarrels. However, the “new nature” is one of “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”. The transition comes from the old to the new as we are spiritually transformed and developed (as discussed in Section 2.4.7) and allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.

An important factor to be taken into consideration is the basis on which we build our notions of what is moral behaviour. Does morality have an objective basis or are our perceptions of what constitutes moral behaviour merely subjective? Are our norms and values related only to a specific context and culture? In a world where values are deemed to be subjective and relative, the Christian faith offers a plumb line against which behaviour can be judged and allows institutions such as the school to establish norms and values based on biblical principles.

2.5.10 Moral and Spiritual Development and Social Exclusion

What does moral and spiritual development have to do with the social exclusion of girls at school? It seems that cognitive reasoning plays a role in moral functioning, implying a developmental component to moral behaviour (Walker 2008: 2). Children who bully may not be aware of the impact of their behaviour, may not understand it or may not have developed the social skills required to interact with others in a non-hurtful way. A child may know what moral action is and still not act on this knowledge. It has been proposed that a sense of responsibility for moral action is also part of a developmental process and has to do with the development of empathy, a sense of guilt and commitment to others (Walker 2004: 546).

We all make moral choices that will determine the sort of people we are going to become, the actions we will perform and the kinds of communities we will build (Connors & McCormick 1998: 4). The purpose of spiritual formation is to become Christ-like and in so doing, become the light and salt in the world (Matt 3: 13–16). Spiritual formation is not only about changing ourselves but also has to do with developing morally sound relationships

(Kretzschmar 2005: 118). Spirituality is concerned with the shaping, empowering and maturing of the spiritual person which Paul identifies as the fundamental aspect of the life of faith (1 Cor 2: 14–15) (McGrath 1994: 33).

The girls at the school are encouraged and expected to develop their academic abilities. They are also expected to develop their physical abilities and cultural competences. Not as much attention is paid to their spiritual and moral development. It is presumed that by the time the girls come to the school (most of them when they are aged about 13), they will understand what it means to be a moral person. Many of them indeed do. However, while we recognise that young adolescents are academically and physically immature, we do not recognise moral and spiritual immaturity.

Our society is influenced by social structures: the media is highly influential in dictating how we should live our lives, and the nature of our values and our aspirations. It is difficult enough for adults to resist these influences; children without a strong sense of who they are would find it almost impossible. Without moral and spiritual formation and development, young people will not have a framework within which to live meaningful lives.

2.5.11 Summary of Sub-Section

In this section, I discussed various components of moral and spiritual development. A person's *moral character* refers to who they are at the core of their beings and its development requires moral courage. Dimensions of moral character include the cognitive, the affective and action. As we are *morally formed and developed*, we mature in our moral relationships, the way we live morally and contribute to the flourishing of all. Moral formation and development will affect how people perceive a situation, what will motivate them and what actions they will take. It was discussed that to act morally we need a moral framework, a moral identity, be motivated to act morally, be exposed to the right influences and be committed to taking the morally good actions when required. I discussed *stages of moral development* according to various psychologists.

It was noted that *spiritual formation*, which is closely linked to moral formation, has to do with the shaping, empowering and maturing of the spiritual person and that our spirituality affects every part of our lives. It was further noted that becoming a spiritual person requires prayer, worship and developing a relationship with God and acting differently as a result. In this section, the *Christian norms, values and virtues* were discussed, with special reference to the virtues of love, compassion and justice (which are particularly relevant to social exclusion). Finally, the *development of compassion and empathy* was discussed as well as the *development of the conscience*.

In the next section, I will discuss the formation of alternative communities and how the Israelites understood the importance of their covenant responsibilities to act with justice and compassion to all in the community, especially the powerless and the vulnerable. Fedler (2006: 107) captures the crux of this excellently: “To show kindness and mercy to those who are vulnerable is not considered voluntary charity by God: it is mandatory. We are obliged to take care of the widow, the orphan and the alien”. Felder (2006: 92) maintains that the reality of the Exodus and God’s covenant had to do with an alternative social community. It represented a new way of loving God and loving one’s neighbour. Jesus was also radically counter-cultural, and challenged many of the norms of his society, showing how things could be very different.

2.6 AN UNDERSTANDING OF COMMUNITIES

As defined above, “Communities are organisations and structured associations of persons which have established ways of behaving (known as structures, systems and institutions)” (Connors & McCormick 1998: 11). Connors and McCormick (1998: 9) maintain that morality has to do with what sort of people we should be and what sort of communities we should construct, and that these both involve character (what sort of people we are), and the choices we make. They maintain that when considering morality, we tend to focus on the individual and do not pay enough attention to the role of the community that individuals belong to and by which they are formed (Connors & McCormick 1998: 56). Moral and spiritual formation are important for both individuals and communities.

2.6.1 Old Testament

In the Ancient Near East at the time of Moses, “the logic of correspondence” (Berman 2008: 19) prevailed: this meant that the king was deemed to be the earthly manifestation of the gods and the people were servants. The king’s decrees were understood to be those of the gods. The society was strongly hierarchical with the king holding complete power (Brueggemann 2010: 6) and those with titles being deemed superior to the other members of society. Most of the citizens held very low social status (Berman 2008: 26) and the Israelites, who were slaves, had forfeited their freedom in exchange for food (Brueggemann 2010: 6). With this level of social stratification, “permanent and institutional power was given to particular classes to control the economic, military and political resources of society” (Berman 2008: 5). Pharaoh’s way of ruling precluded the development of the common good: there could only be slaves and masters.

At Sinai, it was made very clear to the people that there was to be no logic of correspondence and that no person would hold the status of a god. God declared unequivocally, “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me” (Exodus 20: 2–3). The hierarchical structure under which the Israelites had lived in Egypt is not found in the Old Testament: the king and God are not connected as they were in Egyptian society (Psalm 2) and the Israelite king (when the time came) was appointed by God (but not representative of him) (Berman 2008: 27).

When Moses presented the Ten Commandments and the terms of the covenant to the Israelites, an egalitarian structure was introduced. Equality before the law was enjoyed by all, even aliens and immigrants (Rooker 2010: kindle loc 435). “In Israel, all offences were ultimately offences against God” (Rooker 2010: kindle loc 435). Further, people were no longer to be treated as merely economic entities. Every person was important as each one was created in the image of God (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1574; Rooker 2010: kindle loc 3262) and the connection between God and neighbour was established: “Love of God comes as love of neighbour with an immediate concrete, economic dimension” (Brueggemann 2010: 42).

By instituting the covenant with the Hebrews, God was effectively creating a group of people with a new identity; they were to be “a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Ex. 19: 6) who were to be a witness to the world of God’s power and love. They were to be a different, alternative community from the community they had been part of in Egypt – a new social community (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1328).

Brueggemann (2010: 18) notes that the understanding of Divine generosity recurs throughout the Old Testament: for example, 2 Kings 4: 1-7, where the widow is given oil to pay her debts; 2 Kings 4: 42-44, where the prophet feeds one hundred people on an apparently limited supply of bread; and 2 Kings 6: 22, where the prophet insists prisoners should be allowed to leave rather than being put to death. Such narratives “invite the listening community into an alternative mode of existence, one that is ordered according to divine generosity” (Brueggemann 2010: 18).

The prophets called the people back to faithfulness to the covenant: exclusive worship of God and justice and mercy to be shown to all. The main message of the prophets was that the people were no longer living as an alternative community and had become like the nations around them – that power was wielded without justice for the powerless in the society and was used to maintain the status quo of the rich and powerful (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1739). Brueggemann (2010: 60) notes that in the Old Testament ‘justice’ refers to the equitable distribution of commodities, so that all had access to resources and could live with dignity, especially the powerless. Righteousness was understood to be the commitment of those in the community to “intervene effectively in order to rehabilitate society, to respond to social grievance and to correct every humanity-diminishing activity” (Brueggemann 2010: 62).

2.6.2 The New Testament and the Early Church

The Jewish community during the time of Jesus was a divided society with strong hierarchal structures and very strict social norms regarding how each group was to behave. There were those who were living “lives of luxury and decadence”, such as “the Herods, the chief priests, the elders, the nobility and the rich landowners” (Nolan 2006: 49).

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Nolan (2006: 50) claims that Jesus did not try to change the society, improve it or reform it – he was involved in a social revolution that was based on spiritual conversion. He was uncompromising in his declaration that all human beings were equal in dignity and worth (Nolan 2006: 52) and he embraced and ministered to the people who were traditionally excluded from society (Simmonds 2010: kindle loc 7) or lived on the margins, thus creating a reconciling community (Venter 2009: 165). He challenged the stereotypes and the traditions of the society and modelled a different way – the way of compassion, love and sacrifice (Luke 6: 36) (Venter 2009: 166; Wright 1996: 383). It was a reconciling, inclusive community and love of God is shown by love of our neighbour (Venter 2009: 164).

Kretzschmar (2012: 39) notes that like Jesus, most of the early Christians were Jewish and were therefore strongly influenced by the teaching of the Torah. It is not surprising that the Jewish and Christian faiths have much in common: that morality and faith cannot be separated; we are responsible to God for the way we live our lives and morality, compassion and justice are paramount. Most important to both Jews and Christians is the care of the vulnerable in society (Kretzschmar 2012: 39).

The theme of generosity identified at Sinai is confirmed by Paul in the two letter he wrote to the Corinthians (Brueggemann 2010: 70). In 2 Cor 8: 9 he writes, “For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich”. Brueggemann (2010: 33) maintains that it is the role of the Church and society to recognise the narrative so often prevalent in our competitive society: that when we do not recognise God’s generosity, our society is driven by greed, exclusion, selfishness and coercion.

The foundation of the Christian community is the cross (Volf 1996: 47). Through the sacrificial death of Jesus, “Jews and Gentiles are made one body of Christ’s children without regard to ethnicity, nationality, gender, race or class” (1996). Paul (Galatians 3: 26–20) explained that traditional stereotypes no longer apply (Jews/Greek; slave/free; male/female) and in 1 Cor 12: 12–27), his metaphor of the body is a strong statement that no one is to be regarded as being less worthy of respect and dignity than any other person.

2.6.3 Moral Communities in the 21st Century

One of the difficulties we face in the 21st century has to do with how we define moral communities. “We face a crisis about the common good because there are powerful forces at work among us to resist the common good, to violate community solidarity and to deny a common destiny” (Brueggemann 2010: 1). Further, postmodernism rejects “objective standards, universal norms and authoritative judgements” (Braaten & Seitz 2005: ix).

In Western culture, individuality and independence are understood to be virtues, and we learn from a young age to enjoy personal autonomy. Personal achievement and freedom of choice are seen to be important (Gorman 2002: 13). People generally defer to and trust authority less than in previous generations (Biggar 1997: 135). Relationships tend to be based on personal needs and our groups are those where other members of the group are like us and within which we feel affirmed and comfortable. We exclude those who are different from us (Gorman 2002: 14). Because of apartheid, where people of different cultures and races were kept apart, South Africans are probably more concerned with aspects of identity than most other countries (Nicolson 2008: 15).

Fedler (2006: kindle loc 1922) maintains that we need to heed the warnings of the Old Testament prophets. It is very easy to become accommodated to the ethics of the wider society – the pervasive individualism where everyone wants to make sure they get as much as they can of whatever is available. Gorman (2002: 14) claims that in the alternative community instituted at Sinai, we are created to be interdependent and an integral part of a community.

2.6.4 Moral Communities and Ubuntu

There are two roots from which the Western understanding of ethics has branched: a Greek root and a biblical root. The Greek root maintains that “The fulfilment of our nature consists ... of the harmonious development of our power ... known as virtue” (Nicolson 2008: 17). The biblical root considers the idea of a common humanity; people are all created in the image of God and our purpose is to express the character of God in our lives (Nicolson 2008: 17). This is based on Thomas Aquinas’s understanding of morality “as living according to the God-given tendencies of our human nature” (Nicolson 2008: 20).

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For Metz and Gaie (2011: 7), the starting point for understanding moral behaviour begins with the concept of Ubuntu: *A person is a person through other persons or I am because we are (Umuntu ngamuntu ngabantu)*. They note that this statement can often be understood as merely a person's dependence on others for their survival, but the African understanding is a value-laden concept. As Metz and Gaie (2011: 8) gloss it, the principle implies that "[o]ne's ultimate goal should be to become a *full* person, a *real* self or a *genuine* human being". This can only be done in relation to others and in community with others.

Kretzschmar (2012: 35) explains that included in the concept of *Ubuntu* is that a person becomes fully human through caring for others and understanding social responsibility. Compassion, justice, sharing and hospitality are formed within the community.

However, communitarianism can have its moral pitfalls (Kretzschmar 2010: 578). If it becomes collectivistic, the interests of one group are promoted (leading to behaviour such as nepotism), people develop misplaced loyalty to the group and people become too afraid to criticise those in power.

2.6.5 Ethical Communities

Shutte (cited in Nicolson 2008: 25), notes that contemporary Thomists such as Rahner express an understanding of what it means to be a moral person: "It is in our relationships with others that we develop into persons with self-awareness and self-determination" and "it is this ability to think and choose that makes us moral human beings" (Nicolson 2008: 26).

While there are moral and economic divisions in all societies, the biblical narrative tells us that we need a sustained insistence on the alternative. Carney et al. (2011: 241) says that we need to focus on creating a shared sense of humanity among people rather than considering individual acts and that strong interactions are important "for the general functioning of social networks, socially responsible behaviours and overall wellbeing" (Carney 2011: 241). Merely voicing disapproval of the systems will not change them. Racism will not end just by changed attitudes because it is so fundamental to our society (McIntosh 1989: 22). McIntosh (1989: 22) maintains that "[t]o redesign social systems we first need to acknowledge their colossal unseen dimensions and acknowledge the silences and denials that surround the systems and structures that are maintaining social exclusion".

Gill (2001: 23), with reference to Hauerwas, maintains that a Christian ethic can only be understood within the context of the community: as the members of the community grow spiritually and become morally formed, so the Church will be able to be a moral voice to the wider community and society as a whole. Throughout the history of the Church, as described in Sections 2.6.1, 2.6.2 and 2.6.3 above, there have been calls to the people to be radically different. The reality of the Exodus and God's covenant with the Israelites had to do with not a new religious or social community but a totally alternative community. It represented a new way of loving God and loving one's neighbour (Fedler 2006: 92). The Old Testament prophets called people to hold values that were radically different from their society's norms and values. Jesus was radically counter-cultural in his ministry and challenged many of the norms of society.

Fedler (2006: 10) maintains that we are called to be people who seek justice and compassion because of God's love for us and because our God is a God of justice and compassion. In this, according to Fedler (2006: 10), the way we treat others and the world is inextricably linked to our worship of God.

2.6.6 Summary of Sub-Section

In this section, an understanding of a moral community as established at Sinai and developed through the teaching of the prophets and by Jesus has been developed. The recurring theme is that the new community's hallmark is the care of the weak, marginalised and powerless (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1583). A further theme is that of generosity: "The God who gives the Jews more than they deserve, the God who commands us to care for the seemingly undeserving, this same God gives us what we do not deserve – forgiveness and everlasting life" (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1591). Brueggemann (2010: 21) postulates that the metaphor of generosity can be carried into the whole of Church history – that there has always been a pull between the need to control and that which offers generosity (Brueggemann 2010: 21–22).

2.6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented a review of the literature that informs the main research question and the sub-questions to support the hypothesis: There are girls in an independent faith-based girls' school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. As this anti-social behaviour is not fully understood either by the girls or the teachers as being a form of bullying, systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are allowed to persist. Section 2.2 considered aspects of relationships while Section 2.3 gave an overview of bullying. Traditions and ways of behaving that can contribute to social exclusion were discussed in Section 2.4 and Section 2.5 considered the moral and spiritual development of girls. Finally, moral communities, with special reference to the moral community established by God at Sinai were presented.

In the next chapter, the methodology undertaken in the empirical research will be described. In order to test whether the findings of the theoretical research presented in this chapter can be confirmed, expanded or reconfigured, it was decided to conduct empirical research in the school. Other aims were to ascertain attitudes regarding social exclusion, to what extent such exclusion was prevalent in the school and the consequences of exclusion for the individual and the community. The earlier discussion of the Exodus showed that the godly community is an egalitarian one in which each person is valued because they are created in the image of God. The prophets reinforced this and the life of Jesus epitomised the meaning of an inclusive community.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

It is the hypothesis of this research that the social exclusion of girls is a hidden, covert form of bullying but a very prevalent part of the lives of many. In Chapter 1, it was surmised that the pain and hurt caused by this form of bullying deserved more attention than it seemed to have been accorded. In Chapter 2, I drew extensively on the fields of theology, psychology, sociology and education and developed a theoretical understanding of the many parameters that could contribute to social exclusion. However, it is important to consider the personal experiences of those in the school, both girls and teachers, to determine to what extent these supported the theoretical research.

Questionnaires were used to elicit feedback and to expand on the information obtained from the questionnaires, I conducted semi-structured interviews with some of the girls who had graduated from the school and staff. It was intended that the findings of the empirical research would be used to reflect on the theoretical data and reach conclusions that could offer the school a coherent understanding of the subject of social exclusion as a form of abuse, the factors contributing to it, and how these can be addressed. This chapter will describe how the empirical research was conducted.

3.2 TYPE OF RESEARCH

As this research is concerned with social, cultural, and individual factors which are understood subjectively and are not easily quantified, a qualitative approach was used. Qualitative research methods “allow researchers to explore issues from the perspectives of the individuals directly involved ... and to gain new perspectives on problems or issues” (Hansen 2006: 1).

The research is descriptive as I outline the insights of other researchers and describe the findings of the questionnaires and interviews. Hansen (2006: 47) notes that the descriptions of the experiences of people’s lives and social contexts provided by well-constructed qualitative research can offer in-depth insights and provide strategies for change. In this regard, the research is normative. The focus of the theoretical research was to determine the norms, values and virtues associated with ethical behaviour, on the basis of which the

questionnaire was developed. The aim of the interviews was to expand on the findings of the questionnaires. Finally, in Chapters 4 and 5, based on both the theoretical research and the findings of the empirical research, I come to conclusions about behaviour in the school that may or may not be morally acceptable. I further make recommendations to the school that will encourage the development of ethical behaviour.

This is an exploratory investigation as only one school was investigated with the aim of identifying directions for further research. These and the limitations to the research are noted in Chapter 5.

3.3 THE SAMPLE

The hypothesis, presented in Chapter 1, Section 1.8, is:

There are girls in an independent faith-based girls' school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. Because this anti-social behaviour is not understood to be a form of bullying, systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are permitted to persist.

Therefore, it was important to include both pupils (in this study, alumnae were included) and the staff in the sample.

Purposive sampling was used. In this strategy, the researcher determines the required characteristics of the sample group and selects only those who exhibit these to be part of the sample (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2002: 93). The advantages of purposive sampling were that I could select participants whom I knew would provide "a full and sophisticated understanding of the phenomena under study" (Hansen 2006: 52.). One of the problems with purposive sampling may be the bias of the researcher, according to Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2015: 175). I was aware of this problem, but it did not arise as the choice of my sample was dictated to a certain extent by the willingness of subjects to participate in the research. The influence of their interest in the subject on the data is discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.

3.3.1 Participants

There were two sample groups: the teachers at the school and the alumnae of the school.

3.3.1.1 Teachers (also referred to as 'the staff')

According to Bradshaw et al. (2007: 27) teachers often underestimate the extent of bullying taking place in the school, they may not be aware of covert bullying taking place and may not know how to handle bullying. Further, it was noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.1 that teachers may not fully understand the importance of relationships to girls. Hall-Lande et al. (2007: 265) feel that adolescents' painful emotional reactions to social isolation and the presence of distrust, stereotyping and exclusionary practices in the classroom would make it very difficult for the affected children to perform to their academic potential.

As well as teachers, members of staff who interact directly and regularly with the girls include an educational psychologist, clinical psychologist and chaplains. (In this report, the terms "teachers" and "staff" are used interchangeably.) I asked every member of the staff¹⁸ (n = 41) to complete the questionnaire to obtain as wide a response as possible to the questions.

3.3.1.2 Girls

The second target population was that of the girls. I asked alumnae of the school who had graduated from the school within the previous three years to take part in the research. The reasons for this were that the young women were over 18 and could decide for themselves whether to participate in the research. Further, I felt that they may be able to view their experiences at school objectively and be better able to articulate these now that they were no longer in the school environment. I limited the time frame to three years so that their experiences would be comparable. In this research, the term "girls" refers to the young women described in this paragraph.

I applied snowball sampling to identify girls I could ask to take part in the research. In snowball sampling, "[t]he researcher asks key informants to suggest people to include in the study" (Hansen 2006: 53). Snowball sampling is used when the researcher finds it difficult to

¹⁸ The staff body is heterogeneous and comprises members of different sexes, race and nationalities.

identify members to be included in the sample group and relies on individuals to guide her to others (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2015: 178). I asked friends, members of staff and some girls known to me to identify girls who may be willing to participate. Ultimately, I sent out 30 questionnaires to girls whose contact details I had been given.

3.3.2 Size of the Sample

Bless, Higson-Smith and Sithole (2015: 164) note that an adequate sample in qualitative research is one in which data saturation can occur – that is, one in which no new information will be obtained from increasing the sample size. Cohen et al. (2000: 93) feel that the sample size can be small due to cost, time and number of researchers involved and that ultimately, the researcher needs to exercise judgement regarding the size of the sample (Cohen et al. 2002: 96). My initial aim was to obtain a sample of 20 teachers and 20 girls for the questionnaire, and five of each to be interviewed. However, I later recognised that of necessity, my sample would be relatively small. The number of teachers to whom I could send the questionnaire was fixed and identifying girls to participate was dependent on the cooperation of my contacts. Further, given that I hoped to obtain rich, detailed data with open-ended questions rather than a broad overview, I needed to limit the size of the sample as the analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the interviews would be labour-intensive.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION

3.4.1 Access to Participants

A covering letter explaining the research and providing a link to the questionnaire was emailed to 41 teachers and 30 girls. Of these, 17 were returned by the teachers (41.5%) and 15 by the girls (50%). Hence, I came close to meeting my initial target.

It was possible to keep a check on how many questionnaires had been downloaded, but I did not start checking the data until I was sure that no further questionnaires would be submitted. This was to ensure anonymity and that I could not ascertain the identity of the respondent from the information given on the questionnaire.

I emailed a letter to all the girls who had been identified as possible participants in the research and whose names I had been given. The letter included information about the purpose of my research and the girls were asked to complete the questionnaire which could be accessed by the hyperlink given in the letter. The recipient was assured that they would not be identified by any means without their written consent. If the recipient was prepared to participate, they were asked to sign the letter and return it to me, indicating whether they would be prepared to be interviewed. This approach was in line with recommendations offered in the literature: Baatard (2012: 101) recommends that emails should only be used to contact participants. Questionnaires should not be attached or embedded within the body of the email.

If a girl notified me that she had submitted the questionnaire, I asked her for her postal address and sent her a gift voucher to the value of R100, with a note thanking her for her participation. Not all girls informed me that they had submitted the questionnaire.

The staff were sent an email informing them of the purpose of the research and how it was being conducted. I chose to send an email rather than speaking to them directly so that the approach was consistent with that of my approach to the girls. They were invited to participate in the research by completing the questionnaire and were asked to sign the letter consenting to such and return it to me. They were also asked to inform me whether they would be prepared to be interviewed as part of my research. Over the course of three months, I emailed the staff on three occasions, asking them to participate in the research, in an attempt to obtain comprehensive results.

Not all members of staff informed me that they had completed the questionnaire but those who did were each given a bottle of wine with a note thanking them for their participation. I did not open the questionnaires and start checking the data until I was certain I would receive no further questionnaires. This was to ensure anonymity and to ensure that I could not ascertain the identity of the respondent according to the information given on the questionnaire.

3.4.2 Informed Consent

In the letter, all participants were asked to give their informed consent to participate in the research by signing the letter and returning it to me. Although not every participant did sign the letter and email it back, the process of completing the questionnaire implied informed consent as the link to the questionnaire was given in the letter. Hence, the letter would have been read and only those agreeing to participate would have proceeded to the questionnaire.

3.4.3 Confidentiality

The participants were assured of confidentiality. The questionnaire was structured in such a way that personal information was not divulged and, as explained above, even when respondents informed me that they had completed the questionnaire, I did not access the data until all the questionnaires had been completed. When studying the data, I realised that the chaplain may be identifiable as he was identified as a male. I contacted him via email and asked whether this was acceptable to him. He replied in the affirmative. In discussing the data I took care to ensure that neither the school nor the participants in this research could be identified.

3.4.4 Storage of Data

The questionnaires were stored on the SurveyMonkey® website and could only be accessed by me. The interviews were recorded on a small recording device. After each interview, the recording was saved onto a portable memory device and then deleted from the recorder. The portable memory device was given to the transcriber and once the interview had been transcribed, the interview was deleted from the portable memory device, precluding any identification according to voice. The transcriptions were saved by me on my password protected personal computer.

3.5 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.5.1 Questionnaires

An online programme (SurveyMonkey®) was used for the questionnaires. The reduction in the cost of personal computers has resulted in computers becoming ubiquitous in homes. This and the unprecedented growth of the internet have changed how surveys are

conducted (Schonlau, Fricker & Elliott 2002: 24). Online surveys have become more common than surveys conducted telephonically or by means of paper and pen (Baatard 2012: 101; Chang 2013: 121).

According to Chang (2013: 121) and Baatard (2012: 101) the advantages of online surveys are that they are efficient: surveys can be sent to respondents and returned rapidly and there can be immediate follow-up. Other advantages are that interviewer bias is reduced, costs are kept low and geographic location is not a barrier, as long as the internet is available. One of the greatest advantages of online surveys is that respondents find the questionnaires require less effort to complete and return than questionnaires that are mailed (Baatard 2012: 101; Chang 2013: 121). Therefore, it was decided to construct questionnaires that could be completed online for this research.

In designing questionnaires, Schonlau et al. (2002: 74) note that there is little clear empirical evidence for the best design and use of Internet surveys but that the same criteria should be applied as in traditional methods. When developing the online questionnaire to be used in this research, I was satisfied that SurveyMonkey® met the requirements recommended by Baart (2012: 101) and Schonlau et al. (2002: 77): questionnaires should be clear and well-spaced; each section should be demarcated; a progress bar should be offered; and questionnaires should be saveable, allowing the respondent to return to them later. Questionnaires using SurveyMonkey® are very easy to use even for those not particularly experienced in the use of computers.

Two questionnaires were developed, one for the teachers and one for the girls. The two questionnaires were essentially the same with minor differences where necessary. (Both questionnaires can be found in the Appendix)

The questionnaire was divided into six sections.

- Section 1 elicited a few demographic details and an awareness of social exclusion;
- Section 2 covered girls' relationships and explored understandings of social exclusion as insidious bullying (corresponding to the material covered in Section 2.1);

- Section 3 covered the topic of bullying in respect of traditions, systems and patterns that contribute to social exclusion (corresponding to the material covered in Section 2.2);
- Section 4 covered the topic of ways of behaving that may maintain social exclusion in the school (corresponding to the material covered in 2.3);
- Section 5 investigated the spiritual ethos of the school and explored aspects relating to moral and spiritual development (corresponding to the material covered in 2.4);
- Section 6 asked for recommendations to creating an inclusive school environment.

In order to obtain rich data, various forms of questions were used:

- Likert-type scales: respondents expressed degree of acceptance of a statement.
- Open-ended questions: respondents had the opportunity to respond more fully to a question.
- Ranking: respondents were asked to rank items in order of importance.

Two members of staff and two girls were asked to complete the questionnaire before it was sent out. No problems were encountered.

3.5.2 Interviews

Below, the interviewees, the type of interviews and the interview process are discussed.

The interviews were intended to clarify some of the issues that emerged from the questionnaires. "Interviews collect information about the ways that people understand the events and experiences of their lives" and are widely used to collect data (Hansen 2006: 69). They offer flexibility and allow the respondent to express themselves in their own words and the interviewer to ask pertinent questions (Hansen 2006: 94).

However, because interviews are time consuming and need to be fully transcribed (Hansen 2006: 69), I selected only five teachers and five girls to be interviewed. While it has been noted that validity may be compromised when subjects are selected by the researcher (Crothers & Levinson 2004: 496), it was felt that in this case, selected participants would give broad viewpoints of their experience at the school in question.

In selecting interviewees, I ensured that teachers of various races, sexes, levels of seniority and roles were represented. More detailed information is withheld to protect the anonymity of those interviewed. From a practical point of view, girls to be interviewed needed to be available during a specific time frame. Two white girls and three black girls were interviewed. It was interesting to note that those who agreed to be interviewed had all felt excluded while they were at school.

Scheduled semi-structured interviews were conducted. Hansen (2006: 99) maintains that in semi-structured interviews, the interviewer does not necessarily ask the same questions in each interview or present them in the same order. Further, the interviewer may ask additional questions and encourage input from the interviewee. Interviews were arranged with the participants and a set of open-ended questions was prepared. However, the participants were encouraged to express their opinions freely, with the “interviewer only intervening to ask for clarification or further explanation” (Bless, Higson-Smith & Sithole 2015: 193).

To a certain extent, the interviews could be considered to be unstructured interviews: because I knew all the participants, there was a degree of informality during the interviews, and as described by Marcus and Fischer (2003: 338, cited in Hansen 2006: 100), the interviewees shared their experiences and told their stories within a relaxed, comfortable ambience, characteristic of unstructured interviews.

I contacted each interviewee by phone and agreed a time and place for the meeting. Each person was told that the interview would last no more than one hour. All the interviews were held in the lounge of the school clubhouse which offered comfort, quiet and privacy. I was waiting in the venue to welcome the interviewee when he/she arrived. Refreshments were provided and I sat across the corner of the table from the interviewee to avoid face-to-face discussion, which may have felt intimidating. Each interviewee agreed to the interview being recorded and I explained how confidentiality would be maintained (as discussed above).

For each interview, I had five questions prepared:

- Do you think this research is valid?

- Have you ever felt excluded or been aware of those who have?
- Are the teachers aware of the problem?
- What can be done at the school to help those who feel excluded?
- What role does/should the chaplain play?

Each of the questions was asked at some stage during the interviews.

3.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

There are many different ways for researchers to analyse qualitative data and without any specified methods (Hansen 2006: 137), the researcher needs to use the method most suitable for the subject being investigated. In this study, because the empirical research was based on the theoretical research, I decided that the best approach would be content (thematic) analysis. Hansen (2006: 137) explains that a thematic analysis method is flexible and is therefore particularly useful when themes have already been identified. The themes in this research were based on the theoretical research:

- Theme 1: Girls' relationships: the need to belong; the nature of adolescent girls; the characteristics of an excluded girl; the influence of the group; and the consequences of social exclusion
- Theme 2: Bullying: definition; the impact of bullying; types of bullying; participants; and exclusion as bullying
- Theme 3: Traditions, patterns of behaviour and systems: power; hierarchies; traditions; status markers; stereotypes; prejudice (includes racism); and stigmatisation
- Theme 4: Moral and spiritual development: definitions; education; and Christian virtues
- Theme 5: A moral community: recommendations for an including community

Hansen (2006: 149) explains that once the researcher has identified the themes and subthemes, a system of coding is used to identify relevant aspects, which are combined and assessed. Although there are computer programmes to code data, I felt that I wanted to have a "hands-on" approach and be fully engaged with the text. This seems to accord with the method proposed by Aldridge and Levine (2001: 138) who maintain that the

interpretation “can probably be developed manually and can be applied by sorting the text of the responses into the categories to which they belong”.

3.6.1 Questionnaires

I downloaded the responses to the questions from the SurveyMonkey® website and transposed the findings into graphs, as I felt that this format presented the results most clearly. Not all participants added comments, but where comments were made, I used different coloured highlighters to allocate comments to subthemes.

3.6.2 Interviews

After all the interviews had been conducted, the recordings were transcribed by a professional transcriber.¹⁹ The transcriptions were saved onto a portable storage device and the interviews were deleted from the recorder. The transcriptions were printed and for every interview, I used different coloured highlighters to allocate relevant comments to one of the subthemes.

In line with Noble’s (2015: 34) test for reliability of qualitative research, I sent the results to one of the staff participants and one of the girls, who both reported that my findings were an accurate reflection of their perceptions.

3.6.3 Conclusions

This chapter has described the methods followed in conducting the empirical research for this investigation. A description of the type of research was presented and the reasons for following a qualitative method were discussed. It was noted that this was a descriptive study as I offer theoretical research and the findings of the questionnaires and interviews. It is normative in that it examines ethical behaviour and the norms, values and virtues that are associated with such behaviour. The study is intended to be exploratory to determine directions for further research. It was noted that the sample needed to include representatives of both the staff and the girls. Purposive sampling was used as specific characteristics were required (all participants needed to be a member of staff or an alumna

¹⁹ This person is employed to transcribe the proceedings of court cases.

of the school). Snowball sampling was used to identify alumnae while all teachers and those members of staff who worked closely with the girls (psychologists and chaplain) were asked to participate in the research. The design of the questionnaire and the reasons for using a web-based on-line questionnaire were discussed. The process followed in conducting the interviews was presented with reference to the choice of interviewees and the type of interview (semi-structured). Finally, the process followed in analysing the data was described.

The next chapter will discuss the findings obtained from the data.

4 FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The hypothesis of this study is:

There are girls in an independent faith-based school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. As this anti-social behaviour is not fully understood either by the girls or the teachers as being a form of bullying, systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are permitted to persist.

Deliberate (or unintentional) alienation is the antithesis of the fundamental message of the Christian faith – that God loves and cares about each one of us and that we are created to be in community with God and each other (Fedler 2006: 11) and this form of bullying deserves more attention than it seems to have been accorded. Therefore, I embarked on theoretical and empirical research into social exclusion at the school, the aim of which was to offer a theological-ethical understanding of the problem.

In Chapter 2, I presented a theoretical understanding of social exclusion and in Chapter 3, I described the methodology used to undertake the empirical research. In this chapter, I present and discuss the findings of the empirical research and determine to what extent the empirical research supports and adds to the theory.

The main task of the qualitative researcher is to make sense of a large amount of data, draw conclusions, test the data against the hypotheses and determine to what extent the research question has been answered (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2003: 380). In the process, the researcher needs to offer an understanding of “the social patterns of behaviour, groups and processes under investigation” (Alridge & Levine 2001: 135). It is my intention to present the findings of a large amount of data in such a way that clarity is brought to bear on the processes that underlie the context of social exclusion.

Kretschmar and Tuckey (2017: 2), referring to Van der Ven, assert that despite researchers’ best efforts to be as honest as possible in their investigations, their experience and worldviews will always influence their perceptions of reality. I concur with this view: when I conducted this empirical research, I was employed by the school in an administrative role.

Not being a teacher, I was never directly involved with the girls, nor was I ever part of any decision-making body. I am aware that there may well be aspects I have unwittingly ignored in this research and gaps in my understanding of the school. However, as this research is intended to be exploratory, I am hopeful that it will present new understandings and open avenues for further research.

The main research question was “How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls’ school?”

The question incorporated six sub-questions:

- The importance of relationships to girls: how can social exclusion be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically?
- An understanding of bullying: can social exclusion be considered as an insidious form of bullying?
- What traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour of the school maintain or resist social exclusion?
- How do individuals develop morally and spiritually?
- What Christian principles can be applied in a girls’ faith-based independent school so that it offers an including environment for every girl?

These are dealt with in turn below. Where relevant, items in the questionnaire are given as the titles of the figures presented in this section.

4.2 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

4.2.1 Personal Experiences

This theme investigated the respondents’ personal experience of exclusion and the general attitude of staff and girls to those of different genders, races, cultures and sexual orientations. The main purpose of the questionnaire items was to assess girls’ and staff’s awareness of the subject of social exclusion, their sensitivity to the issue, and their personal experiences of it.

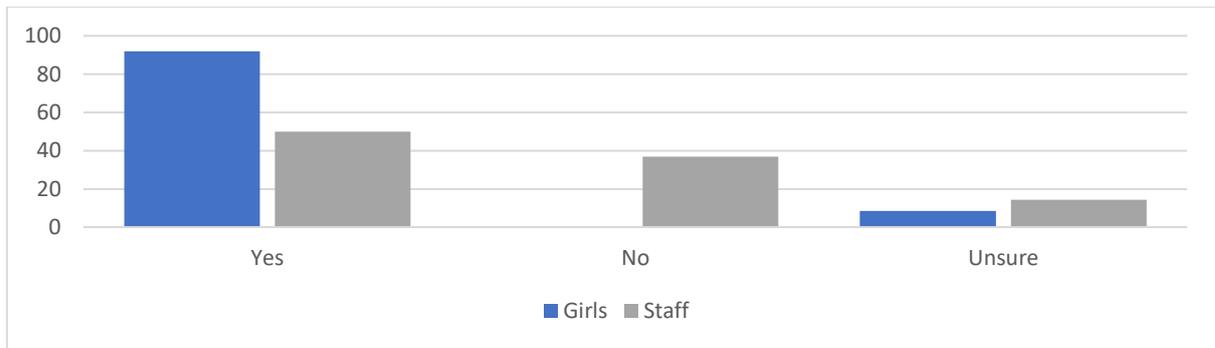


Figure 4-1: Did you ever feel socially excluded at the school? (%)

Figure 4-1 shows that more than 90% of girls felt socially excluded at some point during their time at the school, as had 50% of the staff. As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.3, everyone will experience some exclusion in their lives; some instances are understandable and unavoidable, but there are many instances when such exclusion is bullying behaviour. The high percentage confirms that the problem needed to be investigated.

Some of the respondents offered personal examples. Girls' comments included: "Most of my experience at the school was one of feeling socially excluded" and "I was like a social outcast throughout my school career, so I pretty much got used to it". A member of staff commented during an interview that the problem of social exclusion is likely to occur among teenagers at all schools.

Three themes emerged from the comments made in the questionnaires and were confirmed in the interviews:

1. The girls had tried hard to be accepted and to fit in. In some cases, their exclusion was unexpected as they had been confident about making friends and fitting in before they came to the school. The result was that either they stopped trying to make friends or formed groups with others who had been excluded.
2. All the girls who had been excluded felt that it was somehow their fault and was deserved.
3. They generally felt invisible or that they did not matter – they were the "nobodies" described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3: "It's like I'm not being seen; I'm invisible"; "One

of the advantages of being invisible is that people talk in front of you because they don't notice you are there".

I wanted to establish whether members of staff also showed exclusionary behaviour towards the girls and other members of staff. The results are shown in Figure 4-2.

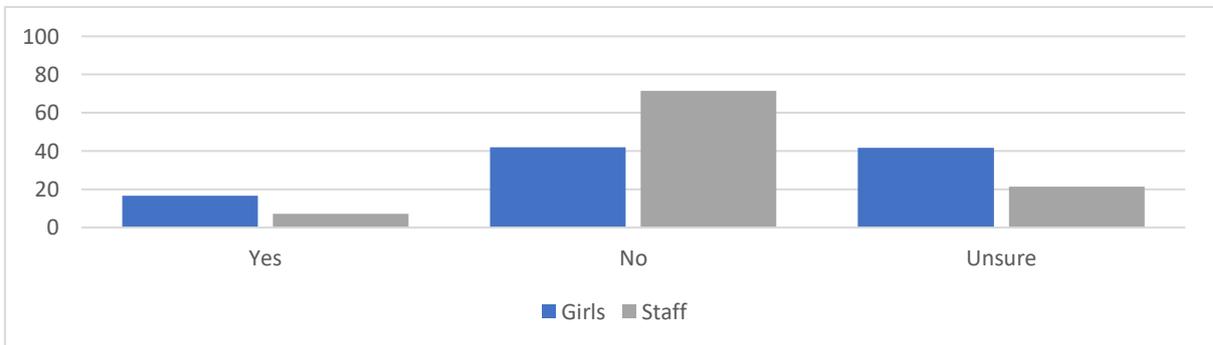


Figure 4-2: Are all girls and/or staff accepted and included by members of staff? (%)

Of concern is the fact that a large percentage of staff (74%) feel they are excluded by other members of staff, as shown in Figure 4-2. (I am unsure why this figure is so much larger than in Figure 4-1.) The comments focused mainly on social groupings in the staff room and were confirmed in interviews: some staff felt that this was not exclusionary per se but had more to do with common interest (teachers from one department, for example). However, there were other members of staff who had felt excluded. While many of the staff and girls feel that not all the staff are accepted by the girls (Figure 4-3), this topic was not pursued as it was not deemed relevant to this study.

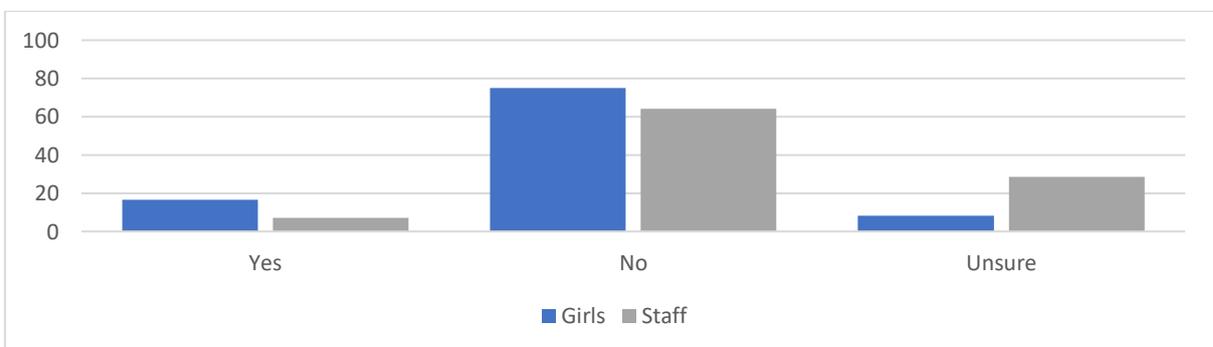


Figure 4-3: Are all staff accepted by the pupils? (%)

The next items on the questionnaire investigated whether social exclusion is seen to be a normal part of girls' relationships.

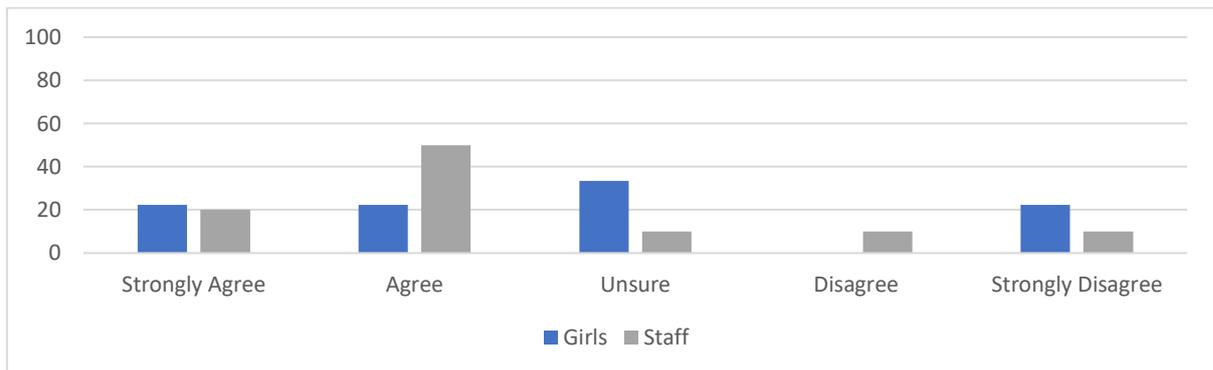


Figure 4-4: Social exclusion is a normal part of girls' relationships (%)

As shown in Figure 4-4, opinions seemed to be divided: while most of the staff (70%) agreed with the statement, a smaller percentage of girls agreed (20%) and there were girls who strongly disagreed (20%). The comment from one member of staff probably reflects the most accurate assessment: "It is normal in the sense that it happens all the time and is considered to be just the way things are". The comments of the girls seemed to indicate a similar idea: that because social exclusion happened so often, it could be construed as being normal, but "girls have had suicidal ideation because of exclusion and loneliness so it can never be a normal part of relationships".

The data indicates, then, that there is an awareness of social exclusion and that there are many, both staff and girls, who have felt excluded at some time or another. The impact of these experiences of exclusion on the school community should not be underestimated. In cases of social exclusion, there is a denial of the *Imago Dei* which has to do with our "fundamental orientation to God" (Mahoney 2010: 677). Social exclusion denies a person's humanity at a fundamental level and the action of rendering anyone invisible must rank as among most extreme forms of denial of personhood. "When people are ignored ... they are dehumanised and their human agency is limited or destroyed" (Kretzschmar 2010: 572).

The next section deals with girls' relationships.

4.2.2 Girls' Relationships

This section of the questionnaire investigated the importance of girls' relationships. Earlier it was noted that connectedness is essential for human survival, and that the quality of relationships is equally important (Hicks 2011: 5). It was noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.1., that people will work very hard to develop and maintain social relationships and the breakdown of a relationship will have negative effects (Major & Eccleston 2005: 63). A component of the hypothesis is that adults do not fully understand the importance of relationships to girls. Questions drawn from the theoretical research regarding girls' relationships were included in the questionnaire, the findings of which are presented in the graphs below. Answers to the open-ended questions and the interviews are included in the discussion.

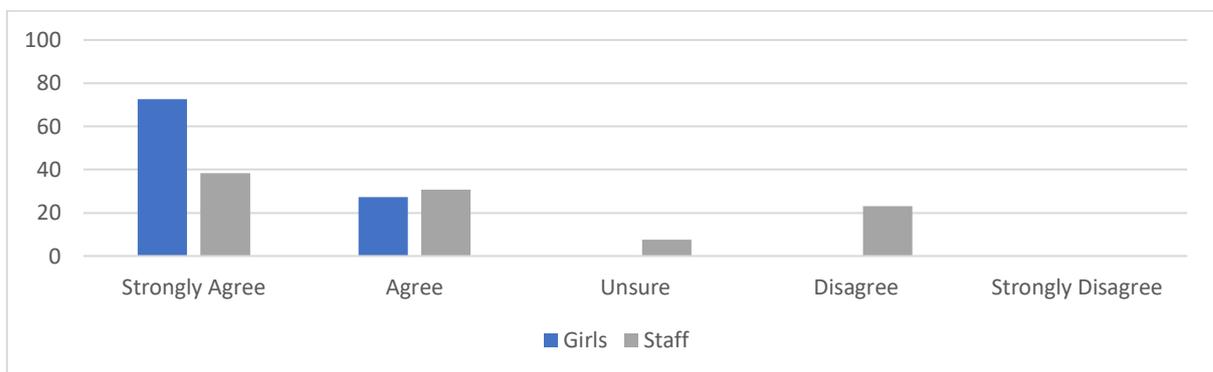


Figure 4-5: Adults may neither realise the importance of friendship groups and how volatile they can be nor understand the subtle ways that girls signal inclusion or the emotional repercussions of exclusion (%)

It can be noted from Figure 4-5 above that while all the girls agreed that adults did not understand how important friends are to girls, a large percentage of the staff also agreed with the statement, with only 20% disagreeing.²⁰ One member of staff commented, "I didn't for a while [understand the importance of relationships and the pain of exclusion] because I fell into the trap of viewing girls' lives through the lens of an adult. I have dismissed many of

²⁰ Some members of staff told me they had submitted the questionnaire. Based on my informal assessment of staff's attitudes, it is my presupposition that many of the participants in this research have great insight into the girls' lives. The findings are perhaps not reflective of the staff as a whole.

the signals and signs of inclusion and exclusion as insignificant and meaningless”. Another member of staff endorsed this: “Adults downplay what to a teenager is real hurt and pain. We have simply forgotten”.

Drawing from the theory regarding girls’ relationships, the questionnaire addressed girls’ need to belong, the nature of adolescent girls, the characteristics of a girl who is likely to be excluded, the importance of groups and the consequences of social exclusion. These are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 The need to belong

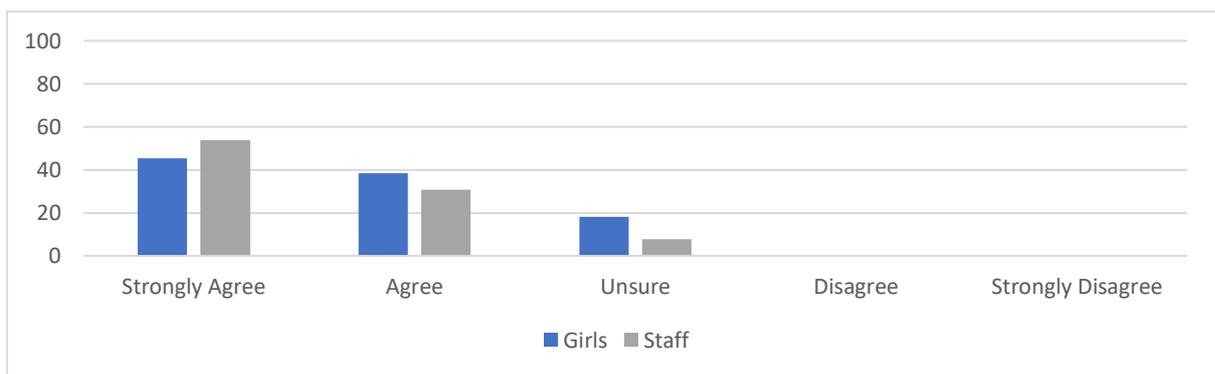


Figure 4-6: The importance of peer relationships (%) (“Without friends no one would choose to live though (s)he had all other goods” Aristotle)

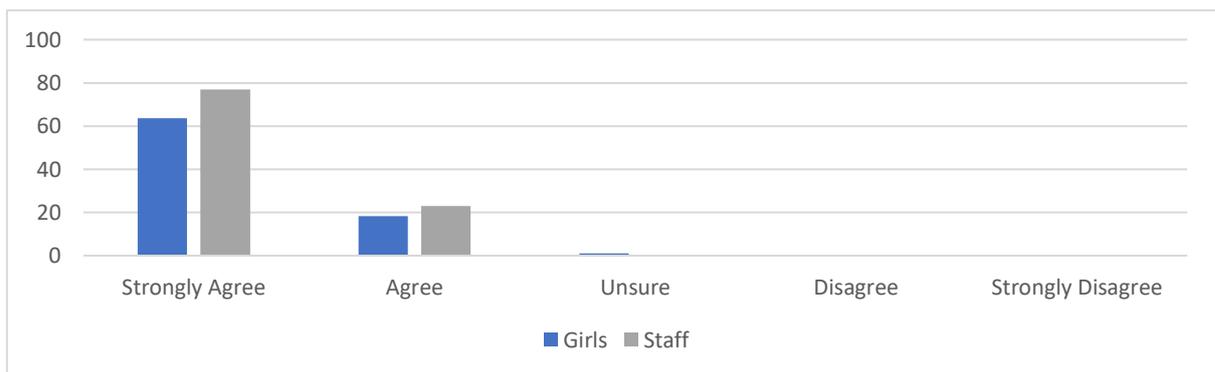


Figure 4-7: A core human need is to belong and to be accepted (%)

Figure 4-6 and Figure 4-7 with their evidence of strong agreement with the importance of relationships and girls’ need to belong, as well as comments made in the questionnaire, strongly confirm the findings of the literature that “[a] core human need is to belong and be

legitimate” (Vescio et al. cited in Nelson 2009: 253). One comment made by a girl in the questionnaire was,

Friendships are everything – bad/toxic relationships can ruin your self-esteem or emotional well-being; good friendships allow you to flourish and gain confidence. Having no friends is perhaps worse – a gradual process of feeling inferior, not good enough, insecure, unworthy, a failure.

These feelings were confirmed by several of the girls.

The staffs’ comments reflected an understanding of the importance of girls’ friendships but had a more nuanced view. They perceived that girls perhaps tended to link up with girls who offered social capital rather than common interests and that the emphasis was on popularity rather than relationships.

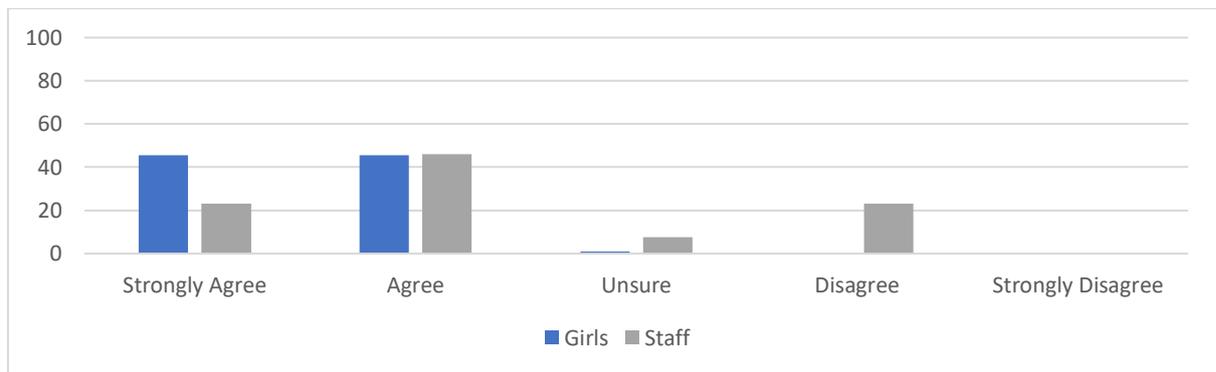


Figure 4-8: Girls will tend to make friends with similar characteristics (%)

There is some difference between the staff and the girls according to Figure 4-8. Of the girls, 90% agree that they make friends with like-minded peers and most of the staff concur (70%). This seems to contradict the staffs’ views regarding friendships based on popularity. The 30% of staff who disagree in Figure 4-8 perhaps concur with the view that that girls will “hang onto friendships, not because of mutual preference for spending time together but because of the fear of being left out”. No reference was made to the ways girls of different ages relate to each other, which I feel may be pertinent and explain the differences shown in Figure 4-8.

4.2.2.2 Adolescent girls

As was discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.1, at a time when adolescent girls are experiencing enormous changes in every aspect of their lives, they need to negotiate adjusting to high school. Despite looking forward to the challenges of a new school with its unfamiliar structures, some will find the important task of establishing their identity in a new social group extremely daunting (Lester et al. 2015: 1). This was supported by some of the girls' comments: "The high school years are an incredibly formative time. Without friends to grow and share these experiences with, I believe my experience would have been very different".

Ridge (2002: 133) notes that adolescent girls fear being isolated and friendships are perceived to be valuable resources; they offer protection from exclusion and are a source of support. This was one of the strongest themes to emerge in the girls' comments: being alone was a major source of concern. This was confirmed in the interviews, with the girls all expressing extreme fear they had felt about walking alone anywhere on the campus. "I would just tag along with somebody. I didn't want to walk by myself because we know that's a terrible thing to go through". The reply to my question about whether being alone carried social stigma was, "Yes, it does. If you're alone, there is something wrong with you. You are known as a loser".

4.2.2.3 The characteristics of girls who are likely to be excluded

Rigby (2002: 133) maintains some children have characteristics that make them more prone to being excluded or attacked in some way. These can include introversion, timidity, anxiety and poor social skills. Other features that render a child more vulnerable include intellectual disability, physical disability, and ADHD, all of which may encourage an attack from others and render the girl less able to defend herself (Rigby 2010: 59).

These findings were very well supported by the empirical research. The girls' and staffs' responses to the question about the characteristics of girls who were likely to be excluded

included: quiet, withdrawn, introverted and having low self-esteem. However, a member of staff noted that low-esteem was the result of social exclusion rather than a cause.²¹

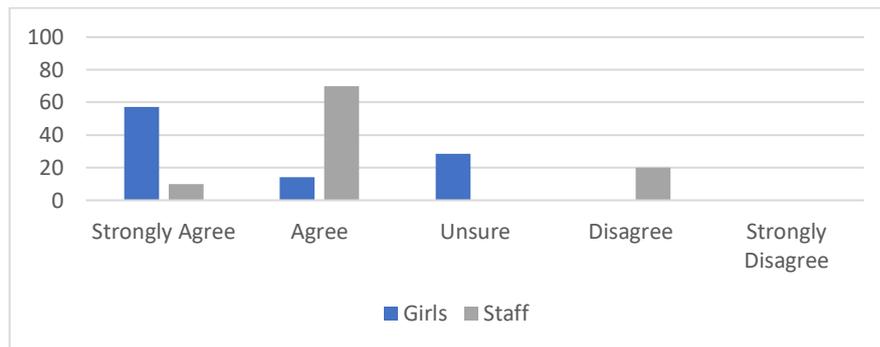


Figure 4-9: Girls are likely to be excluded if they have perceived impediments (%)

Although Figure 4-9 above indicates the girls' general agreement about exclusion on the basis of noticeable impediments, a number were unsure of this and none commented on these being important. However, the staff noted that "less intelligent girls are teased for asking questions in class and the socio-economic status of some black girls definitely results in exclusion from the broader social scene at the school".

4.2.2.4 Groups

It was noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2 that teenagers are highly influenced by their friends and peer pressure is a real force (Besag 2006: 19). Strabstein (2009, cited in Ncube 2013: 4) notes that the norms of the peer group "exert the most intense influence on adolescents' self-evaluation, sense of belonging and their self-esteem and when a person is part of a

²¹ The subtext of some of the staffs' comments seemed to be somewhat critical: "A girl who doesn't want to work in a team"; "Looks miserable"; "Tries too hard to fit in"; "Selfish and strong-minded".

particular group, she will take on the norms, values and behaviours of the group”.

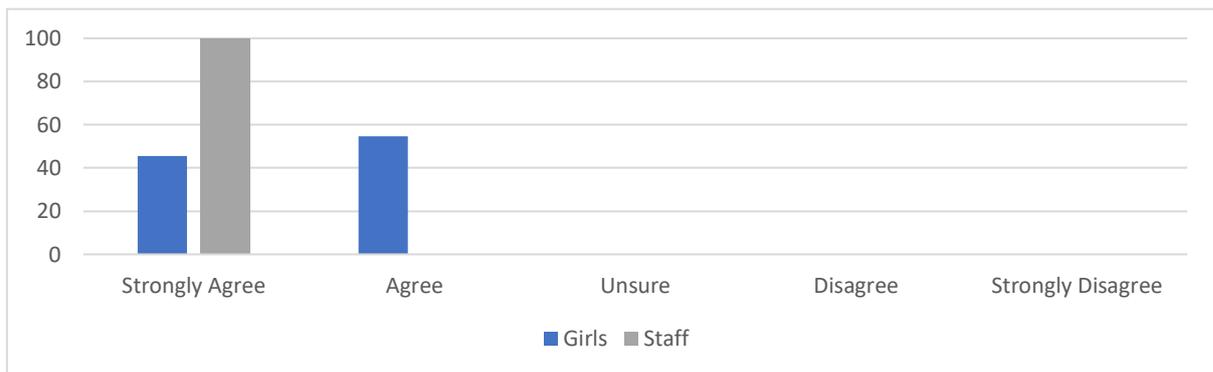


Figure 4-10: Teenagers are greatly influenced by their friends and peer pressure is a real force (%)

The findings of the questionnaire and the comments from the girls and staff not only supported the theory but were unequivocal in their observations that teenagers are greatly influenced by their friends. Figure 4-10 above shows this clearly. A staff member noted that, “Teenagers have to be part of a group. Everything is about the group and who is in the group and they will follow the lead of the most powerful in the group”. One girl commented that “peer pressure is the driving force of the school” and that the pressure to conform to the group would lead them do things and behave in ways that were contrary to their better judgement (“I would drink, lose weight – do whatever it took to be included”). Conversely, some indicated that they did have a degree of autonomy and that while the influence of the group was strong, their background and family norms remained significant despite this.²²

Girls respond to being excluded from the group in various ways, as shown in Figures 4-11, 4-12 and 4-13.

²² I hypothesise that these girls were not excluded and did not have as much pressure to be part of a group.

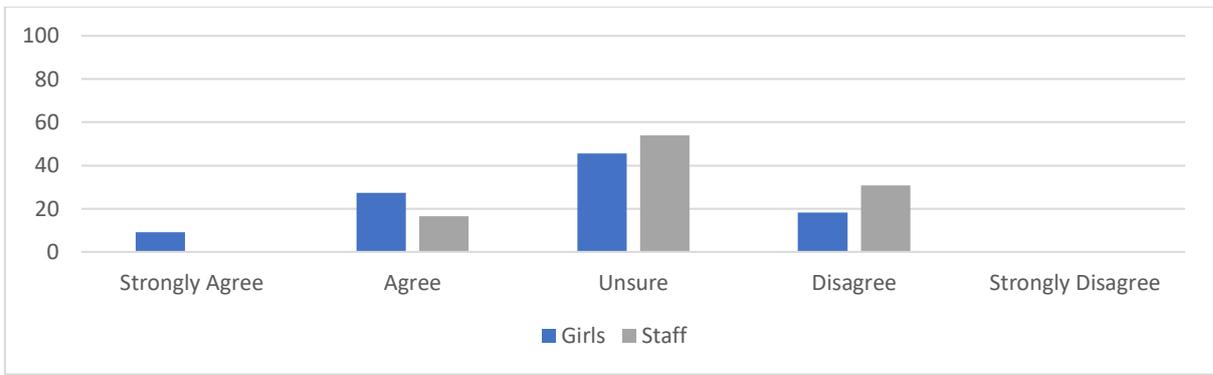


Figure 4-11: Girls who are excluded from groups will find other friends (%)

The spread of responses in Figure 4-11 can be understood from the comments. When girls were excluded from one group, they tended to connect with similarly excluded girls and found security and protection in the group (this was confirmed by the staff and girls). This concurs with the findings of Besag (2006: 65) who noted that those who “are socially isolated often find a loose connection to an undemanding group to be a way of forming a tenuous social bond”. However, it was noted that girls who had been excluded from the powerful, popular groups were just as likely to be excluded from all other groups as no one wanted to be associated with a “nobody” (Fuller 2003: 3) and these girls would tend to withdraw from social relationships, as shown in Figure 4-12 below. One member of staff commented, “The girl who has no social capital will be avoided by all groups and individuals as if afraid her unpopularity would rub off. She would become totally isolated”.

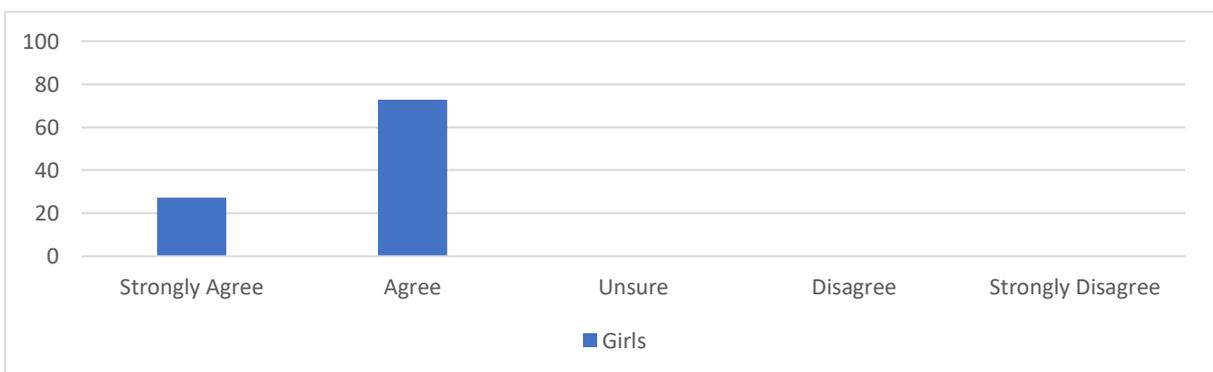


Figure 4-12: Some girls exclude themselves and choose not to be involved with other girls (%)

The question was asked whether the behaviour of black girls, who formed groups for protection and a sense of belonging, excluded white girls from joining their group.

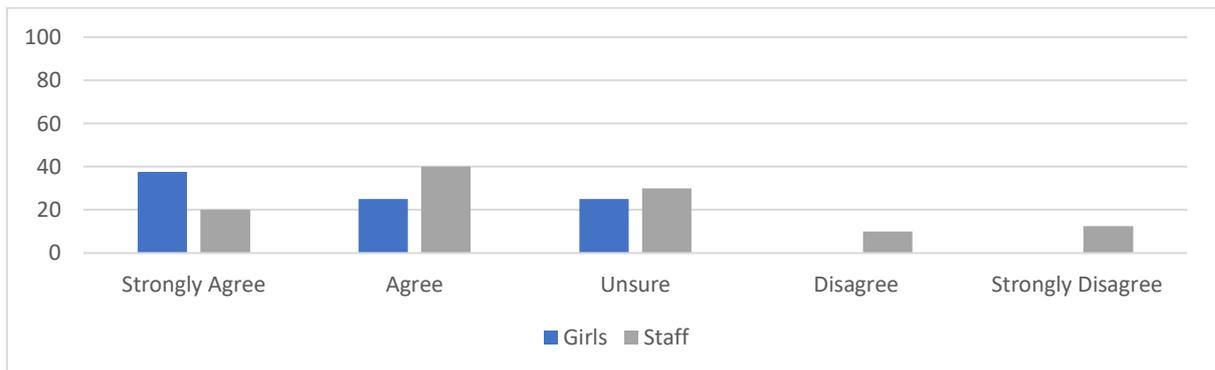


Figure 4-13: Black girls exclude white girls by forming close-knit groups and/or their language (%)

The spread of results shown by the staff in Figure 4-13 indicate different opinions regarding the groups comprising mainly black girls. These groups have been referred to above, where girls who are excluded from one group will form their own group. “I made friends with girls who were not intimidating and would not hurt me even though we had nothing in common” and that “Any friends are better than no friends”. The comments from black girls were that the groups were not excluding of others but offered social protection, especially to the white girls with little social capital who had been excluded by the more powerful girls. However, the comments belie the findings of Figure 4-13, where 60% of girls agree or strongly agree that the groups are excluding of others. A possible explanation for this is to be found in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.12, where I discuss research that has shown that members of different groups believe that those in the other group do not want to have contact (DeMoulin, Leyens & Davido 2009: 67).

4.2.2.5 The consequences of social exclusion

Shame is a major result of emotional abuse. As mentioned above, it is the painful experience of believing that one is flawed and therefore not worthy of acceptance and belonging (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 6, 9). Further, the effects can include depression, lowered self-esteem, increased anxiety, problems with conduct, health problems and even suicide.

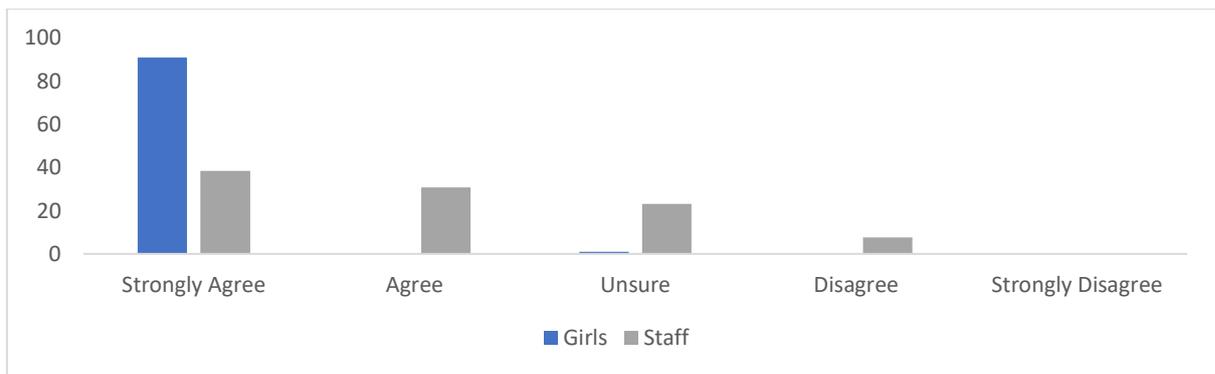


Figure 4-14: Girls who are socially excluded tend to feel threatened and they lack self-esteem (%)

Figure 4-14 shows that all the girls except one or two strongly agreed with the negative effects of social exclusion. The staffs' responses were different, with only 40% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing. Further, the comments made by girls both in the questionnaires and the interviews noted the devastating impact of being socially excluded: without exception, girls who had been socially excluded felt that they were at fault and it was due to who they were: "I did everything I could to try and belong and make friends but I stopped trying"; "I blamed myself because I thought there was something wrong with me".

According to the girls, the most painful thing about being excluded was how subtle the process was. There was no immediate hurt, but a gradually dawning awareness of a process: people moving away from the girl or not making room for her, exchanging looks, not inviting her to an event, for example. The experiences reported by the girls were far-ranging and were all painful. "It was a gradual process of feeling inferior, not good enough, insecure, unworthy, a failure". It seems that low self-esteem is a consequence of exclusion rather than a cause. The girls who were at the school on scholarships because of their outstanding results and contribution to their previous school, now "began to start feeling ashamed of being here on a scholarship".

Girls reported that they had experienced depression or knew of others who had. There were reports of eating disorders and self-mutilation. One interviewee said that the exclusion "[h]ad an impact on me, even after school. It can be life altering and I still have body issue

problems. It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that you deserved it and I did [fall into the trap]".

Some staff members offered insightful comments, noting that girls who were excluded would feel hurt and vulnerable, feel inferior to others and have low self-confidence. In an interview, a member of staff noted that while some girls did experience exclusion, most girls find their place in the school and that there were many opportunities for girls to find acceptance.

In conclusion, this section has considered the social relationships of girls. From the responses to the questions and comments made, it can be concluded that relationships are very important and that being excluded has significant negative psycho-social consequences. Groups offer safety and protection and some girls who have been excluded from one group will form their own groups. However, for some the pain of exclusion is such that they withdraw from relationships. These findings support the theoretical research: young people who are excluded can easily become isolated and feel marginalised and unaccepted (Hazler & Denham 2002: 405). When girls feel publicly humiliated, they will often opt to withdraw from social interactions to avoid further humiliation. In so doing, they are more likely to be further isolated by their peer group (Hazler & Denham 2002: 405).

The consequences of being socially excluded go far deeper than the feelings of shame, worthlessness and liability. Johnson (1992: 215, 227 cited in Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 2) maintains that "Relationship is part of the very essence of God and thus relationship is at the very heart of reality. To be fully human is to be in relationship". Therefore, social exclusion would affect a girl to the core of her being.

In the Genesis story we are introduced to the concept of relationships being God-given and necessary for our well-being and that exclusion is linked to sin and a breakdown in relationships. According to Genesis 1: 26, we are all created in God's image, "both as individuals and as relational beings in our treatment of one another" (Venter 2009: 145). All people, regardless of race, sex, culture and beliefs, are equal and worthy of dignity. Any form of discrimination that "destroys human dignity, that murders self-image, that defines some

people as superior and some as inferior” is not in accordance with the goodness of God’s creation (Venter 2009: 145).

My hypothesis is that while girls are excluded on an ongoing basis, this behaviour is not understood as bullying. In the next section the subject of bullying will be examined and its relationship with social exclusion investigated. The effects of social exclusion (as given in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.4) and the effects of bullying are virtually identical and include depression, lowered self-esteem, increased anxiety, problems with conduct, health problems and even suicide. It has been observed that even after bullying has ceased, these effects can persist (Dupper 2013: vii; Cowie 2011: 33).

4.2.3 Bullying

The aim of the questions in this section of the questionnaire were intended to elicit the staffs’ and girls’ experience of bullying and their understanding of how bullying is manifested.

The first item asked the respondents to define bullying. As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2, one of the problems when trying to deal with bullying is that there are various ideas of what it is and which factors determine it (Orpinas et al. 2003: 431). Various theorists’ opinions were considered and for the purposes of this research, it is given that bullying is always hurtful, there is a perceived power imbalance, and covert actions are as painful as overt acts of abuse.

The girls’ definitions were subjective and they provided their personal experiences. While a range of behaviours was offered, all the examples included emotional hurt. None of the girls referred to physical abuse except one who responded: “Any behaviour that causes pain to another, whether physical, emotional or mental”. The staffs’ definitions were broader and included deliberate behaviour, power imbalances, that the behaviour was systematic and ongoing and that it caused physical, emotional or mental hurt.

In terms of frequency, Ross (2002: 116) points out that actual numbers are not always clear due to differences in definition, but consistent statistics over time and across countries (USA, England, Ireland, Canada, Australia, Spain, Finland and Japan) have emerged: 15% to 20% of

students will experience some form of bullying regularly while they are at school. The results of this research, therefore, are cause for concern, as nearly 80% of the girls indicated that they had been bullied²³, as shown in Figure 4-15. It would be interesting to find out whether the remaining 20% had been perpetrators or bystanders of bullying, as the research shows that they would also suffer emotional consequences (Dupper 2013: 24). The “unsure” responses perhaps reflect the difficulties in defining bullying, as discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.2.



Figure 4-15: Have you ever experienced bullying? (%)

I was interested in assessing what behaviour the girls found most painful and whether the staff concurred. Therefore, the girls and staff were asked to rank 13 examples of bullying from most (1) to least (13) hurtful. This ranking is shown in Figure 4-16.

From Figure 4-16 below, it can be seen that the only full agreement between girls and staff was that being ignored by the teacher was the least hurtful behaviour. The other findings indicate the following:

- The greatest difference between the girls and the staff was that of being humiliated by a teacher in front of the class – the girls ranked this as the third most painful and the teachers only ninth, giving a six-point difference. The girls found all humiliation

²³ The reason for this may well be that those girls who had experienced bullying at school were more invested in helping with this research. Further, the frequency of bullying was not investigated.

extremely painful. It would seem that some teachers engage in emotional bullying by humiliating girls in front of the class.

- Girls indicated that the more overt forms of bullying (being teased, slapped and having possessions damaged) were more painful than some of the more covert forms (being gossiped about, being left out and having rumours spread about them). This perhaps contradicts the theory that girls engage in more covert bullying than overt. The staff ranked the covert forms of bullying as being more painful than the overt.
- There were large differences in opinion between the girls and the staff with reference to being ignored and being made to feel unwelcome. This seems to indicate that the staff do not always understand what is important to girls and how to assess the behaviour in the classroom.

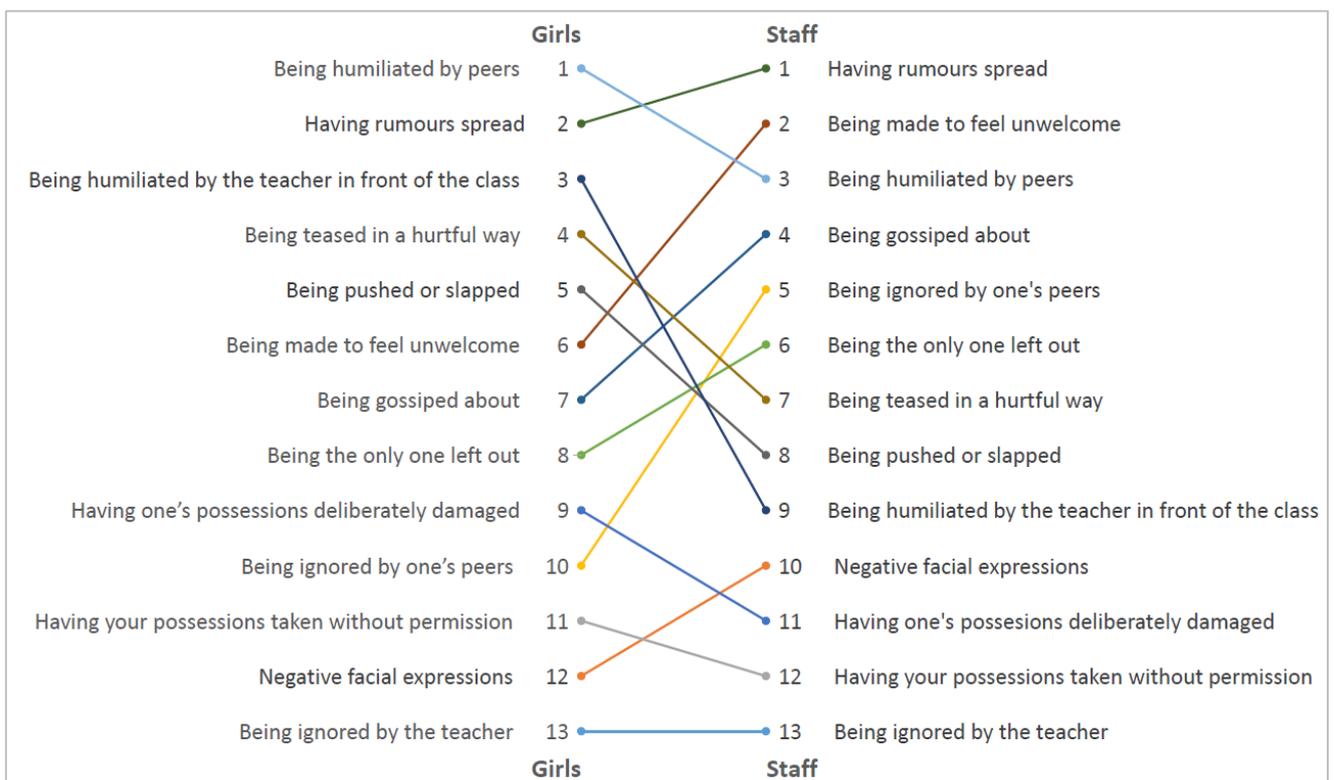


Figure 4-16: Ranking of hurtful behaviour from most hurtful (1) to least hurtful (13)

Research seems to indicate that emotional abuse is less often recognised as a significant social problem than physical abuse, but victims often maintain that in some ways, the effects

are more painful (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 15). There was strong agreement with this, as shown in Figure 4-17.

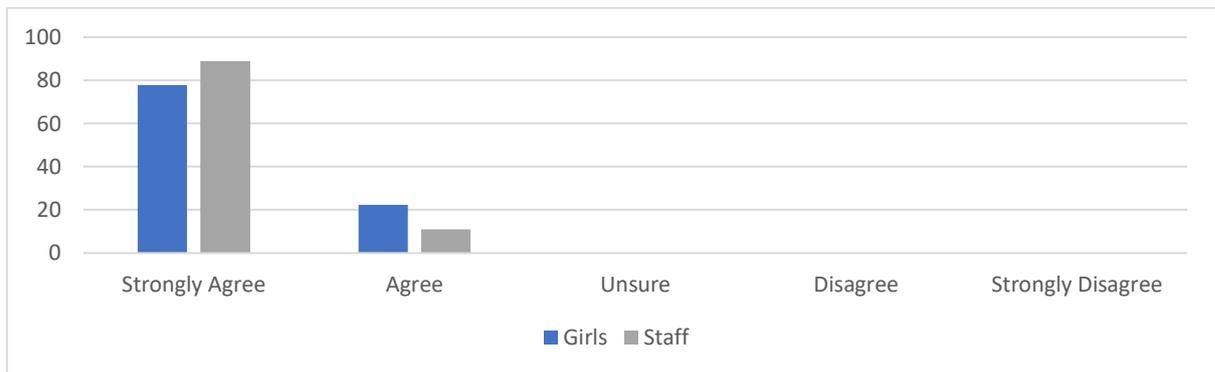


Figure 4-17: Emotional/psychological bullying is as hurtful as physical bullying (%)

While it is apparent that the staff and girls fully agree that emotional bullying is extremely painful, it was important to establish an understanding of social exclusion as a form of bullying. Figure 4-18 shows that staff and girls are in complete agreement that social exclusion is a form of bullying.

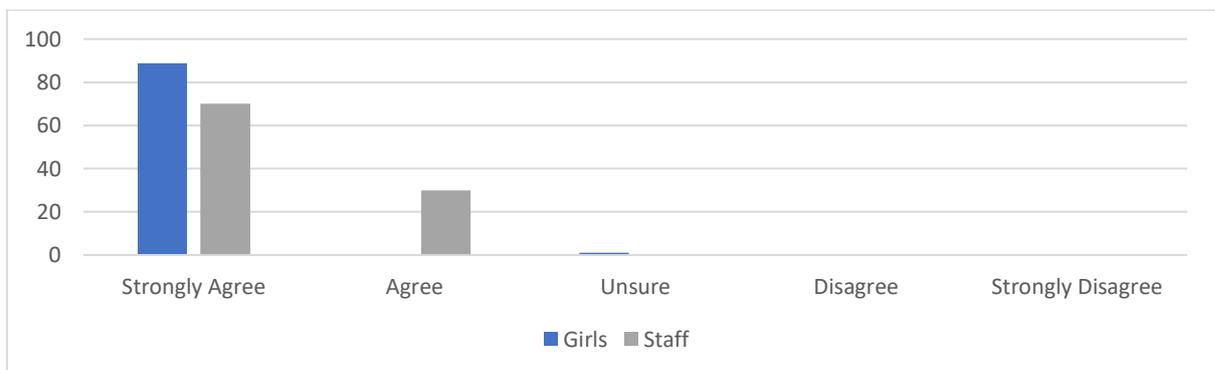


Figure 4-18: Social exclusion is a form of emotional bullying (%)

One of the key factors in bullying (described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2) is that it is always hurtful. Given that relationships are so important to girls, targeting a girl's relationships with other girls, and thus destroying the intimacy girls value, would be extremely hurtful. Research has shown that "[t]he prime goal of girls is to be affiliated with other girls, so that by using alienation tactics they assert that they are 'in' [the groups deemed to hold high status] and their victims are 'out'" (Ross 2002: 114).

In the interviews with the staff, it was noted that the girls who hold the most power are not the ones doing the excluding: it is the girls who are part of the popular groups but are unsure of their position who are likely to be excluding others. In establishing an “us–them” dichotomy, they feel they can claim their place in the popular group. The staff noted that the girls work very hard to maintain their place in the popular groups.

A girl who has been identified as being “out” is likely to experience the negative effects of exclusion, which are virtually identical to the effects of bullying described in the literature. These were described in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.4.

In Chapter 2, Section 2.3.6, the roles of the various participants in bullying behaviour were described – the perpetrators, victims, witnesses and bystanders, and adults. In the case of social exclusion, the victims are identifiable, but the perpetrators are not as easy to identify as it is a group phenomenon. Bullying incidents more often than not take place in the presence of others and many witnesses experience a dilemma: on the one hand they know that bullying is wrong and would like to do something, but on the other hand, they fear becoming a victim themselves if they intervene (Dupper 2013: 23).

However, perhaps the more hurtful behaviour is from teachers who either do not recognise emotional bullying in the classrooms or are ineffective in dealing with it. The impact of teachers was brought up during the staff interviews, but only in the context of dealing with social exclusion when identified. Neither the girls nor the staff referred to the role of teachers more specifically. This will be addressed at a later stage.

In conclusion, the findings of this section align closely with the theoretical research discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3 in terms of how bullying manifests and the role of perpetrators and witnesses. There was complete agreement that social exclusion is a form of bullying and that it is possibly the most painful form of abuse. Girls use exclusion to ensure their own position in powerful groups. However, as discussed before, social exclusion is more than a form of covert bullying: bullying presupposes a relationship, albeit toxic, between abuser and abused. A child who is excluded will be denied any form of relationship.

Bullying is sin (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.7) and sin has consequences, one of which is that our relationship with others is affected by selfishness and self-centredness (Stott 2008: 101). The

school has a full-time chaplain. There are compulsory services twice a week and the chaplain sometimes delivers a homily at the weekly assemblies. The chaplain reported that he had spoken out strongly against exclusion in many sermons and offered a better way – a way of love and acceptance. I am unable to assert whether the need for repentance and forgiveness formed part of the sermons or homilies. At no stage during the interviews was it suggested that exclusionary behaviour was sin and that it required repentance and forgiveness. As discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.7, in the society Jesus lived in, social outcasts were deemed to be sinners, but Jesus, by having meals with those traditionally excluded, indicated who the sinners actually were – those who were doing the excluding (Matt 26: 6–10; Luke 5: 29–32; Luke 7: 36–50) (Volf 1996: 72).

In the next section, I will consider the patterns of behaviour and structures that can maintain or resist social exclusion in the school.

4.2.4 Structures and Patterns of Behaviour

This section refers to some of the structures and patterns of behaviour (also referred to as “systems”) in the school and in the wider society that may maintain an environment in which social exclusion can occur. In Chapter 2, Section 2.4.1, it was noted that “we can only develop just communities when we understand the systems in our lives that maintain injustice” (Hobgood 2009: 1).

I will first discuss some systems/patterns of behaviour that I believe are relevant to the hypothesis and research question. After this, I will discuss the systems within the school which relate to this research.

In Chapter 2, Section 2.4, several systems were identified and discussed: power, the existence of hierarchies, traditions, status markers, stereotyping and categorisation, prejudice and white privilege. Drawing on the theory, the following systems were addressed in the questionnaire: hierarchies; status markers; stereotyping and prejudice; and power.²⁴

²⁴ Space and time constraints precluded an investigation of all the items.

The findings of the Likert-type questions, the open-ended questions and the interviews are discussed below.

4.2.4.1 Hierarchies

As stated in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.3, one of the strongest themes to emerge from a workshop conducted with the girls (Source 3) was the strong hierarchical structure present in the school and that there were powerful cliques maintaining social control over the girls.

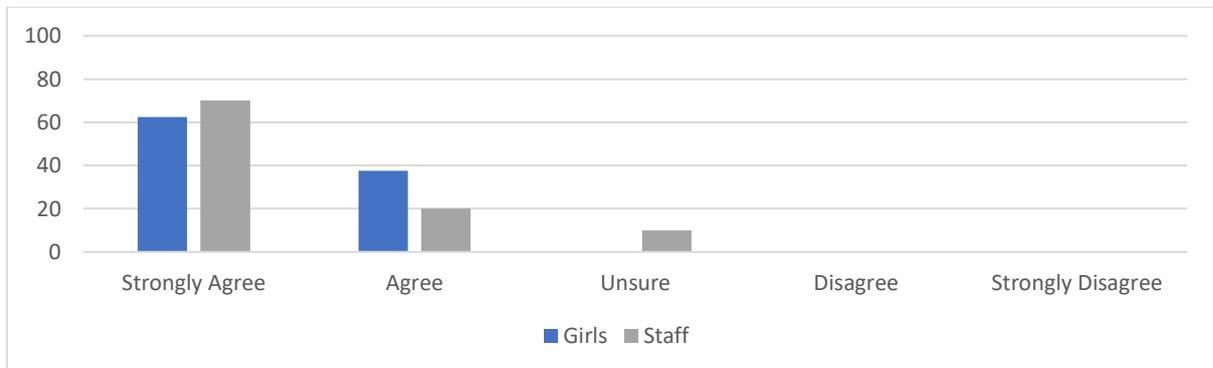


Figure 4-19: There are clear social hierarchies that are understood by the girls and work to exclude certain girls (%)

Figure 4-19 above shows agreement with the presence of hierarchies. Not many comments were made but it seems that in the school there are informal hierarchies with clear rules (understood by the girls) regarding a girl's social position, and it seemed that girls did not like being associated with those perceived to be lower down on the social ladder. One of the girls, who herself had been excluded, admitted, "I had people I looked down on a bit and I would be afraid to talk to them in the wrong place at the wrong time". She expressed regret at what she had done but admitted it was so important to fit in that she did whatever she could to achieve some social capital.

This understanding accords with Fuller's (2014: 270) rankism, discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.3.3. The society Jesus lived in was strongly hierarchical with very strict social norms regarding how each group was to behave (Venter 2009: 165). Jesus embraced and ministered to the people who were traditionally excluded from society, such as the woman at the well (Simmonds 2010: kindle loc 7) and many of whom lived on the margins of society, such as those with leprosy. He ministered to the wealthy, the powerful (Nicodemus, a

Pharisee) as well as those on the lower rungs of the societal ladder: “the rural poor, the uneducated, the sick and the demoniacal” (Venter 2009: 165)

4.2.4.2 Status markers

In Chapter 2, Section 2.4.5, it was noted that a person’s social identity is not value-free and that all aspects of one’s group take on enormous importance (Collicutt 2015: 163). Identity markers become very important and among the girls, certain markers carry more status than others. I identified Fuller’s (2014: 270) “clothes people wear, their looks, their talent...” as status markers and included a question regarding the importance of these. The responses are shown in Figure 4-20.

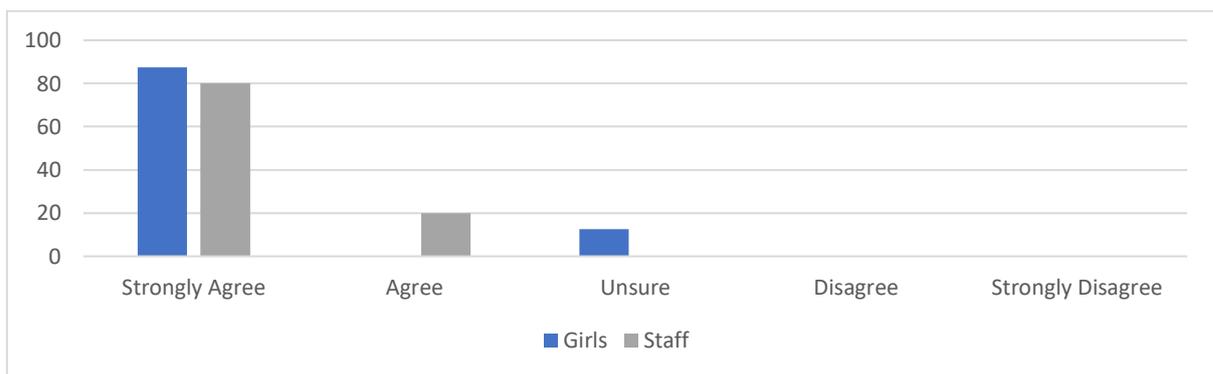


Figure 4-20: Girls accord status to perceived markers: wealth, ability and physical attributes (%)

The comments indicated that certain attributes were important but there were varying opinions as to what these were and how they were ranked. It seemed that among the girls, physical attributes were more important than valuable possessions. Being popular with boys was very important and economic status offered social capital.

It was interesting to note that there was a difference in response between the staff and the girls: the staff were in total agreement (80% agree strongly and 20% agree) that girls recognised status markers. While most of the girls also strongly agreed (nearly 90%), a few were uncertain. I venture to speculate that the latter were those who possessed the high-status attributes and/or did not recognise their importance.

In Chapter 2, Section 2.4.5, the opinion was expressed (Sources 2 and 3) that if girls did not meet certain norms, they tended to be excluded and made to feel as though they were not important. This opinion was tested, with the findings shown in Figure 4-21 below.

The comments indicated that status markers did not guarantee popularity and exclusion possibly had more to do with behaviour than a girl's possessions (hence the spread of opinion in Figure 4-21).

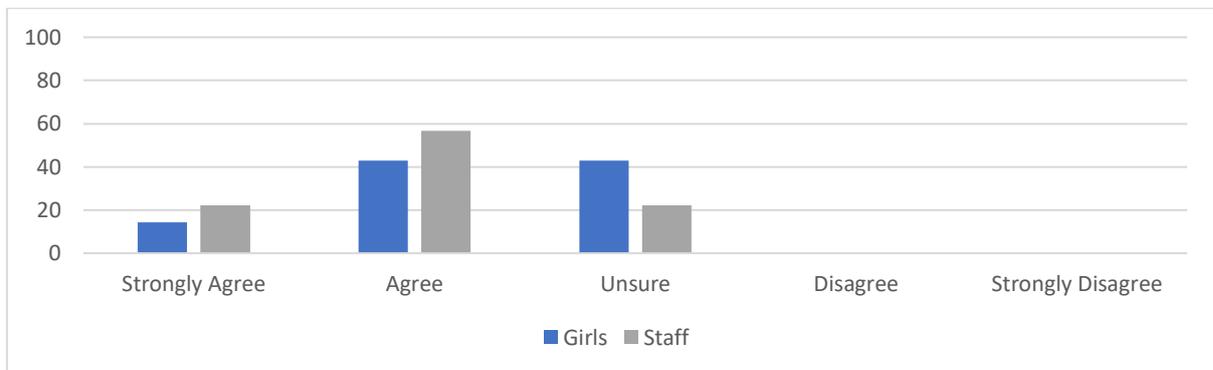


Figure 4-21: Girls who can afford the status symbols linked with wealth are likely to exclude those who do not have these accoutrements (%)

4.2.4.3 Stereotyping, categorisation and prejudice

Conforming to the historical demographics of the pupil body, most of the girls at the school are white and come from economically advantaged families. In Chapter 2, Section 2.4.8, it was noted that a school culture is only normal for those who are in the majority (Michael 2015: 35). Minority groups in a school tend to find themselves marginalised and excluded from the peer networks due to their different cultures and histories (Cowie 2011: 36) and girls who are members of these groups will often underachieve (2011). Other girls may be excluded from their peer groups on the basis of their appearance, characteristics and behaviour.

Figure 4-22 shows the staffs' and girls' responses to their experiences of exclusion on the basis of their group.

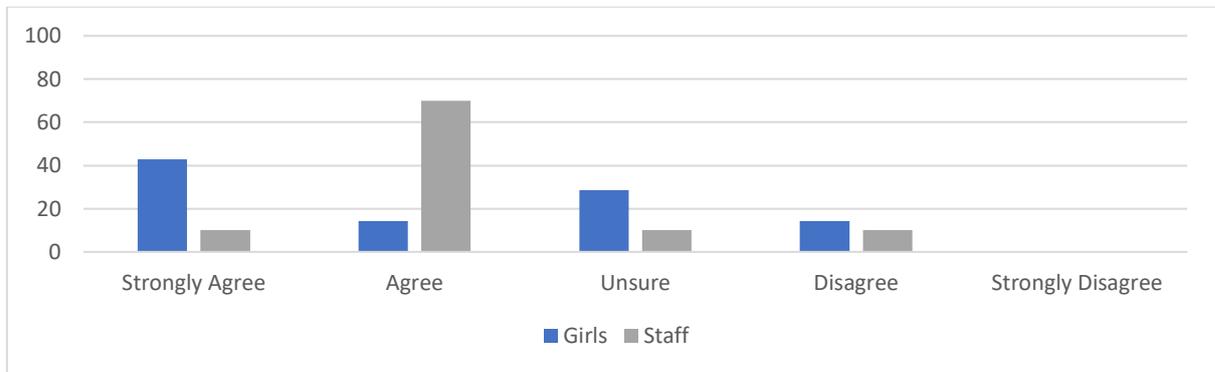


Figure 4-22: Most of the girls in the school are white, English-speaking South Africans who are economically advantaged. Girls who do not meet one of more of these criteria are likely to be excluded (%)

It is interesting that the staff demonstrated more widespread agreement with this statement than the girls (80% vs 50%, including 'strongly agree' and 'agree'), and that more girls than staff were unsure of or disagreed with the assertion. I believe that the girls' spread of results is encouraging and indicates a lack of stereotyping to some extent, while the staff's agreement with the statement perhaps indicates some misunderstanding regarding the girls' interactions and what motivates them. It perhaps also indicates that the staff categorise and stereotype the girls more than may be expected.

While the girls' responses, shown in Figure 4-22, are diverse, comments made clearly show that girls who had been awarded scholarships to the school²⁵ felt that there was stereotyping, categorisation and prejudice. These girls met few of the criteria associated with high status among the girls and were deemed to be very low on the social hierarchy. "So we had the problem of being black, of having a scholarship and of being poor. We were at the bottom"; "I was discriminated against for being black"; "There is a stigma around

²⁵ These girls were black girls from government schools in the area. These schools, like so many schools in South Africa, are understaffed and under-resourced. Girls who stood out academically were offered scholarships to the school. Among the more obvious disadvantages the girls needed to deal with (different language, culture, economic status) were that many of them were at an academic disadvantage. Not only were they often lacking basic scholastic foundations, but they also had to contend with the emotional impact of having been at the top of the class at their previous school to being among the lower achievers.

scholarship girls. The white girls exclude the black girls and the black girls exclude the scholarship girls". However, one interviewee (who was white) noted that this "has more to do with class and economic status than race".²⁶

There were also examples of unintentional prejudice in the comments made: a black girl gave an example of a test during which she had been asked to look at a picture of an airport and describe what was wrong with it. She had never been to an airport. Another girl described the pain of being told that she ought to be grateful for the opportunities that were being afforded her by her scholarship. It made her feel that she was not a deserving member of the school²⁷. It was noted that members of staff fed into this type of thinking by demanding less of certain girls because of their status. Hence, the girls felt that they were not accepted as bona fide members of the pupil body.

4.2.4.4 Power

In definitions of bullying, power imbalances between victim and perpetrator are always a component (Chapter 2, Section 2.3.2). In any school, groups have varying status and concomitant social power; individuals will pick up social signals that help them identify the status of the groups (Guinote & Vescio 2010: 25). Further, those who hold the power have an influence over cultural messages about who is valued, who is normal and who is acceptable (Anderson 2010: 11). Some aspects of power are positive and essential for maintaining a sound social structure but if used negatively can be dominant and controlling. Power, if shared and exercised for the common good, promotes social justice and contributes to the flourishing of all (Hobgood 2009: 25).

²⁶ I did not explore further what this girl meant by "class" and "economic status". I presumed she was referring to the girls, black and white, who were not "scholarship girls" but who were nevertheless still low on the social hierarchy.

²⁷ The response to this by a member of staff when discussed in an interview was that every girl should be grateful for the opportunities they were being given – none were paying the fees and some parents made enormous sacrifices to send their daughters to the school.

It was noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.2 that power (in the form of prefects, team captains and other leadership roles) is delegated to girls by the school authorities to ensure that the school is properly governed and is a safe place for all the girls. However, this power can be abused and those in leadership positions can become bullies. Apart from the delegated power, there are girls in the school who are accorded power by other girls. It is not always clear how this power is conferred, but it is recognised and accepted.

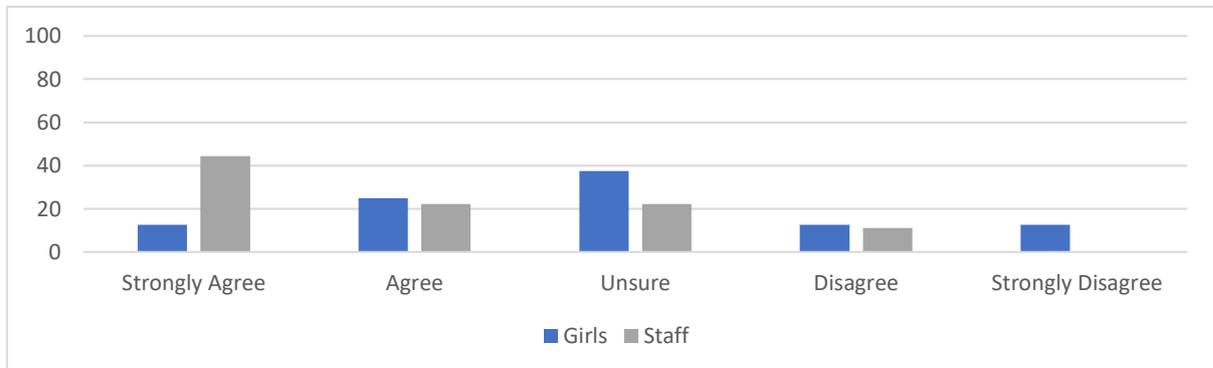


Figure 4-23: Girls who are accorded power by other girls (in terms of their ability, popularity, age, etc.) use their position of power to disempower others (%)

The staff feel more strongly than the girls about how power is exercised, as shown Figure 4-23, but neither the staff nor the girls engaged fully with this aspect of the school community. It was apparent that the legitimate leadership conferred by the school was the only aspect considered; power conferred on a girl by her peers according to her perceived status was not noted. This may well be due to girls not understanding subtle, informal structures of power and how it is exercised.

A member of staff observed that the institutional nature of the prefect system was perpetuating the hierarchical system, while another member of staff felt that children (prefects) should not be given power over other children as they were too immature to understand what leadership entailed. It is beyond the scope of this study to determine how prefects are selected or the criteria for their leadership role, but the comments made by the respondents indicated that it was the popular girls who were selected. While the prefects may well use their power appropriately and perform their leadership functions admirably,

the subtle abuse of power involved in making some girls feel invisible would be difficult to determine.²⁸

One member of staff offered great insight into the subtext of the girls' lives and gives an excellent metaphor by which to understand why some girls find life at the school so difficult.

When the girls from the township come here, they don't realise that there is a very clear rule book. They don't know that there is a rule book, and even if they did, they wouldn't be able to read it because it is in a language they don't understand. Unless you can read the rule book, you are never going to fit in, and even if you can read the rule book, you know where you fit in.

Another member of staff offered a similar opinion: "There are these secret codes of conduct which you have to know". That these are context-specific was apparent from the feedback of two of the girls interviewed: when they had been on a three-week outdoor education excursion, they had each formed a close friendship with a high-status girl and had very much enjoyed the friendship. However, as soon as they got back to school, the status quo was re-established, with the popular girl ignoring the lower-status girl. This seems to indicate that while the behavioural patterns are deeply entrenched, they can be changed.

It was also apparent from the above comments that some of the staff show great insight into the nature of the girls' relationships and interactions.

Having discussed the systems and ways of behaving, I now discuss the structures within the school that relate to this research.

Organisations such as schools have structures in place which facilitate the smooth running of the organisation. These instil a sense of security in members of the community and offer new girls and members of staff signposts to accepted behaviour. There is no doubt that some traditions and structures are entrenched; many of the girls who come to the school are daughters of alumnae and will probably have preconceived ideas and expectations of how the school operates. Similarly, new members of staff are likely to accept the status quo and

²⁸ One girl did comment that in her final three years at the school, the head girls had been "brilliant", and it would have been nice if their example had been emulated by the rest of the prefect body.

conform to the standard patterns. I sought to assess girls' perceptions of the structures²⁹ that have been put in place and how effective these are.

One of the questions asked was whether vulnerable girls should be monitored by the staff. The responses are shown in Figure 4-24.

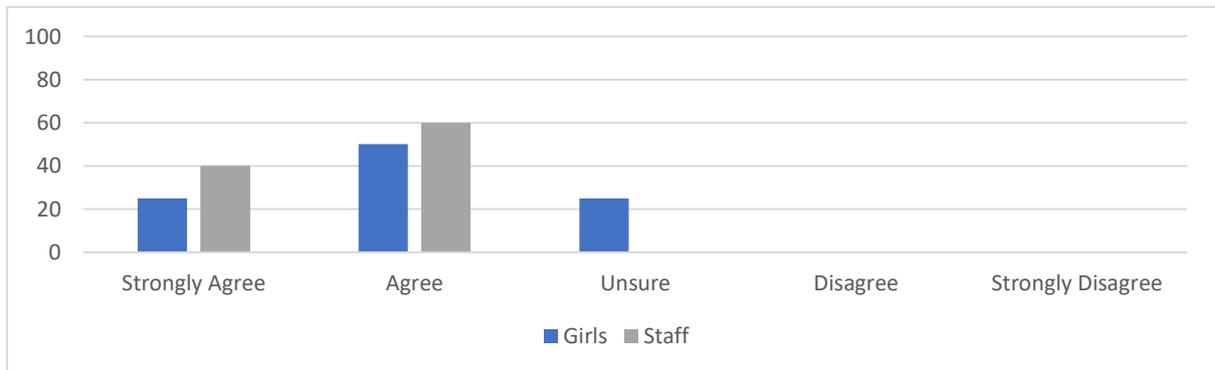


Figure 4-24: Vulnerable girls need to be monitored and protected when necessary (%)

Some of the respondents were unsure about what should be done for girls who were being abused. While both staff and girls agreed that vulnerable girls needed to be monitored and protected, the staff feel more strongly about this, as shown in Figure 4-24 (girls: 25% strongly agreed and 50% agreed; staff: 40% strongly agreed and 60% agreed). From the comments, the girls agree that those who were vulnerable needed to be protected, but how this was to be implemented was unclear.

The general opinion was that any direct intervention in the classroom was counterproductive³⁰ because this could draw too much attention to the victim and she would be further marginalised, but that “sometimes just checking with someone and letting

²⁹ The “structures” referred to in this context are the policies in place for girls to report abuse and the reporting systems: for example, the “Bully Box” that allows girls to report an incident anonymously, and the directives regarding how problems can/should be reported. These are described in more detail below. Other structures will be discussed where relevant.

³⁰ In an interview, a member of staff described that when a pupil in the class had been the victim of some sort of abuse, a talk on empathy had fallen on deaf ears and the pupil had been further isolated.

them know that someone is on their side can make a world of difference”. Girls also felt that being offered respect by the staff was valuable. For example, commenting on teachers who had successfully done this, one girl noted, “Rather than telling the class not to laugh at me, she would look me in the eye, acknowledge me and answer my question. That made me feel accepted and worthwhile”; while another said, “He treated me like a human being; not any less than any other person in the class”. Girls also felt that staff should make sure they were informed and aware of the dynamics in the classroom.

Associated with the question of whether girls should be protected was the question of whether girls should be left to sort out their own problems, as shown in Figure 4-25. A few of the girls (10%) strongly agreed with this view, but 50% were unsure and 35% disagreed. The staff generally disagreed with this view. The comments also showed a diversity of opinion. According to the staff, managing relationships is an important developmental skill for girls, as is handling conflict, but they maintain that girls need modelling and mentoring in developing these skills.

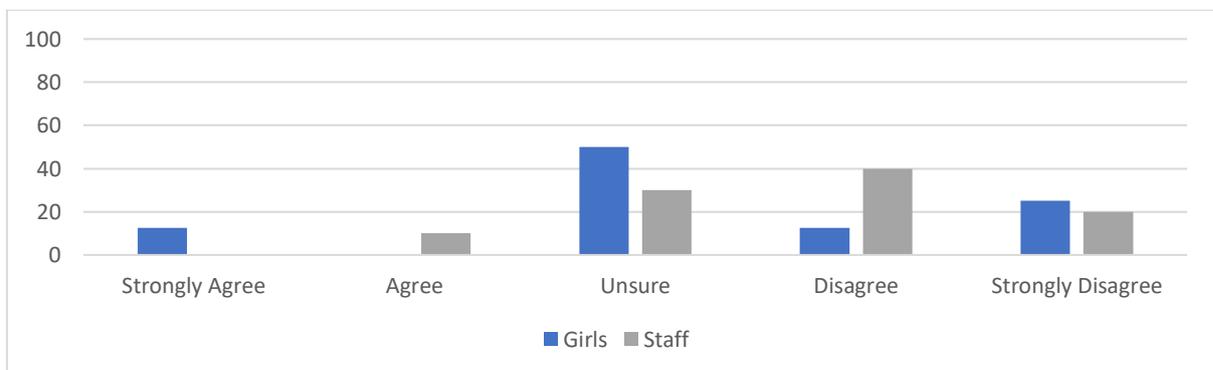


Figure 4-25: Adults should leave girls to sort out their own problems (%)

One of the head’s dictums is that the girls’ physical and emotional care is a priority. To ensure this, the following structures have been established:

- A team that comprises the relevant non-teaching professionals meets regularly to discuss girls of concern and to coordinate any care a girl may need.
- Each girl is allocated to a group comprising not more than ten girls under the care of an academic member of staff who is required to meet with the girls regularly and to

note any concerns that may arise. It is intended that the member of staff form a relationship with the girls which will facilitate communication between child and adult. Referrals are made to the psychologists when deemed necessary.

- As bullying tends to be an ongoing problem in this school (as in any school), a “bully box” is available to girls for reporting incidents anonymously. These structures have been put in place to help girls who are feeling vulnerable to ask for and/or receive help. It is assumed that the girls would easily be able to ask for help when and if needed.

The chaplain, during an interview, maintained that the systems are excellent and that if they worked as they should, all girls would be monitored and receive the protection they needed.³¹ There are instances where a member of staff identifies a girl who is vulnerable and/or may be experiencing difficulties, or a friend will report a problem. In such instances, it is the aim of the school to offer appropriate help (counselling by the chaplain or psychologist, for example). However, in many cases, it is incumbent on the girl herself to seek help, but without an extended vocabulary that names the various forms of abuse, they may be ignorant of the need for help. Further, it is possible that the girls do not understand the structures that are available to them. To obtain insight into these structures, questions were posed regarding their effectiveness (Figure 4-26) and girls’ abilities to articulate and report various forms of abuse they may encounter (Figure 4-27).

³¹ These are structures that have been put into place by adults and it is the adults to whom the girls are expected to respond.

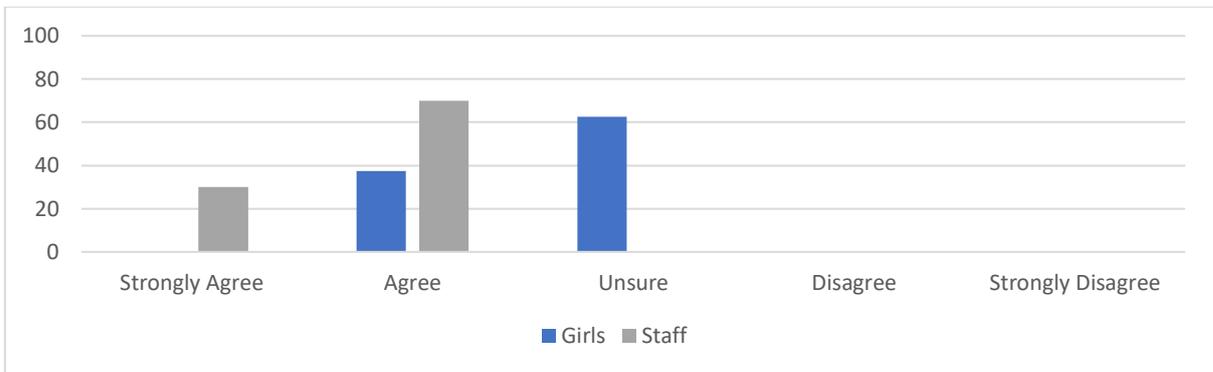


Figure 4-26: In the school, structures have been put in place to allow girls to report any form of abuse (%)

There seems to be a strong disconnection between the staff and the girls about the structures that are in place to help vulnerable girls (Figure 4-26) and whether the girls are equipped with the conceptual vocabulary to report abuse. The staff unanimously believe that the girls are supported, and predominantly believe that they have the necessary vocabulary to report abuse. In contrast, 65% of the girls reported uncertainty regarding the existence of structures to allow them to report any form of abuse and only 10% reported having been helped to develop an encompassing vocabulary to name their experiences. One noted, “I never saw the structures, so if they were there, they weren’t effective”.

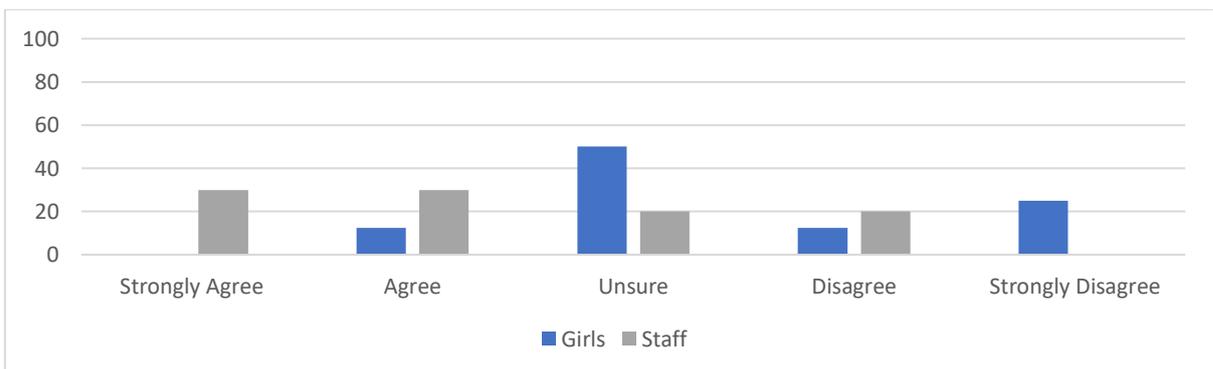


Figure 4-27: Girls are given the vocabulary to enable them to name abuse (such as shaming, harassment, covert bullying, etc) (%)

One member of staff said there were such structures but that they girls were not always comfortable using them, while another member of staff said, “They should know that they can report to any adult they trust”. This confirms the theory (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6) that

there is a difference in perception between students and staff about the extent to which teachers intervene in instances of bullying; teachers tend to overestimate the assistance they give, when students' perceptions are taken into account (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 363).

While the structures that have been put in place are intended to offer vulnerable girls help and support, it is my hypothesis that social exclusion is so subtle that it is difficult to report and girls would be concerned that the staff would not take such reports seriously.

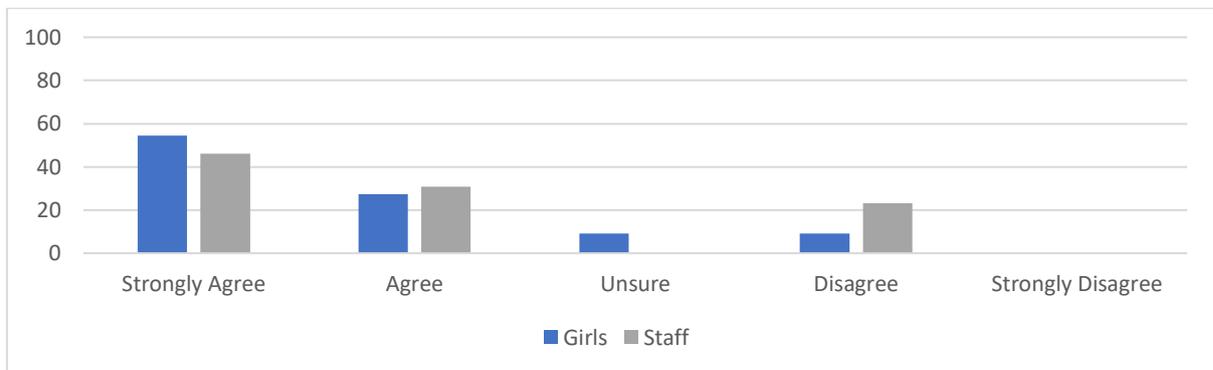


Figure 4-28: The subtle behaviour involved in inclusion and exclusion makes it impossible for girls to report exclusion or to believe that an adult would take it seriously (%)

Figure 4-28 show that 80% of the girls agree that exclusion is very difficult to report. A large percentage of staff also agree, but far more staff than girls disagree (girls: 10%; staff 25%).

The girls' comments included the following:

- The behaviour was so subtle (and often included non-verbal actions such as physical distancing from the victim, for example) that the teachers would be unlikely to notice it. Further, social exclusion was likely to take place beyond the classroom.
- It was very difficult to report ("How do you tell a teacher that no one wants to be your friend?") and if a girl did try to report it, she would be told that she was over-reacting, being too sensitive or that she should try harder to fit in. However, the strongest factor in not reporting behaviour was the fear of being a "snitch". Snitching was considered social suicide, with girls knowing that the consequence of being a snitch was complete exclusion.

- When a girl had experienced exclusion, she felt so vulnerable and had such low self-esteem that she would likely believe that the exclusion was somehow her fault, so it would not occur to her to report it.

A component of the reporting structures depended on the girl speaking to an adult. However, in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.6, it was noted that many students feel that the situation is exacerbated by teachers’ intervention and prefer to discuss problems with friends rather than adults (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 364). This was investigated in Figure 4-29 and Figure 4-30.

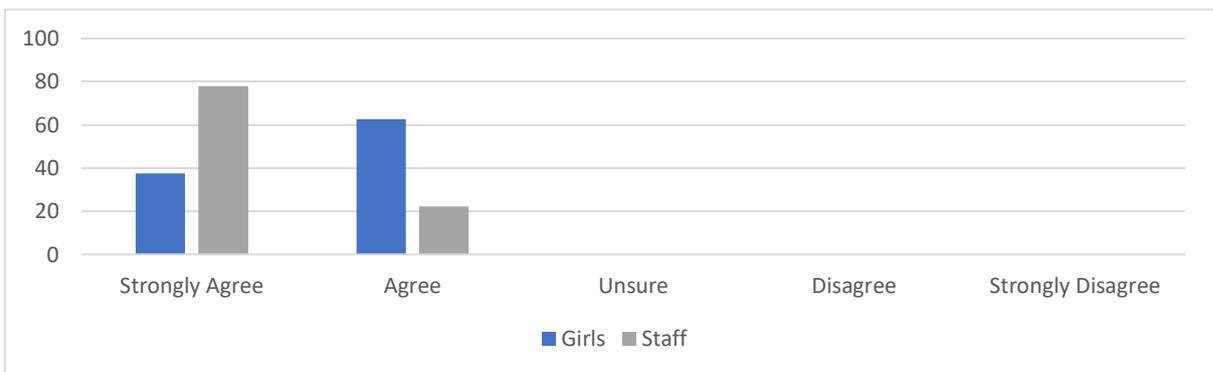


Figure 4-29: Girls tend to confide more in their friends than in members of staff (%)

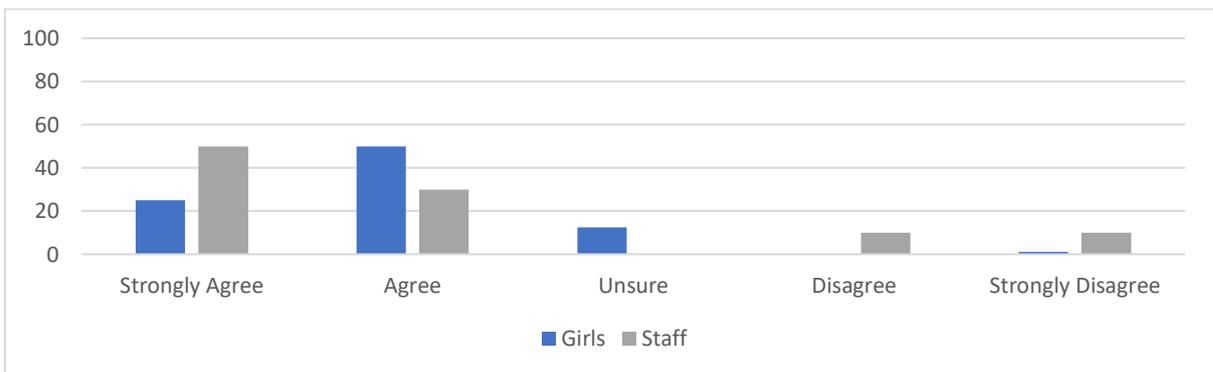


Figure 4-30: There are members of staff girls can go to if she is unhappy (%)

Although there were girls who did approach staff for help, several reasons were given for why they tended to confide in their friends. These included the wide difference in age, a lack of a close relationship with staff, and the belief that nothing would be done about the problem. Some of the most poignant comments were from girls who stated that they had no friends in whom to confide. Given the strong agreement from the staff regarding girls

confiding more in their friends than in adults, it is perhaps somewhat surprising that different structures have not been investigated, such as developing student mentors to support vulnerable girls.

What neither the adults nor the girls seemed to have considered in this regard was that socially excluded girls feel that they are the problem and that they experience deep feelings of shame. As has been noted, shame is one of the predominant results of emotional abuse (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 6, 9). Therefore, the girls would either not realise that they were victims of abuse or if they did, their shame at being deemed so unworthy would prevent them from reporting it. Further, many comments made by both the staff and the girls indicate that they perceive that the onus falls on the excluded girls to make a greater effort to be included.³²

Of concern are the findings regarding the action taken when abuse is reported, as shown in Figure 4-31.

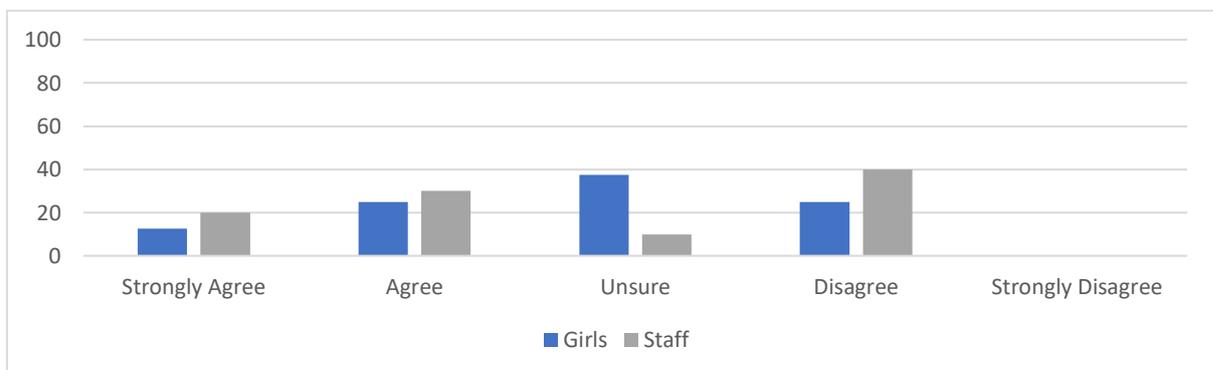


Figure 4-31: Any reported abuse gets immediate attention from the authorities (%)

While 35% of the girls agree that action is taken, nearly 40% are unsure of this and 25% disagree. However, the fact that 40% of the staff disagree with the comment indicates perhaps that not enough is being done to address the situation. Although the school has a

³² This was mentioned earlier: when girls were asked to get into groups, she would be excluded and then told by the teacher that she was deliberately avoiding becoming part of a group. Another girl commented that under similar circumstances, the black girls, having experienced being excluded, would be criticised by the teacher for not integrating more.

zero-tolerance approach to abuse (according to a member of staff) some of the girls said that after a problem was reported, nothing was done.³³ Certainly, neither the staff nor the girls are confident that action is taken after reporting a problem.

Although the subject of specific interventions was not addressed in the questionnaire, during the interviews girls and staff referred to various interventions that had been implemented to address the social issues. Some of these were bonding activities, such as movie evenings, while others were more formally constituted workshops. When asked about interventions, the girls did not seem to be very enthusiastic about these: the bonding activities maintained the status quo with girls remaining in their groups and excluding others (“that was never going to work for me because everyone is going to stay in their groups and leave me out”), and there was not much enthusiasm for workshops for the following reasons:

- Often the workshops were a reaction to a specific situation and did not address the systemic patterns of behaviour. They were therefore “like putting a plaster on a wound”, as one respondent put it.
- The impact was not lasting. Girls would revert to their usual behaviour after the workshop.
- Girls would not listen if they are just being told, “Be nice to each other”. The popular girls would ignore it.

Hobgood (2009: 1) maintains that once we understand the patterns of behaviour that are operating in our societies, we must start dismantling the “unjust distribution of power and privilege” and do the theological work of constructing communities that reflect God’s justice and love. Collicutt (2015: 39) maintains that the compassion Jesus felt for individuals arose from his passion for justice throughout all systems of which the people’s lives were a part. He taught what servant leadership means, as opposed to the powerful assuming special privileges: “There is never any sense of the megalomaniac about him. Instead of demanding

³³ It could well be the case that the problems are addressed but strict confidentiality is observed.

privileges that he might logically have viewed as his entitlement ... Jesus seemed to show a persisting concern to set such privilege aside” (Collicutt 2015: 32).

In conclusion, I believe there have been several genuine attempts by the school to ensure that there are structures in place, as discussed above, whereby vulnerable girls can be monitored, be offered help and report abuse. However, the girls generally do not know how to access these structures and there is a difference in perception between the staff and the girls regarding how effective these are. This confirms the theory that teachers tend to overestimate the assistance they give and many students feel that the situation is exacerbated by teachers’ intervention. They prefer to discuss problems with friends rather than adults (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 364).

Callahan (1991: 205) believes that “for children and youth there may be no place as influential as the explicitly educational institution of the school” and that schools have the obligation to impart knowledge to children as well as teach them about what it means to be moral people. They need to meet these obligations “while encouraging structural processes that encourage self-esteem, moral agency and moral responsibility” (1991). Warnock (1998, cited in Kroflič 2013: 15) maintains that “the development of moral sense is the primary role of education”. Therefore, one of the roles of the school is to encourage the pupils’ moral development.

Earlier it was noted that bullying is not only a psycho-social problem: it has a spiritual component. In Chapter 2, Section 2.2.7, I noted that we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 16–27) and are loved by God. The better we understand these two facts, the more likely we are to regard others as also being created in the image of God and therefore worthy of love and respect. We must recognise the *Imago Dei* in the “nobodies”, not just those who are like us, those who we like, the “somebodies”. In cases of social exclusion, there is a denial of the *Imago Dei* which has to do with our “fundamental orientation to God” (Mahoney 2010: 677).

The next section will consider social exclusion in relation to the spiritual and moral ethos of the school and “the processes that encourage self-esteem, moral agency and moral responsibility” (Callahan 1991: 205).

4.2.5 Spiritual and Moral Ethos

The school's mission statement includes the commitment to "encourage each person to respond to God and grow in faith in a caring community where the grace of God in Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit is proclaimed and taught...". In this section, the extent to which the mission statement is a reality in the daily life of the school is investigated.³⁴ The following discusses responses to the parts of the questionnaire that focused on the extent to which the school's mission statement is a reality in the daily life of the school.

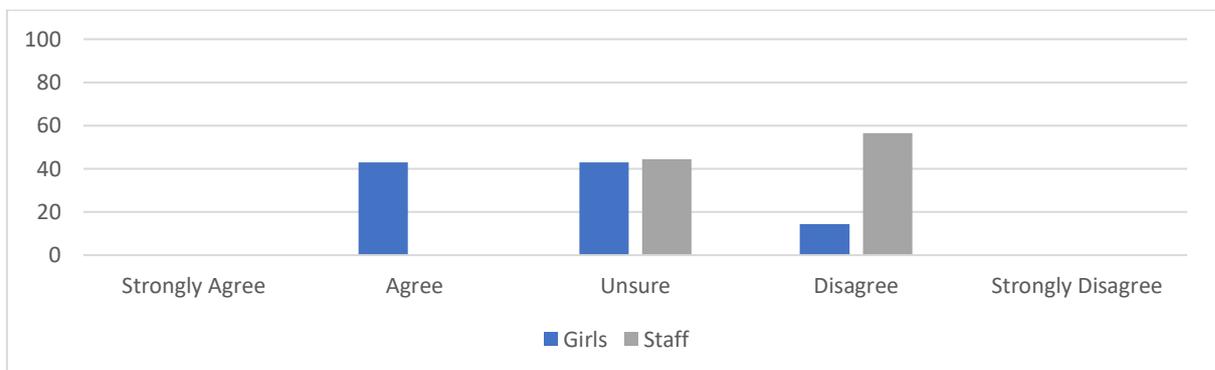


Figure 4-32: The school has forgotten what it means to be a faith-based school and has moved away from the school's mission statement (%)

There is a marked difference between the girls' and staffs' responses to the claim "The school has forgotten what it means to be a faith-based school and has moved away from the school's mission statement", as demonstrated in Figure 4-32. While 40% of the girls agree with this claim, none of the staff do, and only 10% of the girls disagree with the statement, compared with nearly 60% of staff. A roughly equal number of staff and girls are unsure and seemed not to have any real convictions about this. This finding, I believe, is very important in the light of the comment above that schools have the obligation to "teach them about what it means to be moral people" (Callahan 1991: 205).

³⁴ As both the girls and the staff made far fewer comments in this section than in the previous sections, the opinions offered are probably not representative of the staff or the girls.

Further to this, I asked the chaplain how the Christian faith was being lived out in the daily life of the school and how it was that exclusion could persist despite the school being a faith-based school. He said that the school was not a parish: in a parish, people choose to be part of the Church community and in so doing, make a commitment to uphold the ethos, teaching and values of the Church. This is not the case at the school. The chaplain said his role was to try to ensure that “[i]t is a school that is seeking to bring Christian values into a context that is not specifically Christian”. As well as his regular responsibilities as the chaplain of the school, he saw his role as supporting, intervening and establishing bridges where he identified a need, and bringing the Christian message into any and every situation. According to the school’s organogram, the chaplain holds a high position of leadership. As the chaplain represents the spiritual dimension of the school, I was interested in ascertaining how important he was deemed to be.

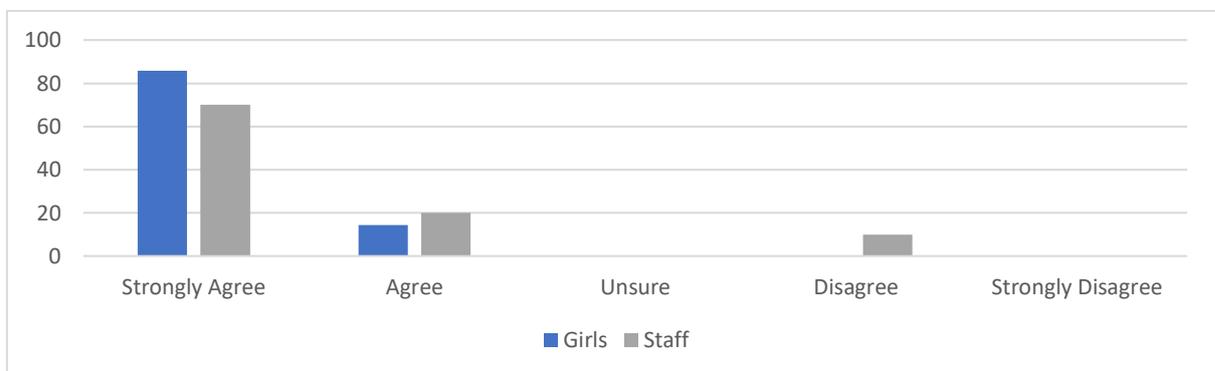


Figure 4-33: The chaplain plays an important role at the school (%)

Figure 4-33 shows that all the girls and 90% of staff agree that the chaplain plays an important role in the school. Therefore, there seems to be a dissonance in opinions being expressed in Figure 4-32 and Figure 4-33. This may have to do with the character of the chaplain and what he brought to the school in his personal capacity.³⁵

³⁵ He is described as “a truly holy man. His faith is deep and unwavering, and our girls and staff have identified in him a man of deep faith whose compassion, care and love for each of us is utterly genuine and heartfelt” (An excerpt from a school report, 2018).

The chaplain noted that it was his assessment that a large number of the girls and staff were not in the habit of attending church in their home environments and may well not have had the vocabulary or concepts to answer some of the questions in the questionnaire. Further, as the pupil body has become more heterogeneous, there will be girls who practice different faiths. Bangs (2014: 1) maintains, “With the decline of some faiths and the expansion of others, schools have become the only places where common values, transcending faith ... are promoted and enforced. In fact, ... schools are uniquely moral places”. Figure 4-34 indicates to what extent the girls and staff feel the Christian faith is becoming diluted.

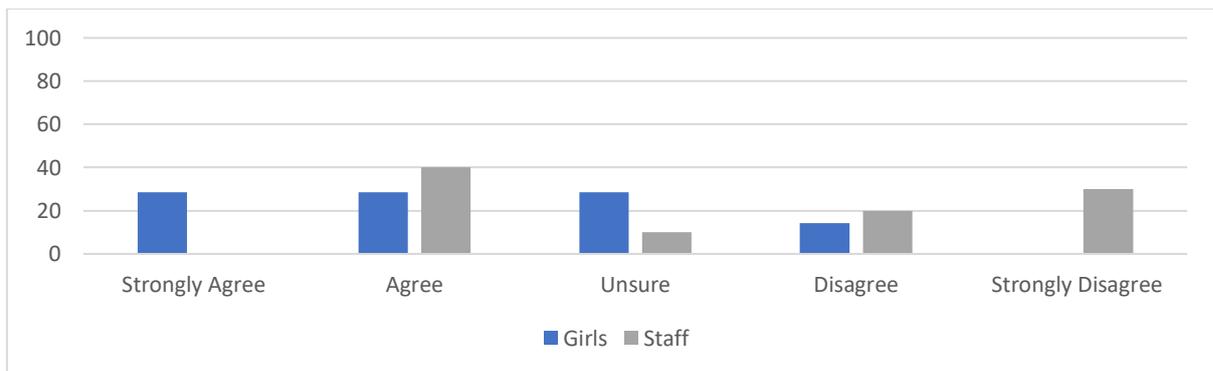


Figure 4-34: There are girls who come from families that are not familiar with the Christian faith so the spiritual ethos becomes diluted (%)

Figure 4-34 shows a spread of results, but there is a discrepancy between the girls and the staff: 60% of the girls agree with the statement compared with 40% of the staff. On the other hand, 50% of staff disagree with the statement, while no girls do. It is difficult to assess the grounds on which the staff and girls form their opinions, other than personal experience.

During the interviews, the girls were unanimous in their views that while they personally had appreciated the spiritual space offered by the school, most of the girls (with reference to the pupil body) found chapel services boring, did not like services being compulsory and did not listen to sermons. Therefore, the findings of Figure 4-35 are somewhat surprising.

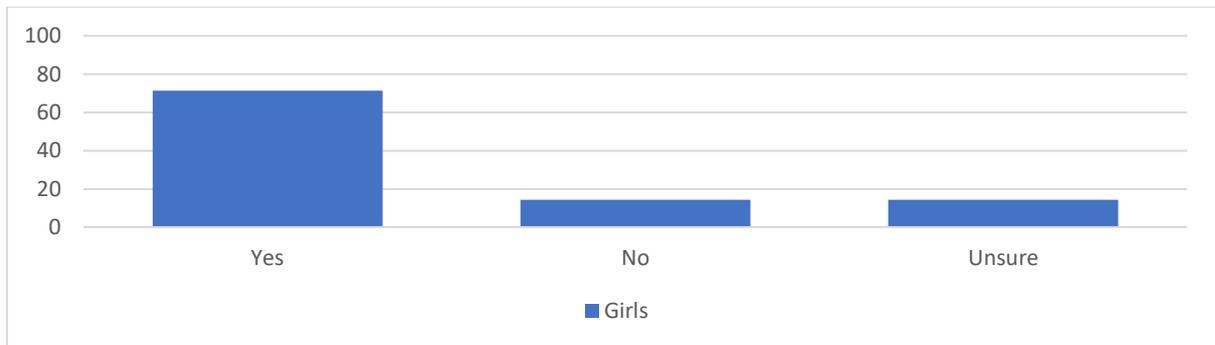


Figure 4-35: Did you participate in opportunities to develop spiritually? (%)

More than 70% of the girls said that they had participated in opportunities to grow spiritually. As noted earlier, these findings are probably not a reflection of the whole pupil body and that the girls who chose to participate in this research were those for whom their faith was important. It seems that the available opportunities to grow spiritually involved being confirmed, which may have been deemed a rite of passage that all girls undertook at a certain age. The girls interviewed noted that they had belonged to the choir, been sacristans and attended Student Christian Association meetings.³⁶

Compulsory weekly chapel services and additional services that mark the liturgical year are part of the structure of the school. The comments indicated that the institutional nature of the services contributed to the pupil body's antipathy (apart from the fact that the behaviour is probably characteristic of adolescents) and the girls who were interviewed felt that they would like some variety: different types of services and meeting with pupils from other schools, for example. One girl felt that it would be very helpful if members of staff came and sat with girls while having meals and informally discussed Christianity and how it related to day-to-day life.

This last comment perhaps indicates that the girls are open to spiritual formation but that, as one member of staff noted, the message given during chapel services was not being

³⁶ These were voluntary and were pupil driven.

carried out into the daily life of the school. Another member of staff's comment was apt: "We are a school whose main function is to educate."

With respect to the latter comment, it was important to establish whether there was agreement with Van der Ven's (1998: 2) view that education should incorporate moral and theological aspects, and Warnock's (1998, cited in Kroflič 2013: 15) notion that "the development of moral sense is the primary role of education".

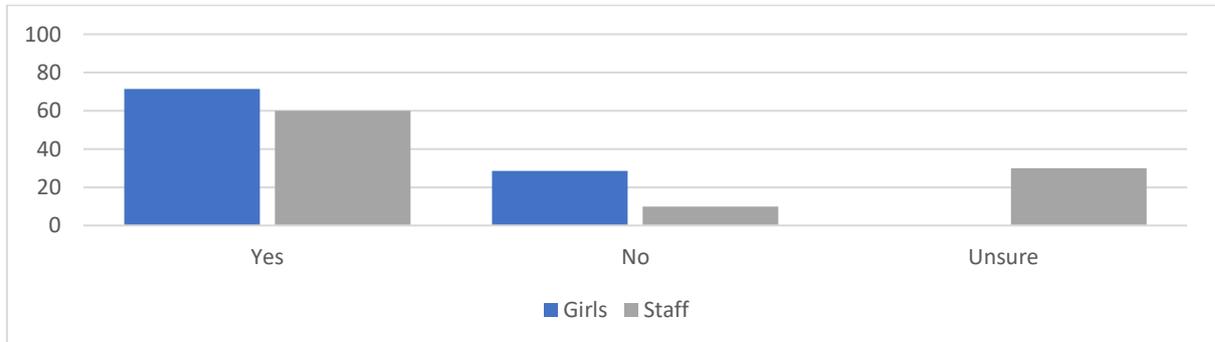


Figure 4-36: In a faith-based school, education that encourages the spiritual development of the girls should be as fundamental as their academic development (%)

The results shown in Figure 4-36 seem to confirm my assertion that girls are perhaps open to spiritual formation, with over 70% agreeing with the importance of spiritual development. Spiritual and moral development are essentially part of the same process. For Christians, becoming moral is connected to the commitment of the will to be a disciple of Christ and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit (Kretschmar 2005: 128). However, the spread of opinion shown in Figure 4-37 seems to indicate that neither the staff nor the girls had any clear opinions on this subject.

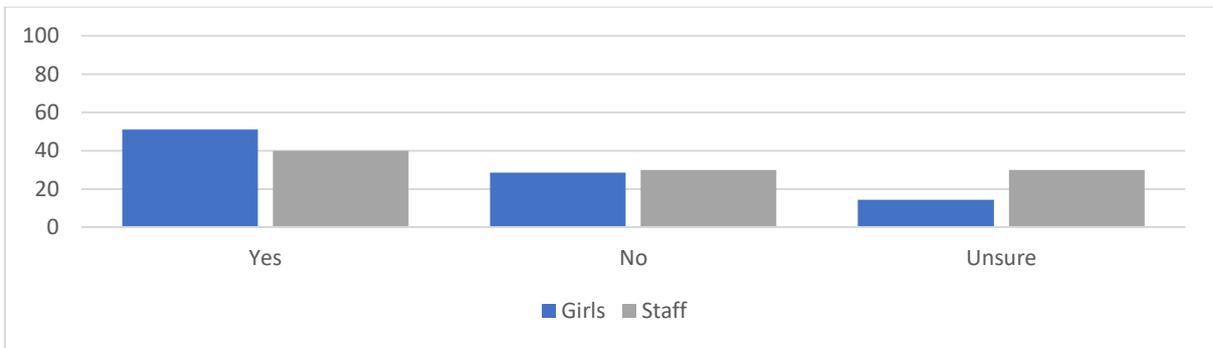


Figure 4-37: Moral development is intrinsically connected to spiritual development. That is, if girls are encouraged to develop spiritually, they will also develop morally (%)

One of the open-ended items on the questionnaire asked participants to define a moral person and a spiritual person. Most of the girls as well as the staff agreed that a moral person knows the difference between right and wrong. One suggested morality included treating others with respect and dignity, while others listed various behaviours (not drinking, for example). The staff tended to expand their definitions and included items such as “stands up for the weak” and “considers the effect of their actions on others”. The girls’ definition of a spiritual person included believing in a higher being and holding onto their beliefs in all situations. One girl noted that a spiritual person has a personal relationship with God and treats all people with love and compassion. The staff’s definitions were very similar to those of the girls, and described being aware of the spiritual world, and belief in a higher Being.

As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.11, the girls at the school are encouraged and expected to develop their academic abilities and they are given all the help they need to reach their potential. They are also expected to develop their physical abilities and cultural competences and again, girls are offered all the help they need to become proficient. However, in terms of the importance of girls’ moral and spiritual development and the role of the school in fostering and encouraging moral and spiritual development, only one member of staff referred to this in noting that girls should be taught to be kind.

The importance of including moral and spiritual formation in the curriculum is aptly described by Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017: 1) who note that enabling moral formation is difficult, but it is vitally important. Getting to know about God is not enough; it is important to “know and relate to God because the Christian faith is a way of life and not just a belief

system” (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 1). Unless moral and spiritual formation are taught, girls may lack “moral understanding and formation. They may seek to live lives of entitlement and opulence ... exploiting others and nature, or they may cling to a narrow, legalistic understanding of God that excludes compassion and sensitivity towards others” (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 1).

Kretzschmar (2005: 27) maintains that to act morally we need a moral framework, moral identity, moral motivation, moral formation, and commitment and action. Each of these can contribute to the girls’ moral and spiritual development. It is my opinion that moral and spiritual development at the school is an important component of the girls’ education, as shown below.

A moral framework allows the girls to discern right from wrong (Kretzschmar 2005: 27). In a world where values are deemed to be subjective and relative, the Christian faith offers norms and values that are universal and specific and based on biblical principles. Although many of the girls do not engage in the chapel services, the fact that the services are compulsory and form part of the school routine provides a framework. However, offering more diverse opportunities for being exposed to the teaching of the Christian faith may be valuable, as suggested by the girls above.

A moral identity helps girls to understand who they are and how are they defined (Kretzschmar 2005: 27). The most important aspect to inculcate in the girls is the concept that we are all created in the likeness of God and that all are worthy of being regarded as valuable and thereby being accorded respect and dignity. In Chapter 2, Section 2.5.2, I discussed how God instituted a radically different community from that of the surrounding nations; one that was a social community (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1328). An understanding of a sense of their belonging to a community that practices Christian norms and values needs to be strongly inculcated. It should be part of the daily discourse that no girl can be marginalised.

Moral motivation has to do with what induces people to behave in a certain way (Kretzschmar 2005: 27). Strong role models are one of the most important ways that girls learn moral behaviour. Important role models for the girls would be their parents and the

staff, especially those members of staff they respect and look up to. The importance of the other girls as role models is perhaps not fully recognised.³⁷ As noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.4.9, values are more strongly communicated in peer-to-peer relationships than in adult-to-child relationships (Spohn 2000: 9).

Moral formation involves the influences that shape the development of moral character. These can be the family, the Church, and teachers and other significant adults at the school (Kretzschmar 2005: 27). The school's strong community engagement programme encourages the virtues of compassion, justice and respect for others and the rules state that any form of bullying will be censured.

It is perhaps presumed that when the girls come to the school, they understand right and wrong and what is moral behaviour. However, while recognising that thirteen-year-olds are academically and physically immature, their moral immaturity is perhaps not considered. Rowe (2006, cited in Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 163) points out that children and adolescents cannot merely be given a set of rules and be expected to internalise them; the rules must be given meaning that is appropriate to the children's lives to motivate them to live according to the rules. Lawler and Salzman (2013: 442) note that "[w]ords, expositions and arguments will never make anyone virtuous, for virtues are habits or states learned only by repeated and habitual performance".

Further, young girls may not understand what is meant by abstract concepts of kindness, generosity and justice, for example. Therefore, moral formation of young girls needs to be given some concreteness. In her interview, a girl suggested that role-playing would be valuable: "Let's put you in this person's shoes, in a real, real way".

Does behaviour reflect convictions? *Moral commitment* requires moral courage in standing up for beliefs (Kretzschmar 2005: 27). Kretzschmar and Tuckey (2017: 2) refer to "the importance of the community in the development of moral virtues and the forming of

³⁷ This assumption is made on the basis of feedback from the girls that they don't easily form relationships with staff.

Christian disciples". Hauerwas (cited in Gill 2001: 26) maintains that a Christian ethic can only be understood within the context of the community; as the members of the community grow spiritually and become morally formed, they can be the moral voice to the wider community and society.

Spirituality is about our relationship with God. In Chapter 2, Section 2.4.5, it was noted that when we understand God, we will be able to understand ourselves and those around us and accord every person respect and dignity (Biggar 2011: kindle loc 884). According to Barth (cited in Biggar 2011: kindle loc 884), the Christian's view of God the creator, forgiver and redeemer engenders in us feelings of humility, gratitude and hope, and in our dealings with others a lack of self-righteousness, compassion for those who hurt us, and patience in the face of ongoing prejudice.

The next section will discuss the development of a community that is including of all girls in the school. In Chapter 2, Section 2.5, the importance of the community was discussed: from the time we are born, we are part of communities and it is within communities that we become fully human. Further, we are profoundly influenced by the communities we live in, for good or bad (Connors & McCormick 1999: 12).

4.2.6 Developing an Including Community

The final question in the questionnaire was: "What can be done to ensure that the school offers an environment within which all girls can feel included?" The same question was asked in the interviews. The staff and girls offered various ideas and recommendations which included specific actions (such as direct intervention, workshops and role-playing), structural changes (such as less competition, reconsidering the role of the prefects and greater consideration of other cultures), and existential changes (such as a focus on girls' happiness and teaching girls to be kind).

In the next section I will offer recommendations that may encourage the development of a community within which all girls can feel included. These are based on the suggestions of participants and on my considerations of the theoretical and empirical data.

4.2.7 Recommendations for an Including Community

As with any school, there are rules governing all aspects of the girls' lives, with concomitant consequences when these are breached. These rules include dress codes and the use of alcohol and cheating, as well as the forbidding of any form of bullying. Further, the school has many policy documents which expand on the rules. Rules are necessary and are in place to ensure that the school operates as it should and that girls are safe and can develop and thrive.

It was my experience that most of the girls and the staff are happy, are thriving and have strong relationships. However, the data indicates that there are girls at the school who do not feel safe, do not have strong relationships and are not thriving. They feel alone and marginalised. Only when attitudes, beliefs and ways of behaving are transformed, will there be real change in the society. From the data presented in this research, I identified six areas in which I make recommendations for developing a community within which all can feel included and thrive: the narrative, structures, age-related interventions, the staff, the girls, and the community.

4.2.7.1 The narrative

A member of staff suggested that the narratives the girls hear need to be considered. One narrative is that all girls will form very good friendships and the concept of sisterhood is frequently used. One unintended consequence of this is that, therefore, the shy, introverted girl who does not easily make friends will internalise the idea that she is a failure. It was noted, "Literally on the first day here, the idea [that it is social suicide to be alone] is being communicated to them". Other narratives that were discerned from the data include the prioritising of certain girls, activities and cultures over others. The "narrative of disadvantage" (as described by a member of staff) is almost exclusively attributed to

economic status.³⁸ This gets internalised by the school community and girls get stereotyped accordingly.³⁹

It seems that in assemblies, much of the narrative promotes the importance of achievement, and success (according to specific parameters in the academic, sporting and cultural fields) is rewarded.

I certainly do not mean to imply that all the school's narrative is negative; quite the reverse. Much of the narrative is no doubt affirming and supportive of all girls and the head of the school as well as many members of staff are committed to dealing with any form of abuse at the school.⁴⁰ It is perhaps the girls' narrative that is the most influential: what do the more senior girls tell the new girls about expected ways to behave, for example?

The narrative the girls hear should be one of reaching out in compassion to all and to according dignity and worth to every single person. The narrative should also be about generosity and sharing, rather than about personal gain. I recommend that in-depth discourse analysis be undertaken of all the school's communication (including the girls' interactions) to indicate where the narrative may be unhelpful.⁴¹

4.2.7.2 The school's structures

There are many instances in the Gospels where Jesus rebukes the Pharisees and leaders of the community, especially when they focused on the letter of the law and not on the well-

³⁸ This member of staff noted that the term "disadvantaged" did not necessarily apply only to economic status. Girls could be disadvantaged in other ways: for example, girls whose parents were divorced, or girls whose parents were more focused on their daughter's achievements than her emotional well-being.

³⁹ Ridge (2002: 131) maintains that poverty and disadvantage can permeate every aspect of a child's life. This perhaps is not accorded enough attention: the girls who come to the school on scholarships perhaps feel excluded before their first day at the school.

⁴⁰ In matters pertaining to the well-being of the pupils, I always found the head of the school to be extremely proactive in ensuring that every girl was cared for. Her support of this research bears testimony to this.

⁴¹ One girl gave me an example (not in this study) of a member of staff saying, "You girls are never...", or "You girls always ...". This was hurtful as it negatively stereotyped a group of girls.

being of those in distress (Matt 12: 1–8; Matt 15: 1). In Matt 23: 13–33, Jesus told the crowds not to copy their leaders who did not practice what they preached. I recommend that the school interrogate structures and ways of behaving and be prepared to break with tradition and institutional ways of behaving when necessary. The following areas were identified for interrogation.

Competition

Both the girls and the staff suggested instituting a less competitive environment. The girls felt that academic awards should be discontinued and that there be less focus on sport. (It would have been interesting to establish whether any of the participants had ever received academic or sporting awards and whether this suggestion would receive support from recipients of such awards.) A further suggestion was that all sports receive equal recognition and more non-competitive activities be offered. Interestingly, this concept may be gaining support in a wider arena. Nicholas Rowe⁴² noted that “we need to learn to interact collaboratively rather than competitively”.

I surmise that there would be a wide gap in opinion between those who support the awarding of excellence (in all areas; not just academic as suggested above) and those who would like awards to be discontinued. I suggest a compromise: girls deserving of recognition for their achievements be given certificates and commended in a public forum (such as assemblies and prize-giving ceremonies) but that no other markers of such awards be permitted.⁴³

⁴² Rowe states that in New Zealand the leadership of cricket, football, hockey, netball and rugby intend making sport for young people more inclusive. Focusing on winners, they maintain, perpetuates the concept among young people that unless they are winners, they are not good enough.

⁴³ Badges worn on the uniform and changes to the uniform serve as constant reminders to the whole school community about the status of some girls. A school community in which no person is singled out by badges would offer a more egalitarian community. This insight was offered by a young man who had been head boy of the brother school and who had chosen not to wear any item of clothing that accorded him status, thus marking him as different from the Grade 8s in the school.

Power structures

One member of staff noted, “We have structures in place [prefectship, for example] that form overtly exclusionary groups. We formally mark some girls as being more powerful than others”. Another member of staff felt that the prefects are accorded too much status and the system sustains the way power is perceived in the school.⁴⁴ The girls in this research felt that the prefects are selected on the basis of their popularity and it is the prefects’ voices that are heard by the girls and the staff. I have little knowledge of the criteria for selection or the mandate of prefects; however, I recommend that prefects be mentored throughout the year to ensure they are using their power to build up the school community. I also recommend that alternative structures of power be investigated (such as student committees).

The culture of the school

Some of the girls noted that the culture of the school was Eurocentric and that not enough attention was paid to African culture, traditions and language. Girls wanted a culture that promoted difference and an environment in which diversity is considered an asset, not a threat⁴⁵. However, another girl recognised that traditions can be important in any school and contribute to its essence: “You can’t take away the history of the school and the traditions that have come down over the years”. The staff maintained that prejudice and exclusion needed to be challenged but gave no specific recommendations about how this was to be done. One noted, “Until we can change the culture at the school, I’m not sure all girls can develop and flourish”.

Carter et al. (2014: 91–101) maintain that the “social culture of the school lies with the peers”. It is the girls who understand the subculture and who will fit in and what will work. Therefore, the girls “should play an active role in developing interventions in school-wide

⁴⁴ As mentioned earlier, the role of the prefects or their selection did not form part of this research. The question referring to power accorded to girls was interpreted as referring to prefects.

⁴⁵ Many of the examples given had to do with the subject of noise: some girls were criticised for making too much noise, while others declared that it was part of their culture to be loudly vocal.

change” (2014: 91–101). I recommend that girls, under staff mediation, together work out codes of behaviour that all can understand and adhere to.

4.2.7.3 The staff

Before any real and lasting changes can be effective in this school, the staff need to take seriously the social exclusion of girls and the structures and ways of behaving that allow such abuse to persist. It was evident that there was a disconnection between the staff and the girls in a number of areas. There was a difference between staffs’ and girls’ assessments of hurtful behaviour and the girls felt that they could not easily confide in the staff. Further, the girls felt that even if they did confide in the staff, their concerns would not be taken seriously.

I suggest the conscientisation of the staff in five specific areas:

- To recognise that there is a disconnection between the staff and the girls on certain issues, including what constitutes painful behaviour, how social exclusion should be handled and the reporting systems available.
- To recognise that social exclusion is very real in the lives of some girls, that it cannot be considered to be a normal part of girls’ relationships and that the affected girls need support.
- To recognise the particularity of social exclusion as a form of abuse and that socially excluded girls do not have a voice. Bearing this in mind, the staff need to develop ideas of how best they can help excluded girls. (For example, it is not helpful to tell girls that they should try harder to make friends.)
- To recognise that staff themselves can be bullies in the classroom. There should be ongoing training of staff regarding bullying, with special reference to power differences between the staff and the girls. It would be well worth investigating incidences of staff feeling bullied by other members of staff, such as heads of department.
- To recognise that 50% of the staff have felt socially excluded by other staff members. New members of staff need to be cared for and special efforts made to ensure their inclusion in the community.

The girls who find themselves excluded have no voice. The shame they feel and the concern that they will not be taken seriously prevents them from speaking to anyone about their experience. The staff should spend time to just listen to the girls and let them tell their stories. These girls do not necessarily want to be given advice or suggestions; they do not necessarily want action to be taken on their behalf. They want to be listened to and be heard. They want to be afforded dignity and respect and to be understood. These girls could be given a voice to be heard by others in any area in which they are competent – music, dancing or acting, for example.

The school has structures in place whereby small groups of girls are under a teacher whose responsibility it is to care for the girls. The chaplain noted that if the structures work as they should, they would be effective. I recommend training for the staff about their responsibilities and ongoing mentoring, especially for the newer members of staff.

4.2.7.4 The girls

Mentors

The data showed that the girls prefer to talk to other girls and that they do not easily confide in staff. I recommend that prefects be offered ongoing and practical mentoring in their roles as leaders in the school and that a system of peer mentors be established. All new girls to the school should be under a mentor who would have been carefully trained. The mentors themselves should be under the direction of a senior member of staff.⁴⁶

Agency

It was noted that the school has a top-down approach, with the staff making decisions and girls submitting to what has been organised or decided. I recommend that the girls, under

⁴⁶ Although there is currently a system whereby Grade 8s are linked with a Grade 12 girl, I feel that the power difference in this structure is too great. I recommend mentors who are only one or two grades above the girls.

the mentorship of the chaplain and the senior leaders of the school, be given some autonomy in establishing the fundamental ethical norms of behaviour and a shared value system to be upheld in the school and the rules and regulations to govern these.

The views of Mamphela Ramphele (2019a) are applicable here. She noted, “The debates our society is now engaged in are reactive rather than informed by a shared value system”. She says that violence can only be addressed within a value system that recognises the equality of all humans and that the key is a participatory process rather than one imposed by a top-down approach.

Practical experience

The school has a very strong community engagement programme. I recommend that the concept of community engagement be broadened and that, in addition to the girls going out to help in disadvantaged communities, they practice treating all they meet with dignity and respect. For example:

- know the names of all the staff: teachers, administration, support, domestic and gardening staff on the campus and greet each one by name;
- make eye contact with and smile at everyone they pass;
- thank everyone who helps them in any way (serving staff in the dining room, cleaning staff in the classrooms, staff who maintain the sports fields).

Developing social competence

This will include:

- practical help for girls who are identified as being socially awkward, introverted or whose behaviour is likely to lead to exclusion;
- helping girls deal with conflict in constructive ways. This can involve round-table discussions under a mediator during which girls can confront others about hurtful behaviour;
- helping girls understand their emotions and recognising realistic feelings (stress before an exam is normal) as well those that are unrealistic. (A member of staff

noted that in our society the lack of happiness is understood to be pathological but no one is happy all the time⁴⁷);

- encouraging girls to identify other girls who may need help and to reach out to them. In this, the girls who attend the SCA could be approached and encouraged to take an active role in leading an initiative of this nature.

4.2.7.5 The community

In the various suggestions offered in Section 4.2.6 above, the girls and staff were inadvertently referring to the importance of the community. In the Western culture (which is the predominant culture of the school), individuality and personal achievement is lauded and some of the comments made during the interviews regarding awards reflects this. Much has been discussed about communities (Chapter 2, Section 2.4; Chapter 4, Section 4.2.5.5) and that “[i]f one harms others ... or even if one is merely indifferent to others and fails to share oneself with them, one is ... literally lacking in personhood or humanness” (Metz & Gaie 2011: 8).

I recommend that when receiving an award for success, girls could be encouraged to acknowledge the role of those who have helped them achieve their success. Further, as well as individual awards, awards should be given to whole groups – for example, a team that has been commended by another school for their sportsmanship; a group of girls who took part in a project to help a local community; a group of girls who stayed behind to clear the garbage after a function. I also recommend that more non-competitive activities be arranged in which girls are required to engage with girls who would not normally be part of their social group.

In Luke 14: 7–14, after being invited to dinner at the Pharisee’s home, Jesus warned his disciples about presuming they were important and told them to value the unimportant in the society. It is recommended that as well as rewarding the normal criteria of success in the academic, sporting and cultural fields, the school recognises in some way those who are

⁴⁷ This expectation of perpetual happiness may well be driven by false impressions gleaned from social media.

successful in different ways. Another suggestion was that at times it may be worth “subverting the cultural currency”. By this was meant that it would be a worthwhile intervention to arrange activities where the black girls would be the ones with knowledge and expertise and thereby, power.

4.2.7.6 Age-appropriate interventions

It was interesting to note that none of the staff referred to the age of the girls in either the questionnaires or the interviews. However, I feel that this is a very important consideration as the developmental level of the girls will mean that if interventions are to be effective, they must be age-appropriate.

The staff and the girls all noted that educating the girls about bullying and various forms of abuse was important and interventions such as workshops should be arranged. The negative aspects of workshops have been noted but one member of staff insightfully suggested that perhaps the material offered was too abstract for the girls and that practical examples be given. Further, concepts presented as part of the narrative, such as “sisterhood”, should be given concrete expression – what actions indicate sisterhood?

Moral principles such as caring and justice are first established in the home, but are also learned from lectures, sermons, admonition, etc. (Gibbs 2003: 95). It has been shown that the development of empathy is the best antidote to bullying, and that children respond well to training in compassion and empathy (Cram 2003: 2). Sermons in chapel are not enough; neither are talks from the head in assembly. Age-appropriate, relevant films, documentaries and visiting speakers could be offered and role-playing and drama could be very effectively used. Biggar (1997: 132) notes that through various avenues (such as those mentioned above) morality can be taught.

Rest (1994, cited in Brook, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 150) suggests that four stages have to occur for moral behaviour to take place: sensitivity, judgement, motivation and implementation. Young people must regularly and frequently be conscientized to situations requiring a moral response, be helped to make moral judgements, be given the motivation to respond appropriately, and then encouraged to behave morally. This conforms to the requirements for moral and spiritual development described in Section 4.2.5 above.

We are encouraged in the Bible to grow and mature in our faith: Eph. 5: 1: “Be imitators of God ... and live a life of love”; Col 2: 6–7: “So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up, strengthened in the faith as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness”. While several recommendations have been made to ensure a community that is including of all girls within it, there is always the danger that each of these be considered is isolation and separated from the overarching consideration: that girls (and staff) be morally and spiritually formed and that the recommendations contribute to the moral framework, identity, motivation and formation, as Section 4.2.5 above. This should be the goal of all actions undertaken.

In Section 4.3, the findings of the empirical research and the conclusions reached are summarised.

4.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS REACHED

In this section, as mentioned above, the findings of the empirical research and conclusions reached are summarised, after which further considerations pertinent to the hypothesis and the research questions are discussed. For clarity, the headings under which the data was presented are used in this section.

4.3.1 Personal Experiences

This theme investigated the respondents’ personal experience of exclusion and assessed their awareness of social exclusion. It was found that 90% of the girls and 50% of the staff had felt excluded at some stage and that the experience was extremely painful. The girls felt that their exclusion was somehow warranted. Further, the results indicated that because social exclusion was ubiquitous, it was seen as a normal part of girls’ relationships, albeit not acceptable.

4.3.2 Girls’ Relationships

In this section, questions derived from the theoretical research considered girls’ need to belong, the nature of adolescent girls, the characteristics of girls likely to be excluded, the importance of groups, and the consequences of social exclusion. It was concluded that peer relationships are very important and that adolescent girls have an inordinate fear of being

4.3. Summary of findings and Conclusions reached

alone. Being excluded would have a serious impact on their well-being. It is not always clear why a girl is excluded: quiet, introverted girls tend to be excluded, but not necessarily those with physical impediments.

The results indicate that girls are strongly influenced by their peers and belonging to a high-status group is very important. Girls who are excluded will form groups with other excluded girls or withdraw from relationships. They may be excluded from all other groups.

Consequences of social exclusion include loss of self-esteem, depression, eating disorders and even suicidal ideation. Girls felt worthless and, in some cases, completely invisible.

These findings support the theoretical research that young people who are excluded can easily become isolated and feel marginalised (Hazler 1996; Hodges & Perry 1996; Olweus 1996, cited in Hazler & Denham 2002: 405). Shame, the painful experience of believing that one is flawed (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 6, 9), is a consequence of social exclusion.

It was also concluded that social exclusion would affect a girl's very human-ness because "[r]elationship is part of the very essence of God and thus relationship is at the very heart of reality. To be fully human is to be in relationship" (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 2)

4.3.3 Bullying

This section explored social exclusion as a form of bullying.

The data indicated that nearly 80% of the respondents said they had been bullied at school, and that social exclusion was a particularly painful form of bullying. The staff and girls showed differing understandings of bullying behaviour and in some cases, the girls found overt forms of bullying more painful than exclusionary behaviour. This finding was somewhat of a surprise as it contradicted my own personal understanding that girls engage in more covert forms of bullying than overt.

It was concluded that the theory on bullying was supported by the data: the consequences of social exclusion are very similar to those reported for bullying and that in some ways, the effects are more painful than physical abuse (Lundberg-Love & Marmon 2006: 15). The theory regarding the witnesses was also confirmed: witnesses can feel intimidated and

fearful that they may also be bullied, and they may experience the same effects as the victims (Dupper 2013: 24).

The high percentage of girls who reported that they had experienced bullying does not conform to the literature. It was noted in Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 that differences in definition of bullying means that statistics of bullying incidence are not clear, but that a reasonably reliable figure seems to be that 15%–20% of students will experience some form of bullying while they are at school (Ross 2002: 116). The results of this research present a far higher number of girls admitting to being bullied. This may be due to participants having a vested interest in the study and/or that the more covert forms of abuse are being increasingly recognised as bullying.

4.3.4 Structures and Patterns of Behaviour

This section investigated some of the structures specific to the school and patterns of behaviour (also referred to as systems) that are found in the school and in the wider society that are relevant to social exclusion.

It was concluded that there are strong social hierarchies with unwritten rules. While these rules are understood by most of the girls, some girls do not even realise that there are unwritten rules and it is the girls in the latter group who find themselves excluded. All the girls understand the social positions and where they fit. Girls preferred not to associate with those lower down in the hierarchy. There was strong agreement among the staff and the girls that some attributes held high status and were aspired to by the girls. It was concluded that some attributes were important but social exclusion was not directly linked to status markers. The importance of status markers supports Collicutt's (2015: 163) contention that a person's social identity is not value-free and that all aspects of one's group take on enormous importance.

The only power referred to by the girls was legitimate power held by leadership conferred by the school, such as prefects, and that the popular girls were selected as prefects.

The structures that are in place to protect girls and the effectiveness of these was investigated. It was found that there was a difference in perception between the staff and

the girls regarding the help available to the girls. This confirms the theory that teachers tend to overestimate the assistance they give. Many students feel that the situation is exacerbated by teachers' intervention and prefer to discuss problems with friends rather than adults (Bradshaw et al. 2006: 364).

4.3.5 Spiritual and Moral Ethos

The aim of this section was to examine the moral and spiritual ethos of the school and ascertain to what extent the school's mission statement was a reality in the daily lives of the school.

It was found that the role of the chaplain was very important. Some of the girls did not enjoy compulsory services but others valued the opportunities to grow spiritually. On the whole, the girls' opinions of the various interventions arranged by the school were negative. I concluded that it is perhaps not recognised that girls are immature and that moral and spiritual development should receive as much attention as academic and physical development. Rowe (2006, cited in Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2002: 163) points out that children and adolescents cannot merely be given a set of rules and be expected to internalise them; the rules must be given meaning that is appropriate to the children's lives to motivate them to develop life-giving attitudes and behaviour.

Collicutt (2015: 7) notes that we are all to be spiritually transformed and because the Christian life is lived in community, spiritual formation always has a corporate dimension (Collicutt 2015: 9). Spiritual formation is very closely linked to moral formation because it exposes us to God's gaze, and enables repentance, forgiveness, acceptance and healing. Kretschmar (2002: 57) maintains that "as spirituality is formed, the values of integrity, justice and compassion are displayed, rather than falsity, partiality and selfishness".

4.3.6 A Community that is Including of all Girls

The final item asked for suggestions about how to develop a community within which every girl could feel included. Various suggestions were given for specific actions, structural changes and existential changes.

4. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

In this chapter, I have tried to present as accurately as possible an understanding of social exclusion at this school. As I assessed the data and came to conclusions, I recognised increasingly that the subject is complex and multi-faceted. I am aware that there is much that could and should be interrogated further and I am also aware that aspects of the school and efforts on the part of the staff have not been fully presented, either due to my lack of knowledge or time constraints. However, the empirical research presented in this chapter leaves me in no doubt that the girls who have been socially excluded need to be heard and their stories listened to. They have been voiceless for too long.

In the next chapter, I will summarise the theoretical research and the findings of the empirical research and how the latter confirms the theory, adding to the body of knowledge. I will also explain the limitations of the study and suggest further areas for investigation.

5 CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I will summarise the theoretical and empirical research that contributed to this study and discuss the methods used to collect the data. Based on the findings of the data and the conclusions reached, I will discuss the extent to which the research question was answered and the hypothesis supported. Recommendations for the way forward will be offered and the limitations to this study are noted and suggestions are made for further research. Finally, some personal impressions are given about my engagement with this research.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

My motivation for this research was my awareness of social exclusion as a form of bullying that is often not recognised because it can be so subtle. During my theological studies, I engaged at a deeper level with many ethical issues and I began to experience great empathy for those who are powerless and abused. I became increasingly aware of a hidden, often non-articulated form of bullying: one that renders people, and particularly girls, voiceless – that of social exclusion. I realised that I had been subjected to this as a young girl. The motivation for this research, as discussed in Chapter 1, fed into the aim of the research which was to investigate this painful form of abuse in a faith-based independent girls' school in South Africa in order to obtain a better understanding of the problem and to offer recommendations for developing a community within which all may feel included.

I hypothesised that there are girls in the school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. As this anti-social behaviour is not fully understood either by the girls or the teachers as being a form of bullying, systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are allowed to persist.

To test the hypothesis, the research question was:

How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls' school?

The question incorporated five sub-questions:

- The importance of relationships to girls: how can social exclusion be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically?
- An understanding of bullying: can social exclusion be considered as an insidious form of bullying?
- What traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour at the school maintain or resist social exclusion?
- How do individuals develop morally and spiritually?
- What principles can be applied in a girls' faith-based independent school so that it becomes a community that is including of all girls?

To answer the research questions, I drew on sources in the literature and prior empirical studies to acquire a full understanding of the many relevant psychological, social and theological theories that may have a bearing on the subject being investigated. To add to my understanding of the subject, I made use of reports of a workshop and the results of an informal survey at the school, and informal discussions with the girls and members of staff during my employment at the school. This review was presented in Chapter 2. Empirical research was conducted to determine to what extent the theory was supported and to obtain the experiences and perceptions of the staff and the girls at the school. The findings of the empirical research is presented in Chapter 4. The motivation for the research was presented in Chapter 1 and the methodology for the empirical research was presented in Chapter 3. In the next section, I summarise the findings of these four chapters.

5.2 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 1 AND 3: RESEARCH MOTIVATION AND METHODOLOGY

Throughout history, people have built walls: notable examples are Hadrian's wall between England and Scotland, the Berlin Wall that separated East and West Berlin after World War II and more recently, the proposed wall to be built between the USA and Mexico. While these walls are people's material way of keeping "us" in and "them" out (Abrams, Hogg & Marques 2005: 4), people also build metaphorical walls for the same reason, but humans are relational beings and the need to belong is a fundamental human need (Abrams et al. 2005: 28). The very nature of relationships means that there is the potential for exclusion and while some exclusion is inevitable and will be experienced by everyone at some stage, there

5.2. Summary of Chapters 1 and 3: Research Motivation and Methodology

are people who are denied healthy social relationships by being excluded from groups. This can be as painful as any form of physical violence.

I hypothesized that there are vulnerable children who are being socially excluded and isolated by their peers at school, but it is not always easy to establish why these children are excluded. I surmised that such exclusion may be a hidden, covert form of bullying that is not being recognised due to its insidious nature. However, I suggested that bullying was more than psycho-social behaviour and needed to be considered from a theological perspective if there was to be any permanent change to girls' behaviour.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the aim of this dissertation was to investigate aspects of social exclusion to get as full an understanding as possible of this behaviour. To do this, I undertook a review of the literature to establish a theoretical foundation for the subject. However, I also felt it was important to conduct empirical research to determine whether the theory was supported by the experiences of girls and staff at the school. The methodology used for the empirical research is described below while the findings of the theoretical and empirical research are presented in the next section.

As this research is concerned with social, cultural, and individual factors which are understood subjectively and are not easily quantified, a qualitative approach was used. It was a descriptive study and was intended to be exploratory to indicate directions for further research.

The data was collected from questionnaires and interviews. The questions in the questionnaire were drawn from the theoretical research and comprised closed questions (Likert scales and ranking) and open-ended questions. The online programme SurveyMonkey® was used and participants could download the questionnaire, complete it and return it online. Semi-structured interviews were conducted. Open-ended questions had been prepared but interviewees were encouraged to express their opinions freely. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed by a person whose profession it is to transcribe court cases.

The sample comprised staff at the school and alumnae (referred to as 'girls' in this study) who had been at the school within the previous three years. I emailed a letter to 30 girls and

41 members of staff – teachers, psychologists and chaplains – and asked them to complete the questionnaire which could be accessed by the hyperlink given in the letter. They were assured that they would not be identified without their written consent and they were asked for their formal consent to participate in signing and returning the letter. Ultimately, 17 questionnaires were returned by the teachers and 15 by the girls, while six teachers and five girls were interviewed. In selecting staff to be interviewed, I ensured that staff of different race, sex, levels of seniority and role were represented. Of the girls, two white girls and three black girls were interviewed.

In the analysis of the data, the responses to the closed questions in the questionnaire were analysed by the online SurveyMonkey programme and were then presented as graphs. I undertook content analysis of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the transcripts of the interviews. The themes that had been identified in Chapter 2 were used for the analysis of the data. These were:

- Girls' relationships (the need to belong, the influence of the group, etc.);
- Bullying (definition, consequences and participants, etc.);
- Patterns of behaviour and systems (power, hierarchies, prejudice, etc.);
- Moral and spiritual development;
- A moral community.

5.3 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS 2 AND 4: THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

As given at the beginning of this chapter, the research question was:

How can social exclusion be understood as a form of bullying from theological-ethical and psycho-social perspectives in a specific independent faith-based girls' school?

The research question incorporated five sub-questions. In Chapter 2, this research drew on sources in the literature and prior empirical research and reference was made to reports on a workshop that had been conducted, the findings of an informal survey conducted within the school to ascertain the girls' perceptions of various aspects of school life and informal, and undocumented discussions held by me with girls and members of staff. The findings of the empirical research are also summarised below.

5.3. Summary of Chapters 2 and 4: Theoretical and Empirical findings

5.3.1.1 The first sub-question: The importance of relationships

The question regarding the importance of relationships to girls and how can social exclusion be understood theologically, psychologically and sociologically was answered by the theoretical research, the findings of the questionnaires and the interviews with the girls and the staff.

The theoretical research indicated that girls' relationships are extremely important: their emotional health is affected by their social relationships and their inclusion in the group. Peer pressure and the influence of the group are very strong among adolescents but some characteristics, such as introversion, make children more prone to being excluded. Girls convey inclusion and exclusion in both obvious and subtle ways, the latter to the extent that adults do not recognise its occurrence. Adults may not realise either how important friendships are to girls or how painful the experience of being excluded is.

From the questionnaires and the interviews, it was concluded that the data supported the theory: the findings indicated that relationships are very important to the girls and being excluded has very negative psycho-social consequences. Groups offer safety and protection and some girls who had been excluded said that they had felt invisible, deserving of the exclusion and inadequate.

The value of relationships was linked to the Genesis story. Adam and Eve's relationship with God and the consequences of a breakdown in the relationship introduces us to the importance of relationships and how we are to relate. I explained in Chapter 2 that Jesus lived in a society with strong hierarchies of power, so his inclusion of those who would not normally have been easily accepted into the homes where he was a guest was counter-cultural and very affirming of the excluded.

5.3.1.2 The second sub-question: Bullying

The question was: can social exclusion be considered as an insidious form of bullying? The research indicated that bullying can be overt (as in acts of physical aggression) or covert (which includes relational and emotional abuse). Social exclusion is considered to be a form of covert bullying as the impact on the victim is the same as with overt bullying. There is lack of agreement about the definition of bullying, so for the purpose of this research, three

components were identified: hurtful behaviour; a power imbalance perceived by the girls; and covert behaviour as painful acts of aggression.

The research shows that the effects of bullying are severe, not only for the victim but also for witnesses and bystanders. Girls who are bullied by being socially excluded will often withdraw from interactions. Teachers can themselves be bullies and further, teachers underestimate the extent of the problem and can be ineffective in dealing with social exclusion in schools. This may be because few instances of social exclusion take place in view of adults, or that it is so subtle that only the girls understand it. Adults and those being excluded do not always agree on the efficacy of the interventions being offered.

The empirical research supported the theory that social exclusion is an insidious form of bullying and that the consequences are very painful. However, I concluded that while the results were unequivocal about social exclusion being a highly painful form of bullying, social exclusion is more than a form of covert bullying: bullying presupposes a relationship, albeit toxic, between abuser and abused. A child who is excluded will be denied any form of relationship.

The role of witnesses and the impact of bullying described by the girls aligned closely with the theory presented in Chapter 2 where it was noted that bullies derive their power from the reaction of the witnesses (Dupper 2013: 23), that witnesses can feel intimidated and fearful, and they may experience the same effects as the victims (Dupper 2013: 24). One aspect that did not receive attention from the participants was the effect of teachers who bullied, although being humiliated by teachers seemed to be very painful for the girls.

It was noted that bullying should be regarded as a spiritual problem because it damages our relationship with God and with each other. We are created in the image of God (Genesis 1: 16–27) to be in relationship with each other and with God. The more we understand that we are all created in the image of God, are relational and are loved by God, the more likely we are to recognise the *Imago Dei* in “the other”.

5.3. Summary of Chapters 2 and 4: Theoretical and Empirical findings

5.3.1.3 The third sub-question: Traditions, systems and patterns of behaviour

Systems and patterns of behaviour that maintain or resist social exclusion was explored extensively in Chapter 2, where the theory regarding power, status markers, categorisation, stereotypes, prejudice, racism, white privilege, stigmatisation and intergroup interactions were presented. These concepts were included in the questionnaires and the interviews when the school traditions, structures and patterns of behaviour that may contribute to an environment within which some girls may be socially excluded were investigated.

Power: Because power is always a factor in bullying, structures of power and how relationships are affected by those who hold power were investigated. Various forms of power were discussed and it was noted that powerful groups in the school will tend to exclude those assumed to hold less power. Jesus' servant leadership was noted as an example of how leadership is can be affirmative rather than abusive.

Hierarchies: Strong, informal hierarchical structures are a part of the school's social structure. Reference was made to C. S. Lewis's "inner rings" (1994), which are hierarchies found in official systems such as schools. Research shows that ranking can be useful but can also be abusive (Fuller 2014: 270).

Status markers: The literature indicates that a person's social identity is never value-free and that identity markers are important (Collicutt 2015: 163). According to the previous research the school, girls attribute status to certain markers such as possessions, ability (academic and certain sports), physical attributes (thin, pretty), popularity and economic status.

Categorisation: Our ability to categorise incoming information helps us to make decisions and make sense of our worlds (Gaertner et al. 2016: 435). However, social biases can be the result of categorisation and people tend to place themselves firmly in groups of people perceived to be the same (2016: 435). Belonging to a prestigious group can have a positive impact on a girl's self-image but the "disadvantaged status due to preferential treatment of one group over another" can be very damaging (2016: 435). The attitude of Jesus in breaking down cultural barriers was discussed.

Stereotypes: Stereotyping is a natural process for making sense of our worlds but is always harmful (Anderson 2010: 18) as people are not seen as individuals and are understood according to broadly defined characteristics deemed to be normative of a particular group. People changed when exposed to the unconditional acceptance offered by Jesus (Luke 19: 1–10).

Prejudice: “Prejudice is a negative attitude towards a group or toward members of a group” (Stangor 2000: 4). The attitudes are not based on reality but on unexamined beliefs (Venter 2009: 90) and can be directed to those who hold lower social status. Subtle prejudice is insidious because it is difficult to identify and is resistant to change.

Racism: Racism is an ideology premised on the idea that one racial group is culturally and/or biologically superior to another group (or all other groups). It is structural and institutional, and the discourse of racism includes dominance, exclusion and non-acceptance (Iseke-Barnes 2006: 143). Racism cannot be understood simply from the point of view of individual actions; it is an invisible system that allows one group to accept dominance over another (McIntosh 2010: 1-4).

White privilege: Privilege is defined as “a special right, benefit or advantage given to a person, not from work or merit, but by reason of race, social position, religion or gender” (Liu, Pickett & Irvey 2007: 194). Those who are privileged are often unaware of their privilege and presume their social identities are normative, universal and ubiquitous and those who do not belong to the privileged group are deemed to be the outsider (2007: 194).

Due to time and space constraints, not all the themes were covered in the questionnaires or interviews. However, there were indications that the theory was supported by the empirical research: it was evident that girls were very aware of the informal social hierarchies and girls with specific, socially identifiable attributes held the most power. Some girls had experienced racism and prejudice (perhaps unintentional) but the topic of white privilege was not specifically addressed. Some of the bullies were not the powerful girls but those who sought to maintain their inclusion within the powerful groups, confirming the theory that those who are insecure about their place within the powerful group or those who are

5.3. Summary of Chapters 2 and 4: Theoretical and Empirical findings

on the margins will be the ones most likely to demand the exclusion of others (Pickett & Brewer 2005: 89).

It was concluded that there was a real effort on the part of the school to protect vulnerable girls. Structures have been put into place whereby girls who need help can be supported. Further, specific interventions, such as workshops, have been arranged to develop awareness of problems. However, the theoretical research which shows that adults tend to overestimate how much help they are giving girls was supported by the empirical research and it was clear that there is a disconnect between the staff and the girls about the structures in place. The reasons for this were given in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4.

5.3.1.4 The fourth sub-question: Moral and spiritual development

This question had to do with girls' moral and spiritual development. One of the roles of education is to encourage pupils' moral development (Van der Ven 1998: 2), bearing in mind that young children are immature and still developing. In this section, moral character and moral formation were investigated and the stages of moral development were described. From a theological perspective, moral and spiritual development involves becoming an ethical person and learning to live according to the teaching and mission of Jesus Christ (Kretzschmar 2005: 27).

Spirituality is concerned with the shaping, empowering and maturing of the spiritual person that Paul identifies as the fundamental aspect of the life of faith (1 Cor 2: 14–15) (McGrath 1994: 33). The connection between spiritual and moral development was discussed. The antidote to social exclusion was shown to be the Christian virtues of love, compassion and justice. Empathy and compassion are developed within communities and the inter-relationship of the individual and the community is important: the two cannot be considered apart from each other.

Although the feedback given in this section was limited, there was agreement that moral and spiritual development were connected, and that the chaplain's role was important. While all the data confirmed that staff and girls recognised social exclusion as morally wrong, thereby espousing virtues, norms and values that are fundamental to Christian beliefs, neither the girls nor the staff who filled in the questionnaire offered a theological response to the

problem. It seemed that they had not given much consideration to whether the mission statement of the school was being upheld. While compulsory chapel services were apparently considered to be boring by the schoolgirl population (despite most saying they had availed themselves of opportunities to grow spiritually), most of the participants in this study valued the spiritual space accorded them.

Although the theory of moral and spiritual development was investigated in Chapter 2 with reference to girls' development, the implications of this in terms of girls' relationships was not investigated empirically.

5.3.1.5 The fifth sub-question: Moral communities

This section considered the importance of the community and what principles can be applied in the school so that it becomes including of all girls. Morality has to do with the sort of people we should be and what sort of communities we should construct (Connors & McCormick 1998: 9). In this section, I discussed the structure of communities in the Ancient Near East and how at Sinai, God instituted an egalitarian community with covenantal requirements for the protection of the powerless in the society. I described how the prophets called the people back to their covenantal responsibilities in the Old Testament, and that Jesus was uncompromising in his declaration that all human beings were equal in dignity and worth (Nolan 2006: 52). He challenged the stereotypes and the traditions of the society and modelled a way of compassion, love and sacrifice (Luke 6: 36) (Venter 2009: 166; Wright 1996: 383).

In the Western way of thinking, individuality and independence are virtues and personal autonomy is valued. In our postmodern world, moral values are determined by the individual and become relative (Fedler 2006: kindle loc 1922). However, the concept of *Ubuntu* can offer a different way of understanding relationships – compassion, justice, sharing and hospitality are formed within the community (Kretzschmar 2012: 35).

During his time on earth, Jesus did not try to change the society, improve it or reform it – he revolutionised it: he was involved in a social revolution that was based on spiritual conversion.

The questionnaires asked participants to offer suggestions to ensure that the school community could be one within which every girl would feel valued and supported. The same question was posed in the interviews. Various suggestions were made, but of particular interest were the following points:

- All the solutions offered relied on adult agency. The staff and the girls seemed to accept the traditional top-down structure with the adults as the authority. The results of the empirical research show that there is a disconnection between the adults and the girls in terms of how helpful previous attempts at intervention have been. The staff feel that more is being done than the girls do.
- All the solutions offered were premised on the patterns of behaviour and systems of the school remaining essentially the same. While some references were made about changing the power structures, only one member of staff referred to a fundamental change: the underlying narrative that allows exclusion to continue.
- Most of the solutions referred to the girls as individuals or groups of individuals. The concept of community was not presented.
- While the fact of social exclusion being the experience of some girls in the school was never questioned, and the underlying assumptions were that the behaviour was unacceptable, there was no theological response. Christian virtues were not mentioned, neither was the idea that exclusion may be sin, rather than behaviour that was unacceptable (perhaps falling into the category of breaking rules, such as drinking on campus).

Based on the comments from the respondents, I recommended several courses of action that could be instituted. Recommendations for the way forward are discussed in Section 5.5 below.

5.4 SUPPORT OF THE HYPOTHESIS

The hypothesis for this research was:

There are girls in an independent faith-based girls' school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships. As this anti-social behaviour is not fully understood either by

the girls or the teachers as being a form of bullying, systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are permitted to persist.

There are girls in the school who are excluded on an ongoing basis from social relationships.

This was fully supported by the empirical research.

The anti-social behaviour is not fully understood by either the girls or the teachers as being a form of bullying.

There was no doubt that the girls and the staff who participated in this research were aware of social exclusion and regarded it as a form of bullying. However, the particularity of social exclusion is not understood. The socially excluded girl is powerless: she feels invisible; she feels she deserves her exclusion; and she feels enormous shame. Confiding in anyone would exacerbate these feelings. She has no voice. Further, the fact that many teachers chose not to contribute to this research indicated that they were not interested in or concerned about this research.

Therefore, this part of the hypothesis is mainly supported.

The systems, patterns of behaviour and traditions that maintain such exclusion are permitted to persist.

This part of the hypothesis is partially supported, as discussed below.

It is recognised by the school that any form of abuse needs to be addressed (such as bullying) and the staff are committed to ensuring the psycho-social well-being of the girls. As well as an anti-bullying policy and rules prohibiting any abusive behaviour, the school has systems (as discussed above) to ensure the girls are protected. Interventions have been implemented in the form of workshops and bonding events and there is an option for anonymous reporting. However, the empirical research indicates that the benefit of these interventions is questionable, and interventions are infrequent. Further, the girls have not been fully apprised of what options are available to them to seek help, they do not willingly talk to adults or they are too afraid to do so for fear of being considered a “snitch”.

The patterns of behaviour that maintain social exclusion are evident in the school. Many of them are part of our culture and social environment and too often, South Africans are exposed to examples of racism, prejudice, stereotyping, abuse of power and white privilege. It was my experience at the school that if any of these were identified, action was taken. Further, the school has been actively addressing many of the cultural issues that are inevitable in a traditionally white school and is working towards the transformation of attitudes and actions. Recognising the imperative, it has a strongly proactive approach to transformation and has set up committees to drive the process. However, the problem with social exclusion is that much of the behaviour is so subtle that the staff do not recognise it and/or the behaviour takes place out of the view of the staff. Further, it may be that it is the girls themselves who are vigorously maintaining the patterns of behaviour.

It is perhaps because of the unspoken, unrecognised patterns of behaviour that the social exclusion persists. It would perhaps be of great benefit to the school if these were identified. Some suggestions as to how the status quo may be changed were discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.7, and the example set by Jesus is cited here as an exemplary and helpful model.

This section has summarised the findings of the theoretical and empirical research and to what extent the research question and sub-questions were answered. I also discussed whether the hypothesis had been supported. In the next section, based on the findings of this research, I will offer directions for the way ahead for the school, after which I will discuss the limitations of this research and offer some suggestions for further research.

5.5 THE WAY FORWARD: PROPOSALS

In Chapter 4, Section 4.2.7, recommendations were made for encouraging a community within which every girl feels included and I further discussed actions that could be taken by the girls and the staff to promote inclusivity at all levels. Many of these offered practical and specific actions that could be taken. However, after engaging with the theoretical research, analyzing the data and trying to reach accurate conclusions, certain insights emerged more strongly than others and on the basis of these, I offer the following overarching recommendations:

5.5.1 Establishing the school's identity

In Chapter 2, Section 2.3.5, it was noted that a person's social identity is not value free and identity markers become very important. The same applies to organizations and schools are accorded status in the public domain according to certain markers. Independent schools are judged by how expensive they are, how many distinctions are obtained in the matriculation certificates and/or their sporting results, for example. While these are important, an internet search is unlikely to note the schools that have the most effective outreach programmes or which offer a culture within which every person in the community (girls, and *all* the staff) are afforded dignity and respect. I would like to suggest that the school make its moral ethos central and that the narrative within the school and in its public communication focuses on the importance of offering a community within which the dignity and well-being of all members is paramount.

5.5.2 Appropriate help for vulnerable girls

From the data, I obtained an understanding of the feelings and emotions of the girls who had been excluded. They feel powerless, voiceless and experience feelings of shame. While the staff cannot be faulted for their concern and empathy for these girls, or for their commitment in offering help, I believe that there are fundamental misconceptions about the impact of social exclusion and the approach in addressing any form of abuse. All the structures in place require the agency of the girls or the expectation that the girls themselves need to be their own advocates. Further, too often, the problem is understood to relate to individuals and the role of the community is not considered. Before any changes can be implemented, I believe that there should be regular and ongoing discussions with the staff about abusive behaviour and the impact of social exclusion.

Once there is this understanding, appropriate interventions can be implemented. One of the most important would be giving the girls a voice. Emerging from the interviews was the fact that the girls did not necessarily want action to be taken; they wanted to be listened to and

accorded dignity.⁴⁸ The second consideration has to do with who is given the agency. The focus of behavioral change should move from the victim being responsible to the structures that are allowing the behaviour to be maintained (as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.27).

5.5.3 Age-appropriate interventions

It was noted in the findings that none of the current interventions seem to consider the age of the children. Further, the theoretical and the empirical investigations noted certain traits that may be associated with girls being excluded. The grade 8 girls should be carefully monitored and mentored so that any potential exclusion can be identified early and patterns of behaviour associated with exclusion circumvented. Further, it has been noted that there are structures in place that should ensure that every girl is cared for but are not always effective. The recommendations offered in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.7 may be helpful.

5.5.4 Ongoing transformation

It should be noted that occasional interventions that are constituted in response to a specific situation do not address the problems and that social exclusion needs to be recognised as the daily experience of some girls. I recommend that structured time be incorporated within the timetable to consider all forms of abuse (sexual harassment, bullying and exclusion for example) and deal with the issues that maintain such abuse (such as racism, for example). Serious consideration should be given to developing an understanding of such behaviour. Further, young people can be helped to negotiate friendships. Biggar (1997:126) notes that schools can make an important contribution to helping adolescents to learn how to deal with aspects such as conflict. Professionals need to be consulted in this regard.

Given the recent outbreaks of xenophobia in our country and the reports of increasing global nationalism, much of it driven by antipathy to immigration (Bieber 2018), I believe that

⁴⁸ It is my understanding that since the interviews were conducted, a member of staff has been appointed whose role it is to liaise with the girls who have scholarships. Presumably, this person would offer the listening ear as well as the practical help required. There are other girls, though, who perhaps do not have a listening ear.

giving the girls an understanding of exclusion, not only of their peers but how it is expressed in a more generalised environment is becoming increasingly important.

5.5.5 Interrogate the current systems and structures

No one finds change easy, and the traditions of a school can last for generations. (I surmise that alumnae returning to the school after many years will find much unchanged.) While tradition is important and some traditions should be preserved, nevertheless the school has to be relevant to the 21st century and to our county. Adams (2019), in a speech at Michaelhouse (an independent faith-based boys school in South Africa) used a metaphor of a dinner table and maintained that it is no longer about being permitted to sit at the table, or pulling up a chair to the table, but about building a new table with new chairs, meaning that the traditional needs to be replaced by the new. “We need to exercise courage and address “larger archaic structural issues” to ensure that our highest moral ideals are being presented.

It will require strong leadership to interrogate the prevailing traditions and structures and honestly evaluate which need to be changed. It will require a willingness to change the story (Adams 2019). It will require courage and “If we are to practise courage, we have to have our hearts touched by the things that are happening around us” (Adams 2019). I believe the current head has shown all these qualities.

In the next section, I offer some of the limitations of this research.

5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.6.1 The Sample, Questionnaires and Interviews

There were a number of limitations to this research. The most significant of these was the size of the sample. Of the 41 members of staff contacted, 17 returned questionnaires, three fewer than I would have liked, and I was concerned that it was only those who supported the research who responded. As this research is intended to be exploratory, the findings from the small sample give an important overview but it would be valuable to establish the views of members of staff who may hold different views of this topic. Strong inducements would need to be offered to the staff to encourage greater participation in the research.

5.6. Limitations of this Research and Suggestions for Further Research

The same limitation applied to the small sample of girls. Of the 30 girls who were sent letters inviting them to participate, 15 returned questionnaires. It is possible that the majority of those who chose to participate had felt excluded at school (as confirmed by Figure 4-1 in Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1) and that the results are skewed. Further research should include a larger sample of girls to ensure that a broad spectrum of opinion is obtained.

The same limitations regarding the attitudes of staff and girls who participated in the questionnaires applied to those who were interviewed. It would be valuable to interview members of staff and girls who felt that social exclusion was perhaps not a problem at the school.

5.6.2 Future Research

Due to time and space constraints, some important issues raised in the data were not investigated. These include social exclusion among the staff, the narrative, and girls' development

5.6.2.1 Social exclusion of staff

I believe this is an important area for research as there are members of staff who are being socially excluded but this exclusion is not being recognised or dealt with. Further, the subject of how girls are being bullied by teachers in the classroom also requires further research.

5.6.2.2 Girls' development

A limitation of this research was that the development of girls did not receive enough attention in the empirical research. It was noted in Section 2.5 that as they matured, girls would be able to more easily understand others' feelings and pain. Apart from one item in the questionnaire ("As girls mature, they handle relationships more effectively") this aspect was not investigated. In further research, it would be valuable to determine whether the experiences of the girls in Grade 8 was different from their experience in Grade 12.

5.6.2.3 Social exclusion among boys

It is presumed that social exclusion is the prerogative of girls and that boys tend to use more overt forms of bullying. Many schools recognise the harm that bullying can cause and many schools have anti-bullying policies in place. It would be interesting to investigate whether

bullying among boys has now become more covert and whether social exclusion is as prevalent among boys.

I would like to conclude this study by offering some personal reflections.

5.7 PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

It is apparent that social exclusion is highly complex and that there are no easy answers or solutions. This research has covered a wide range of subjects that can contribute to girls being socially excluded and the consequences of this. Despite undertaking what I believed to be in-depth theoretical and empirical research, I still felt I had merely scratched the surface and had not fully engaged with the topic.

For much of the time that I was engaged with this research, I was employed at the school and enjoyed being part of a very collegial, supportive community. The girls seemed to be happy and fully engaged in the activities of the school. The school, as mentioned earlier, was proactive in developing policies to protect the girls and there were times when I certainly began to doubt the relevance of this research. That was until I interviewed the five alumnae and some of the staff. Before commencing each interview, I told the alumnae that if at any stage they wished to end the interview, they were welcome to do so as they may find recounting some of their experiences painful. None did end the interview nor decline to answer a question.

My discussion with each of the girls was life changing. They all shared how much they valued having someone who was prepared to just listen to their stories. They all said that this was the first time they had been given the opportunity to share their experiences and open up about their feelings. All said that the time we had spent together had been cathartic.

However, it was the pain these girls had experienced that touched me deeply. They all said that they could look back on their time at school with some dispassion now, but the memories were still very real. They said that at school, they had tried to put on a brave face and deal with their lives as best they could. Now they were leading happy, productive lives, but it was obvious that all five still felt the pain they had experienced. The girls said that at school, they would have liked to just be listened to, without advice, solutions, or

interventions being offered. Secondly, they just needed to be recognised. They did not expect everyone to like them, or to be included in certain groups. They did not want or need a big circle of friends (although friends were important). They just wanted to be accorded respect and to be recognised as a bona fide member of the school community. Barth (cited in Biggar 2011: kindle loc 928) maintains that to be fully human “is being in encounter which involves a reciprocal and benevolent looking in the eye and a reciprocal hearing and speaking” and that this reciprocity brings people into a common life. These are not too difficult to implement.

However, the socially excluded girls somehow find themselves in the eye of the perfect storm:

- They are among girls who are all physically, emotionally, and cognitively immature and who cannot easily put themselves in the shoes of others. Girls tend to say things or behave in ways that are hurtful and harmful, often without any idea of what they have done.
- They are among some girls who come from homes where going to church and the Christian message has possibly never been heard. Possibly, they are among girls who come from families where individual success and advancement is the main objective in life and social capital is extremely important.
- The girls are living in a society where sin prevails. We are all sinners and with the best interventions in place and all the structures and policies encouraging inclusivity, social exclusion will still occur. It is pervasive and occurs in every society.
- Finally, once a girl is identified as being “the other” her reputation may persist until she leaves the school.

Although there are girls who are being socially excluded on an ongoing basis, as presented above, I wish to state unequivocally that I believe there are those at the school who try to ensure that the well-being of the girls is a priority and that every girl can thrive and develop to her full potential. In all my dealings with the head of this school and some of the members of staff, I could not fault their commitment. However, without a strong commitment to the moral and spiritual development of the girls, it is my opinion that not much will change.

At the end of the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–36), Jesus asks, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him”. Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise”.

This statement, according to Lawler and Salzman (2013: 442), explains in a nutshell what Christians are called to do. Paul (Phil 2: 5–7) tells us, “Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”. What are we then called to do, and what should our attitudes be?

In Matthew 5, Jesus gives a different perspective on traditional ways of understanding the social norms. He says six times: “You have heard it said, but I tell you...” with reference to anger (vs 22), adultery (vs 27–30), divorce (vs 31–32), taking oaths (vs 33–37), retaliation (vs 38–42) and loving one’s enemies (vs 43–48). In all these examples, Jesus was telling the people that the rules are in place and people can be seen to be obeying them, but that it is the state of the heart (and inner emotions and attitudes that are reflected in action) that is even more important.

The school has rules and regulations regarding behaviour. These are good and necessary. However, Rowe (2006, cited in Brooks, Narvaez & Bock 2013: 163) points out that children and adolescents cannot merely be given a set of rules and be expected to internalise them; the rules must be given meaning that is appropriate to the children’s lives to motivate them to develop life-giving attitudes and behaviour. Unless the school makes the moral and spiritual development of children the centre of all it does, some students may leave the institution lacking in personal moral understanding or formation. They may seek to lead lives of entitlement or opulence or they may cling to a narrow, legalistic understanding of God that excludes compassion or sensitivity to others (Kretzschmar & Tuckey 2017: 1).

Ultimately, fundamental questions need to be asked and bold actions taken to ensure that this school develops a community which is not shame-full but grace-full, “where the worth of every individual is upheld and strengthened and where people are held accountable for behaviours that are harmful to others” (Kondrath 2012: 765). Mamphela Ramphele’s (2019b) comment sums up my conclusions to this research:

We should have invested a lot more time and resources to nurture a culture of respect for human dignity, human rights and responsibilities. The human mindset does not easily shift simply because a decision has been taken to shift. Much more is required to help people leave familiar psychological anchors to their lives and adopt new ways of being and doing things. Our institutions such as schools ... should be encouraged ... to embrace and live the values of Ubuntu. Embracing new values requires leadership at all levels of society to model change.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRES

GIRLS' QUESTIONNAIRE

No	ITEM	RESPONSE				
1	What grade were you in when you started at the school?					
2	Were you a day girl or a boarder?	Day girl	Boarder			
3	Have you ever felt socially excluded at the school?	Yes	No			
	Can you elaborate?					
4	Do you feel that all girls are accepted and included by other members of staff regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
5	Do you feel that all staff are accepted by the girls and accorded the same respect regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
6	Would you like to comment on the perception that certain members of staff are treated differently by pupils?					
<p>In this section, the importance of girls' relationships will be addressed. Please can you indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement and offer personal experiences and insights. Mark the appropriate box and please add your comments where indicated (Comments facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues related to the research).</p>						
7	“Without friends no one would choose to live, though (s)he had all other goods” (Aristotle). This quote describes how girls feel about their peer relationships.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
8	Teenagers are greatly influenced by their friends and peer pressure is real force	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
9	A core human need is to belong and be accepted	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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	Comment					
10	It is normal for girls to experience fluctuating friendships	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
11	Girls who are socially excluded tend to feel threatened and they lack self-esteem	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
12	Adults may neither realise the importance of friendship groups and how volatile they can be nor understand the subtle ways that girls signal inclusion or the emotional repercussions of exclusion.	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
13	Girls will tend to form friendships with girls who share common characteristics	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
14	Girls who are excluded from one group will find other friends	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
15	Some girls will exclude themselves and choose not to be involved with other girls					
	Comment					
16	The subtle behaviour involved in inclusion and exclusion makes it almost impossible for girls to report exclusion or to believe that an adult would take it seriously.	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
In the next section, perceptions of bullying will be investigated.						
17	How would you define bullying?					
18	Have you ever experienced bullying yourself?	Yes	No	Unsure		
19	Please rank the following behaviours with 1 being the least hurtful and 13 being the most hurtful for girls.	Being pushed/slapped/tripped Being teased in a hurtful way Being ignored by her peers Having her possessions deliberately damaged Negative facial expressions directed at her Having her possessions taken without permission				

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		Being ignored by her teacher Being made to feel unwelcome when joining an activity Being gossiped about Being the only one left out of an activity Having rumours spread about her Being humiliated by her peers Being humiliated in front of the class				
20	Are there any other behaviours you have found to be particularly hurtful?					
21 - 25	Did you experience the following? - Being teased in a way to cause feelings of embarrassment, belittling or discomfort? Being belittled when expressing opinions? Being deliberately excluded from activities When asked to form groups, being the last to be selected - Being ignored when offering suggestions or comments	Often	Sometimes	Never		
Please will you indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements? It would be very helpful if you supported your response by adding comments in the relevant spaces						
26	Emotional/psychological bullying is as hurtful as physical bullying	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
27	Social exclusion is a form of emotional bullying	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28	Social exclusion is a normal part of girls' relationships	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
29	As girls mature, they handle relationships more effectively	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
30	Adults should leave girls to sort out their own problems	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
31	There are members of staff a girl could go to if she was unhappy	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
32	Vulnerable girls need to be monitored and protected where necessary	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
33	Girls tend to confide more in their friends than a member of staff	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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34	In the school, structures have been put in place to allow girls to report any form of abuse	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
35	Girls are given the vocabulary to enable them to name abuse	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
36	Discerning the difference between bullying and normal girls' quarrels can be difficult	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
37	Any reported abuse receives immediate attention from the authorities	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
38	What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of a girl who is likely to be excluded?					
39	If (or when) you became aware that a girl was deliberately being left out of activities organised for the whole group, how would you have reacted when you were at school?					
40	In hindsight, do you think you should have reacted differently?					
41	Can you describe your feelings and/or actions if you were excluded (as in 39)					
42	To what extent is social exclusion a problem that needs to be addressed in the school (1 not important to 5 very important.	1	2	3	4	5
43	Can you explain your response?					
Bullying does not occur in isolation and it is important to take into consideration the school climate: what traditions and established ways of behaving may be maintaining certain patterns of behaviour (positive and negative). This section deals with some that may be pertinent.						
Various statements are given below. Please can you indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement by marking one box per statement. It would be helpful if you supported your response by providing a comment in the space indicated.						
44	Girls accord status to perceived markers: wealth, ability and physical attributes are important	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
45	There are clear social hierarchies that are understood by the girls and which work to exclude certain girls	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
46	Girls who are accorded power by the other girls (in terms of their ability, popularity, age, etc) use their position of power to disempower others	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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47	Black girls exclude white girls by forming close-knit groups and/or through their language	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
48	The school selects as leaders those who are likely to use their position to encourage and support others and who will epitomise servant leadership	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
49	Most girls in the school are white, English-speaking South Africans who are economically advantaged. Girls who do not meet one or more of these criteria are likely to be excluded	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
50	Girls who can afford the status symbols linked with wealth (designer clothes, up-to-date technology, etc) are likely to exclude those who do not have these accoutrements	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
51	Girls are likely to be excluded if they have perceived impediments (physical, academic, psycho-social, for example)	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
In this section, the place of moral and spiritual development will be investigated.						
52	How would you define a moral person?					
53	How would you define a spiritual person?					
54	In a faith-based school, education that encourages the spiritual development of the girls should be as fundamental as their academic development. Do you agree with this statement?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
55	Moral development is intrinsically connected to spiritual development. That is, if the girls are encouraged to develop spiritually, they will also develop morally. Do you agree with this statement?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					

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56	Please can you describe the opportunities girls have to develop spiritually while they are at school?					
57	In your view, how could more opportunities be created for girls to develop spiritually while they are at school?					
	To what extent do you agree with the following statements?					
58	The chaplain plays an important role in the school	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
59	The school has forgotten what it means to be a faith-based school and has moved away from the mission statement.	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
60	There are girls who come from families who are not familiar with the Christian faith so the spiritual ethos becomes diluted	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	The prospectus states: "We believe every girl at the school is entitled to live in a congenial, nurturing environment in which she is afforded every opportunity to develop and flourish					
61	What opportunities are afforded girls to "develop and flourish"?					
62	In your opinion, is social exclusion a major problem at the school?	Yes	No	Unsure		
63	What do you think can be done to help the girls who are socially excluded?					
64	What can be done to ensure that the school community is including rather than excluding?					

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE

No	ITEM	RESPONSE				
1	How many years have you been a member of staff at the school?					
2	What is your function at the school?	Teacher	Other			
3	Have you ever felt socially excluded at the school?	Yes	No			
	Can you elaborate?					
4	Do you feel that all staff are accepted and included by other members of staff regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
5	Do you feel that all staff are accepted by the girls and accorded the same respect regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation and/or religion	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
6	What has been your experience in the classroom?					
<p>In this section, the importance of girls' relationships will be addressed. Please can you indicate the extent to which you agree with each statement and offer personal experiences and insights. Mark the appropriate box and please add your comments where indicated (Comments facilitate a deeper understanding of the issues related to the research).</p>						
7	“Without friends no one would choose to live, though (s)he had all other goods” (Aristotle). This quote describes how girls feel about their peer relationships.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
8	Teenagers are greatly influenced by their friends and peer pressure is real force	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
9	A core human need is to belong and be accepted	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
10	It is normal for girls to experience fluctuating friendships	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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	Comment					
11	Girls who are socially excluded tend to feel threatened and they lack self-esteem	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
12	Adults may neither realise the importance of friendship groups and how volatile they can be nor understand the subtle ways that girls signal inclusion or the emotional repercussions of exclusion.	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
13	Girls will tend to form friendships with girls who share common characteristics	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
14	Girls who are excluded from one group will find other friends	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
15	Some girls will exclude themselves and choose not to be involved with other girls					
	Comment					
16	The subtle behaviour involved in inclusion and exclusion makes it almost impossible for girls to report exclusion or to believe that an adult would take it seriously.	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
	Comment					
In the next section, perceptions of bullying will be investigated.						
17	How would you define bullying?					
18	Please rank the following behaviours with 1 being the least hurtful and 13 being the most hurtful for girls.	Being pushed/slapped/tripped Being teased in a hurtful way Being ignored by her peers Having her possessions deliberately damaged Negative facial expressions directed at her Having her possessions taken without permission Being ignored by her teacher Being made to feel unwelcome when joining an activity Being gossiped about Being the only one left out of an activity				

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		Having rumours spread about her Being humiliated by her peers Being humiliated in front of the class				
19	Have girls reported any other behaviour they may have found to be particularly painful?					
20 - 23	Being teased in a way to cause feelings of embarrassment, belittling or discomfort? Being belittled when expressing opinions? Being deliberately excluded from activities When asked to form groups, being the last to be selected Being ignored when offering suggestions or comments	Often	Sometimes	Never		
Please will you indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements? It would be very helpful if you supported your response by adding comments in the relevant spaces						
24	Emotional/psychological bullying is as hurtful as physical bullying	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
25	Social exclusion is a form of emotional bullying	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
26	Social exclusion is a normal part of girls' relationships	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
27	As girls mature, they handle relationships more effectively	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
28	It is best to leave girls to sort out their own problems	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
29	Vulnerable girls need to be monitored and protected where necessary	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
30	A girl would be welcome to come to me or another member of staff if she was unhappy	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
31	Girls tend to confide more in their friends than a member of staff	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
32	In the school, structures have been put in place to allow girls to report any form of abuse	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
33	Girls are given the vocabulary to enable them to name abuse	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree

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34	Any reported abuse receives immediate attention from the authorities	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
35	Discerning the difference between bullying and normal girls' quarrels can be difficult	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
36	In the past, girls have come to me to talk about painful experiences	Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
37	What, in your opinion, are the characteristics of a girl who is likely to be excluded?					
38	If (or when) you became aware that a girl was deliberately being left out of activities organised for the whole group, how would you have reacted when you were at school?					
39	To what extent is social exclusion a problem that needs to be addressed in the school (1 not important to 5 very important).	1	2	3	4	5
40	Can you explain your response?					
Bullying does not occur in isolation and it is important to take into consideration the school climate: what traditions and established ways of behaving may be maintaining certain patterns of behaviour (positive and negative). This section deals with some that may be pertinent.						
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	encourage and support others and who will epitomise servant leadership					
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The school's mission statement						
52	How would you define a moral person?					
53	How would you define a spiritual person?					
54	In a faith-based school, education that encourages the spiritual development of the girls should be as fundamental as their academic development. Do you agree with this statement?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
55	Moral development is intrinsically connected to spiritual development. That is, if the girls are encouraged to develop spiritually, they will also develop morally. Do you agree with this statement?	Yes	No	Unsure		
	Can you elaborate?					
56	Please can you describe the opportunities you had to develop spiritually while you were at school?					
57	Did you participate in opportunities to develop spiritually?	Yes	No	Unsure		
58	In your view, how could more opportunities be created for girls to develop spiritually while they are at school?					

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To what extent do you agree with the following statements?						
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62	What opportunities are afforded girls to “develop and flourish”?					
63	In your opinion, is social exclusion a major problem at the school?	Yes	No	Unsure		
64	What do you think can be done to help the girls who are socially excluded?					
65	What can be done to ensure that the school community is including rather than excluding?					

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Your help is much appreciated.