

**A SOCIO-EDUCATIVE ANALYSIS OF AGGRESSIVE
BEHAVIOUR DISPLAYED BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS**

by

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DECLARATION

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I declare that 'A Socio-educative analysis of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls' is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signature
(Mrs C Gouws)

Date

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SUMMARY

The successful social development of adolescent girls is dependent on the acquisition of the skills required to face the challenges of adult life. Young girls are faced with the problem of a growing aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls who are supposedly their friends. This aggressive behaviour may negatively affect social, psychological or emotional development, possibly resulting in long term social adjustment problems.

This investigation identifies the types and causes of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls, with the intention of ultimately identifying strategies to address aggressive behaviour. The implementation of a school-based approach, including all sectors involved in the education of the child in a whole-school programme to address aggressive behaviour, is recommended. Including all parties, firmly committed to addressing aggressive behaviour from a preventative perspective, may result in reducing aggressive behaviour and possibly provide adolescent girls with the coping skills required for successful social development.

KEY TERMS

Adolescent girl, aggressive behaviour, aggression, meanness, peer harassment, bullying, victimisation, indirect aggression, exclusion, whole-school programme, preventing aggression, intervention programmes

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

“[A] hidden culture of aggression in girls is now being studied for the first time ... around the world ... and shows that girls everywhere are motivated to use their closest relationships as weapons, regardless of class, race, or family background” states Paul Kennedy (in: Ringrose, 2006:414) from a pamphlet entitled “It’s a Girls’ World”.

According to Crick and Grotpeter (in: Ringrose, 2006:410) girls are involved in aggressive behaviour which is “done with the intention of damaging another child’s friendship or feelings of inclusion within a social group” and to “thwart or damage goals that are valued by their respective gender peer groups”. Girls in the early adolescent stage are more inclined to make use of relational aggressive behaviour (Leschied, Cummings, Van Brunshot, Cunningham and Saunders, 2001:206) which can possibly harm numerous aspects of the relationships between girls. Hadley (2003:373) confirms that social aggression and meanness are increasing and becoming an unwelcome part of school life.

This is unfortunate because children are in the school environment for approximately twelve years of their lives. For this reason it is important that schools should be “inviting, exciting, and inclusive places where all who enter celebrate individual differences and understand and value all members of the community” (Orpinas, 2006:4).

Young (2002:5) maintains that learners develop positive relationships in healthy schools which influence their personal well-being. A positive school climate enables the child to select friends in a positive manner (Garbarino, 1999:424). Williams, Forgas and Von Hippel (2005:173) further indicate that friendships are important as “forming and

maintaining friendships, is a fundamental part of human nature” and may assist in increasing an adolescent’s self-esteem which is beneficial for future development.

Vanzetti & Duck (1996:16-18) believe that there is an interdependence between adolescents as each adolescent has an effect on the other adolescents with whom he or she comes into contact and is in turn affected by them. Human beings are all involved in relationships which are important as they give one a sense of belonging and acceptance. There is also an emotional integration as one assesses one’s responses to those around one. Having relationships enables one to communicate about oneself as one learns to express oneself and voice one’s opinions. Those in relationships with one give one reassurance as to one’s worth as they show one how much they care and hold one in their esteem. Feeling good about oneself in a relationship assists one in helping others and also supports one’s personality development.

Juvonen & Graham (2001:11) refer to Olweus (1978) who says it is a “fundamental democratic or human right for a child to feel safe in school and to be spared the oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation implied in peer victimisation or bullying”. Unfortunately not all children experience school as a positive environment.

The old adage “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is no longer applicable in modern society. Words are often more of a problem and more harmful than one would expect. According to Garbarino (2003:1) words do hurt and may have negative long term effects on the youth.

Aggression is an inescapable fact of life and in schools this aggression is manifested as aggressive behaviour which occurs to some extent in all schools (Young, 2002:5). How aggressive behaviour is dealt with is important in one’s life and the lives of young people. Managing the feelings and attitudes experienced by oneself, and those around one, enables one to go through life either successfully or with many negative feelings which may impact on everything that happens in the future.

1.2 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Adolescent girls express their aggression differently to adolescent boys. Tremblay, Hartup and Archer (2005:5) maintain that girls tend to show less physically aggressive behaviour than boys. The form of aggressive behaviour used by adolescent girls is thought to have more long term effects on their peers as their aggressive behaviour is a more emotional form of violence than a physical form (Garbarino, 2003:8). Hadley (2003:372) is of the opinion that "...girls express their aggression in and through relationships in ways that are indirect, covert, often hurtful and frequently in the service of forming alliances that exclude some in order to affirm others".

Girls have generally been viewed as more caring than directly aggressive, but this appears no longer to be the case. Girls are increasingly involved in socially aggressive behaviour. This aggressive behaviour causes harm to the social standing of other girls and to relationships and is a new area of focus in the media (Horn, 2004:314).

This problem has been researched in numerous countries overseas. Most of these studies assume that social aggression is negative and leads to negative outcomes (Horn, 2004:316; Geiger & Fischer, 2007:343, 348). There are, however, still many unresolved problems that warrant further research, especially in South Africa, where little research has been undertaken in this field so far.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

Aggression is presumed by many researchers to occur in all schools. De Wet (2005:2) found in a recent survey completed in Free State secondary schools that only 29, 2% of the learners surveyed had not been directly or indirectly abused. This problem requires further investigation. The aim of this study was to investigate aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To examine the meaning of aggressive behaviour.
- To identify the forms and causes of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls.
- To determine effective strategies to provide educators with the guidance required to address aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls.

The findings reported in this study deal with the following research questions:

- What is aggressive behaviour?
- Is aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls?
- What forms of aggressive behaviour are displayed by adolescent girls?
- What are the causes of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls?
- What strategies can be employed to address aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls?

1.4 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.4.1 Adolescence

Adolescence is the period in a young person's life when the physical and psychological changes associated with puberty take place (Stoff & Susman, 2005:88; Dellasega & Nixon, 2003:14; Berger in: Sorlie, Hagen & Ogden, 2008:123). According to Berndt (1996:183) it is the "developmental period from the onset of puberty to maturity" and usually occurs from the age of twelve in girls and the age of fourteen in boys.

Gillis (in: Bezuidenhout, 2004:65) divides adolescence into three stages, namely: child adolescence, mid-adolescence and adult adolescence. These stages are also referred to as early, middle and late adolescence. During stage one the adolescent has to adapt to a number of changes in his or her body. Stage two is the period when the adolescent tests these changes and the third stage implies the forming of the personality.

Adolescence is an important developmental milestone for a child as it is the period when hormonal changes occur and secondary sexual characteristics develop. Huston (1999:407) explains that it could be a very difficult period for the young person, exciting and stressful, as adjustment problems may occur as a result of the many changes occurring in the adolescent.

It is, furthermore, a period in the development of the child when new abstract reasoning skills are used to control the emotions (Underwood & Hurley, 1999:243). The adults in the world of the child have various expectations of them (Aubry, Ruble & Silverman, 1999:385) which may often be confusing. All young people go through these changes but most have the resources needed to adapt (Stoff & Susman, 2005:89). Family support, parental monitoring and guidance influence how well the adolescent copes with these changes and expectations which can be exceptionally stressful.

Another source of stress in adolescence is the experiencing of intense emotions. Dellasega and Nixon (2003:16) emphasise that friends are very important to adolescents as they experience a strong need for acceptance by their peers. Relationships with peers are part of the training ground for developing relational skills. Adolescents learn who to trust and how to gain or lose someone's trust during this period. They also become more independent according to Cunningham (2004:112) and realise the importance of sharing and cooperation. Hadley (2004:347) adds that adolescents are expected to develop a personal identity, they start separating from their families during this developmental stage and they realise that they have a role to play in the community (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003:17).

The researcher sees adolescence as a time of growth and change in a young person's life. These changes and the manner in which they are managed will enable the child to become a balanced adult able to face the challenges of life. For the purpose of this study adolescent girls refer to early adolescent girls aged twelve to thirteen and in Grade seven.

1.4.2. Aggression

Aggression is defined by Orpinas (2006:13) as an intentional act which may cause physical or psychological harm to the victim. Aggression implies a specific child or group repeatedly causing intentional harm to another child in a relationship of unbalanced power according to Piek, Barrett, Allen, Jones and Louise (2005:454) and Juvonen and Graham (2001:xiii). Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006:419) define aggression as “[b]ehaviour directed toward the goal of harming another living being, who is motivated to avoid such treatment”. Hadley (2003:367) defines aggression as an act that attacks or confronts someone with force.

According to the researcher aggression is a feeling or an action which results from anger or unhappiness and may aim to hurt, either physically or emotionally, other people who may be totally removed from the initial unhappiness or anger of the aggressor. The aggression results in aggressive behaviour which is harmful to others.

The terms aggressive behaviour, peer harassment, bullying, victimisation and meanness are all interchangeable according to Dellasega and Nixon (2003:7). For the purpose of this research the term *aggressive behaviour* will be used.

1.4.3 Aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour, which includes peer harassment, bullying, victimisation, meanness, emotional, relational or social aggressive behaviour, is a form of aggression. Juvonen and Graham (2001:398) confirm that “[s]chool bullying, or victimisation, takes place when one child or adolescent is repeatedly and systematically tormented by negative actions of others”, therefore emphasising the fact that these types of behaviour are aggressive.

Most aggressive behaviour has multiple goals that need to be achieved. Underwood (2003:31) maintains that certain forms of aggressive behaviour are more heated, angry

or impulsive, while other types of aggressive behaviour are cooler, planned, calmer and more deliberate.

Aggressive behaviour can be divided into two specific categories namely direct and indirect aggressive behaviour.

1.4.3.1 *Direct aggressive behaviour*

Piek et al. (2005:454) define direct aggressive behaviour, or overt aggressive behaviour, as either physical aggression whereby someone is physically injured, or verbal aggression which involves swearing or name calling. Emotional abuse is a direct form of aggression and may include threats or exclusion (Delfabbro, Winefield, Trainor, Dollard, Anderson, Metzger & Hammarstrom, 2006:72). Psychological abuse is also viewed as a form of direct aggression.

1.4.3.2 *Indirect Aggressive Behaviour*

Indirect aggressive behaviour, or covert aggressive behaviour, is similar to direct aggressive behaviour, but it happens behind someone's back with possibly far more harmful effects. Teasing that is not 'fun' falls into this category, as well as the spreading of unpleasant rumours or arranging for someone's belongings to be destroyed (Underwood, 2003:33; Richardson & Green, 2006:2493). The actions of the aggressor are directly aimed at harming the victim and often an intermediary is used by the aggressor to actually inflict the harm.

Casey-Cannon, Hayward and Gowan (2001:139) believe that this form of aggression is less noticeable as it appears to be typical of adolescent behaviour. Children exposed to this form of aggression may not even realise that it is aggression and may not ask for help to solve this problem. Covert aggression may cause long term problems, especially if not addressed.

This form of aggression is subtle, often delayed and there is no physical contact between the aggressor and the victim (Tremblay et al., 2005:34; Richardson & Green, 2006:2493). This type of aggression is essentially part of relational and social aggression and is more frequently found among girls (Wicks-Nelson & Israel, 2003:199). The victim often has no way of defending herself against the aggressor (Raskauskas & Stoltz, 2004:210).

1.4.4 Specific types of aggressive behaviour

1.4.4.1 *Emotional aggressive behaviour*

Emotional aggressive behaviour is behaviour aimed at hurting the individual rather than the group. Talbot (in: Crothers et al., 2005:349) recognises that girls need emotional intimacy in a relationship and Crick and Grotpeter (in: Ringrose, 2006:410) confirm that this intimacy is often the reason why girls are able to hurt friends' feelings and often there are long-term effects as a result. James and Owens (2005:71) explain that pain is inflicted in such an effective and often discreet manner because of the high levels of trust and intimacy in girls' friendships. Neglecting the rights and feelings of others is part of emotional aggressive behaviour. Rejection may cause a girl to feel unworthy of love and affection (Williams et al., 2005:173). Continually threatening to withdraw friendship is a form of emotional blackmail whereby the person is coerced into situations at the threat of losing friendship (Wicks-Nelson et al., 2003:211).

Name calling, embarrassing someone, negative comments and teasing are elements of this category of aggressive behaviour. This form of aggressive behaviour may be more damaging as it may cause the individual to totally lose faith in herself and in those around her (Garbarino, 2003:13).

The researcher defines emotional aggressive behaviour as behaviour aimed specifically at an individual with the intention of hurting that person's feelings. The perpetrator has no compassion for the victim and no concern for the long term harm caused.

1.4.4.2 Relational aggressive behaviour

McKay (2003:25) and Remillard and Lamb (2005:221) define relational aggression as causing harm through manipulation, damaging or threatening to damage relationships with peers by spreading rumours, purposefully ignoring someone or influencing others to ignore someone, verbal comments, staring at someone, gossiping, using a hostile voice when speaking to someone or using mean facial expressions when communicating with someone.

Intentional harm is caused by exploiting a relationship. Relational aggressors hurt others with their words and actions. They generally target those who appear scared and insecure, although they may also use this form of aggression to cover their own insecurity (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003:2). Leff, Kupersmidt and Power (2003:32) define relational aggression as a purposefully manipulative sequence of events whereby one peer tries to change another peer's social status. Relational aggressors make use of direct and indirect aggression to achieve their objectives (Crick, Ostrov & Werner, 2006:131). This form of aggression can be as harmful as physical aggression (McKay, 2003:25) as it aims to damage the social status and self-esteem of the victim (Remillard & Lamb, 2005:221; Orpinas, 2006:20; Underwood, 2003:1).

The relational aggressor uses covert or indirect aggression to manipulate the situation. This may include isolating another student, excluding peers, threatening withdrawal of friendship and the spreading of negative rumours. It is a subtle form of aggression which can last for a few days or even weeks (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003:7). The reasons for relational aggression may include jealousy, wanting to exclude others, the need for power or retaliation, to gain attention or for recognition (Orpinas, 2006:22; Crothers, Field & Kolbert, 2005:352). It is also thought that girls who are relationally aggressive misinterpret the behaviour and intentions of other girls in various social circumstances and they react by being aggressive (Crain, Finch & Foster, 2005:237).

The researcher regards relational aggressive behaviour as direct or indirect aggression that is aimed at damaging relationships between girls irrespective of the harm done to the feelings or self-esteem of the girls involved. This form of aggressive behaviour is more group orientated.

1.4.4.3 *Social aggressive behaviour*

Underwood (2003:32) states that “[s]ocial aggression includes all behaviours that are intended to harm others by harming their social relationships, peer status, or friendships”. It may include social rejection, facial expressions, rumours, manipulation or exclusion (Underwood, 2003:5; Crothers et al., 2005:349). The resulting negative emotions of the victim are seldom considered. Underwood (2003:7) further avers that this form of aggression is used behind someone’s back, covertly, as a form of retaliation, to make someone pay for something. Social aggression may include direct and indirect aggression (Tremblay et al., 2005:34).

The purpose of social aggression is to hurt someone by harming their self-concept, self-esteem or social standing (Underwood, 2003:15; Underwood & Hurley, 1999:252; Bright, 2005:93), and also to achieve specific social goals (Underwood, 2004:371). Underwood (2003:173-175) establishes in her studies that it usually involves three or more peers and implies that one of the peers has more power than the others, and is the central member of the social network. Younger adolescents are generally meaner as they have to protect the boundaries of their social groups and confirm their higher peer status. They may also have relational problems during puberty and feel pressurised to fit in with the standards of womanhood as required by society, e.g. no fighting. Girls involved in social aggression may also be vulnerable to interpersonal difficulties, be self-conscious about how others perceive them or they may be sensitive to social rejection and may resort to aggression as a defence mechanism.

Underwood (2003:32) prefers the use of the term ‘social aggression’ as it encompasses all aspects of the type of aggression seen in adolescent girls in overseas studies.

According to Underwood (2003:32) there are basically three important types of social aggressive behaviour:

- To do social harm to a friendship, to someone's standing or their self concept
- It can be both overt, or a covert form of manipulation of relationships
- It includes nonverbal acts and social exclusion

The researcher is of the opinion that social aggressive behaviour is behaviour that repeatedly occurs, with specific goals, and is aimed at a specific group by a specific group. It includes all areas of social interaction and is more harmful than emotional or relational aggressive behaviour. It incorporates elements of both emotional and relational aggressive behaviour.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on a socio-educative perspective of aggressive behaviour in girls. The Collins English Dictionary defines 'socio' as meaning society or social. This in turn refers to "living or preferring to live in a community rather than alone" or "denoting or relating to human society or any of its subdivisions" (Collins English Dictionary, 1998, s.v. "socio"). Education is defined as "the act or process of acquiring knowledge" or "the act or process of imparting knowledge" (Collins English Dictionary, 1998, s.v. "education").

Pretorius (1994:5) confirms that people are social beings who can, must be and are educated and influenced by everything around them. Education assists in the realisation of the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, moral and social development. The adolescent period in a girl's life is a period of fast growth, self consciousness, sensitivity, shyness, uncertainty, loneliness, sexual development, conflict and a search for meaning. Accepting the society in which they function and being accepted by that society are essential for their eventually becoming successful adults according to Pretorius (1994:7).

Pretorius further emphasises that a child who is a socialised being will be capable of managing the challenges of life successfully provided the following occur:

- Social interaction
- Positive experiences
- Development of a positive self-esteem
- Acceptance of who and what he or she is
- Taking risks
- Exploring new opportunities

Baron et al. (2006:5) add that “[v]irtually everything we do, feel, or think is related in some way to the social side of life”. Behaviour takes place in groups and affects the development of all in the group especially the developing child. The development of a social identity occurs as social interaction takes place (Pretorius, 1994:23; Sorlie, Hagen & Ogden, 2008:124), and is an important part of growing up. Children with low self-esteem struggle to face the many challenges in life (Baron et al., 2006:171-184). Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:84) add that “[a] positive self-concept is not only important for the adolescent’s mental well-being, but it also influences social relationships, academic progress, and career expectations and success”.

The researcher is of the opinion that the self-esteem of adolescent girls is directly affected by aggressive behaviour, and its various manifestations, with which they come into contact during the social interaction process. This behaviour impacts directly on the development of the self-esteem in girls, which in turn impacts on their ability to face the challenges of life.

1.6 METHODOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION

1.6.1 Qualitative Research

This research will be conducted by means of the qualitative research approach which aims to interpret and understand daily experiences according to Fouche and Delpont (in: De Vos, 2002:79). Individuals are given the opportunity to describe and discuss events in their lives as a means of understanding and possibly resolving problems as they occur. McMillan and Schumacher (2001:41) explain that “[q]ualitative techniques provide verbal descriptions to portray the richness and complexity of events that occur in natural settings from the participants’ perspectives”. Fouche (in: De Vos, 2002:272) emphasises that qualitative research offers a variety of research strategies or techniques including participant observation, field observation, in-depth interviews, personal and official documents, artifacts and supplementary techniques (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:41-43). In most instances it is more time consuming but it is more appropriate for this type of study. It is a more flexible approach to research and can be modified as circumstances dictate. Strydom (in: De Vos, 2002:62) emphasises the fact that ethical considerations must be taken into account for the research to be successful.

1.6.2 Data Collection Strategies

1.6.2.1 *Focus group interviews*

Focus group interviews will be held with groups of girls selected by means of purposeful sampling as the groups should be “knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001: 401). The focus group method of interviewing is time effective as a group of six to ten girls can be present at each interview. Each group of girls will meet with the researcher in a suitable room where the researcher will explain exactly what is expected of them and the purpose of the interview. The researcher will then question the girls making use of carefully planned, open-ended questions keeping the specific purpose of the interview in mind.

The girls will be able to share ideas and encourage each other to participate as new ideas develop. Greeff (in: De Vos, 2002:307) confirms that a group is capable of generating a large amount of information in a relatively short period of time. Group members may withdraw from the interviews at any time should they wish to do so.

The purpose of the focus group in this research is to encourage the girls to discuss their own feelings and experiences, irrespective of whether they are friends or strangers. Friends may encourage each other to be more at ease as they may have similar ideas and interests. Strangers may, on the other hand, react more openly as they may not feel self-conscious in front of those unknown to them and not having preconceived expectations of them. The questions should be formulated in such a way that this is taken into account.

Conflict between learners will be avoided during the focus group interviews and for this purpose questions should be carefully structured and planned, but within a relatively informal setting. There should, however, be room for modification depending on learner responses.

These focus group interviews will be held as often as is required in order to obtain the necessary clarification and detail (De Vos, 2002:312). Interviews are recorded in order to assess the information gathered.

1.6.2.2 *Individual interviews*

Individual interviews, consisting of open-ended questions, may be necessary for this research as some sensitive issues could arise from the group interviews. The girls may feel more comfortable answering questions in a one-to-one situation in this instance, especially as the questions may relate to events experienced with other girls in the group. It may be easier to answer these questions without the presence of the other girls involved, specifically in order to avoid feelings of discomfort or possible retaliation at a later stage.

A sample group of educators will also be questioned on the various issues of aggressive behaviour as displayed by adolescent girls. Adults working with the girls may have a different perspective which could prove valuable for the research. Educators will be asked questions such as “Describe the extent of aggressive behaviour amongst the girls in your class”, “How do the girls cope with this type of behaviour?”, or “Have you noticed any increase in this type of behaviour and, if so, explain”.

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews enable the participants to be more specific concerning their feelings about aggression and to be more in control of circumstances (De Vos, 2002:302).

1.6.3 Sampling

This study focuses on early adolescent girls in Grade seven. Five independent schools in the northern part of Johannesburg are to participate in the research. The families are all in the middle to upper middle income group and have few financial challenges. The schools are relatively small, with the largest having a total learner intake of 350. There are a total of eight Grade seven classes in the five schools with approximately 20 learners per class. The percentage of boys to girls is generally 55% girls to 45% boys. It is presumed that the learners receive more attention from the teaching staff as the classes are smaller than in most public schools.

There are, in total, 80 Grade seven girls in the five schools selected, with eight to twelve girls per class. Research site A has fifteen Grade seven girls, Research site B has twenty four Grade seven girls, Research site C has fourteen Grade seven girls, Research site D has thirteen Grade seven girls and Research site E has fourteen Grade seven girls. Each school is to be contacted and a meeting set up with the school principal. A letter of introduction will be presented to each principal, detailing the exact requirements for this study. Once the principal is satisfied and has given permission for the study to take place, a letter requesting permission to interview and record the interviews will be sent to the parents of each of the 80 girls as the researcher wishes to include as many of the

girls as possible in the study. The final number of participants will depend on the total number of parents who give permission for their daughters to participate. Dates and times will then be set up for the interviews (De Vos, 2002:64-73).

The researcher will record any additional information after each interview, such as the attitudes of the girls and behaviour towards each other and the interviewer. Individual interviews may be arranged where required.

The Principal or a Head of Department from each school will be requested to provide the necessary background to possible problems in the schools. A sample group of at least one educator from each school, who teaches the Grade seven girls, will be also be interviewed in order to ascertain the extent, forms and causes of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls from the educators' perspective.

1.6.4 Data Analysis

All interviews are to be recorded, additional information concerning the interviews will be carefully noted, and the interviews will then be transcribed. The information gathered will be arranged in categories. This will enable the researcher to identify the forms of aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls and the probable causes of that behaviour. This information will be used to work out a strategy for educators so that they may learn to address the problem of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls. Where necessary, further interviews may be arranged in order to clarify problem areas.

Debriefing of the girls may take place should it be required. The schools will be informed of the outcome of the research, but all interviewing will remain completely confidential.

1.7 PROGRAMME OF THE STUDY

Chapter one introduces the subject, providing the necessary background to the problem. The aim of the study is specified here, as well as the scope of the study. The research method is also specified in this chapter.

Chapter two includes a literature study which gives a perspective on aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. It also supplies information of previous studies conducted in this field, reinforcing the need for this research and for additional research in this field at a later stage.

In chapter three the focus will be on qualitative investigation with specific reference to the problems experienced.

Chapter four will focus on the results obtained. These results will be analysed and discussed.

Strategies to assist the educator to address and manage the problem of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls will be provided in Chapter five.

Chapter six will incorporate a summary of the study, provide recommendations for addressing aggressive behaviour and specify opportunities for further research.

1.8 CONCLUSION

Girls in the early adolescent stage of development are faced with many challenges. It is important for them to face these challenges with the necessary support from families and friends. Positive self-esteem is very important for young people who have to learn to accept the adult they are becoming (French & Underwood, 1996:172).

Many girls in this sensitive stage of their lives are faced with aggressive behaviour from adolescents who are considered to be their friends. We need to know to what extent this is happening in South African schools and how the problem can be addressed. It is, therefore, the aim of the researcher to investigate this problem in order to provide strategies to address aggressive behaviour displayed by girls.

CHAPTER TWO

A PERSPECTIVE ON AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Aggression is a world wide phenomenon and has been a part of society since the beginning of time. Aggression as it is manifested by girls is, however, a relatively new field of study. In initial studies of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls and boys conducted by Besag in 1989 and Olweus in 1991 (in: Smit, 2003:31) boys were identified as being more aggressive than girls. More recent research has confirmed that girls are inclined to be as aggressive as boys, although in a more psychological manner, than boys, as was suggested by Bqorkvist (in: Bright, 2005:93). Horn (2004:318) warns, however, that it is important to be careful of stereotyping as social identity, history and an understanding of the self may influence the way in which girls and boys react.

The occurrence of aggression displayed by girls and the enormity of the problem are highlighted as the research results become more evident. Research on the various aspects of aggressive behaviour, displayed by girls and boys as a group, or just as displayed by girls, has been completed in a number of countries. This has enabled researchers to compare aggressive behaviour displayed by boys and girls, as well as identifying the forms of aggressive behaviour occurring in girls, possible reasons for this behaviour and the long term effects of aggressive behaviour. The researchers have also attempted to provide better insight into identifying ways of how to deal with aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls. For the purpose of this study the focus will be on the results of studies of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls although cooperative results may also be mentioned where deemed of importance to the study.

2.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.2.1 The problem of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls

When considering the aggressive behaviour of girls, Barron and Lacombe (2005:63) believe that it is important to note that the definition of violence, which previously was considered to be a part of physical aggression, has changed and now also refers to indirect and verbal aggression that may not cause physical harm, but certainly causes damage to the self-esteem of the victim of the aggression. Peer relationships may also be damaged as a result of this type of aggressive behaviour (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2002:353). Rigby (2002:58) states that there is an increase in this type of behaviour in school years seven and eight when the girls are moving on to high school. Stoff and Susman (2005:89) confirm that there are structural and interpersonal changes at this stage, which also coincide with early adolescence. Most young people have the resources to adapt to the changes, but some struggle more than others.

Tim Fields (in: Rigby, 2002:130-131), identified possible personality traits of those who tend to be aggressive, which include lacking in understanding things said, having poor judgement, not thinking ahead, having a selective memory, being deeply prejudiced, being paranoid, lacking insight, bearing grudges, being uncreative, needing control and not learning from experience. Crick and Dodge (in: Rigby, 2002:131) felt that aggressive people were possibly socially inadequate.

Kaukiainen (in: Rigby, 2002:131) believes that aggressive people are more socially intelligent which means that they are able to manipulate in subtle ways. In order to manage this they would have to have a better understanding of the social cues and situations, and possess the necessary skills to isolate others. They would also have to understand the ways in which the mind works in order to cause as much distress as possible.

Horn (2004:314) is of the opinion that aggressive behaviour which causes harm to the personal and social standing of a person or to the relationships between peers is increasing among girls. According to Ringrose (2006:406) girls have generally been considered more vulnerable than boys, but there has been a definite shift away from this belief over the years. Whereas previously it was believed that girls were just as aggressive as boys, they are now perceived to be more aggressive. Crick and Grotpeter (in: Ringrose, 2006:410), emphasise that girl aggression is specifically of a relational type and not physical. Girls are involved in close relationships with their peers and they use their intimate knowledge of their friends to manipulate them. Maccoby (1998) and Crick and Grotpeter (1995) (in: Tremblay, Hartup & Archer, 2005:439) say that the type of intimacy and cohesiveness, which is characteristic of female friendship, encourages the use of indirect aggression. Girls appear to take out their frustrations on the girls around them in a variety of ways.

2.2.2 Specific forms of aggressive behaviour which occur

Shute, Owens and Slee (2002:359) refer to various forms of aggressive behaviour which may either occur on its own or simultaneously. These forms of behaviour have been identified by a number of researchers in their attempt to find reasons and solutions for the problem. The following forms of aggressive behaviour have been identified as a result of research, personal experience of individuals and working with adolescent girls in various situations.

2.2.2.1 *Gossip*

One of the most common forms of aggressive behaviour according to James and Owens (2005:77) is gossiping which involves talking in secret behind someone's back or saying something just loudly enough for other girls to hear. Often the whispers are combined with unfriendly looks or a denial of having said anything so that the girl is not sure if she has heard correctly. Gossip may also include breaking of confidences which becomes

more of a problem as the relationship becomes more intimate and each individual speaks more about herself, confirms Underwood (2003:40).

2.2.2.2 Spreading rumours

Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2003:211) state that some girls spread lies about other girls. This is done so that those girls become disliked by their peers. Olweus (1996) (in: Juvonen & Graham, 2001:6) mentioned in his research that girls often tell lies, spread false rumours or send around mean notes in order to discredit other girls. The person spreading the rumours may actually gain status at the cost of the other girl (Crothers, Field & Kolbert, 2005:352).

The spreading of rumours is often used to ruin someone's reputation and may occur as a result of jealousy. Juvonen and Graham (2001:201) believe that the basis for this type of rumour spreading is the possible involvement of the individual in a romantic relationship. Relationships with boys may result in those who are jealous using that relationship to infer that the girl has a poor character. An example of this is being called a 'slut' (Hadley, 2003:372). Crothers, Field and Kolbert (2005:352) add that rumours concerning the sexual reputation of a girl can be one of the most damaging types of rumour. Vail (2002:14) is of the opinion that rumours can be as harmful as physical aggression.

2.2.2.3 Exclusion

Shute, Owens and Slee (2002:363) explain that exclusion occurs when a person or people are deliberately left out of a group or an activity. It may also include ostracism which is a more extreme form of rejection by the majority. Exclusion is often reinforced or emphasised by the type of dress worn by the 'in' group. Being 'out' because of being different is a hurtful experience for a girl (Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowan, 2001:139). Horn (2004:316) believes that exclusion is regarded as acceptable behaviour by some people. The person who excludes someone may do so merely to assert her

authority. It may also be seen as a form of social regulation as an individual could be excluded as a result of not fitting in with the norms and values of a group, or even as a result of being viewed as being a possible threat to the group. Juvonen and Graham (2001:6) mention that Olweus (1996) confirms that girls may ignore or exclude other girls on purpose. According to Xie, Swift, Cairns and Cairns (2002) (in: Crothers, Field & Kolbert, 2005:349) informing a girl that she is no longer welcome in a group is a way of withdrawing emotional support from the girl.

2.2.2.4 Facial expressions

Girls make use of unpleasant and intimidating facial expressions to intimidate or to show their dislike of other girls. Facial expressions may include rolling of eyes to communicate a feeling. Underwood (2004:372) states that there is no punishment for a mean face and often no-one sees the expression of meanness apart from the victim. It is very difficult to prove that this form of aggression has actually occurred.

2.2.2.5 Sarcasm

Shute, Owens and Slee (2002:368) confirm that the tone of voice used during this form of aggressive behaviour is what actually does the harm. Sarcasm is often not understood by the person against whom it is used and it may therefore cause unnecessary anger. This form of aggression may seem amusing to the aggressor but it could be hurtful to the victim.

2.2.2.6 Gestures

Girls often make use of gestures to communicate their negative feelings towards each other. James and Owens (2005:78) explain that this form of aggressive behaviour gives the impression that the person being targeted is generally disliked and has done something wrong. Shute, Owens and Slee (2002:368) feel that gestures are a form of

shorthand used to hurt and to reinforce previous verbal behaviour. Gestures are also not so easily seen by the educators and it is difficult to prove that they actually happened.

2.2.2.7 Rejection

Williams, Forgas and Von Hippel (2005:173) emphasise the fact that “[f]orming and maintaining relationships is a fundamental part of human nature”. When a girl is rejected by those she wishes to befriend she believes that she is unworthy of love and affection. Rejection is far more extreme than exclusion and is generally carried out by a group (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2002:363). It is an unnatural state for a girl to be in, as humans are social beings requiring stable relationships in order to develop emotionally according to Aronson (1999) and Ehrlich (2000) (in: Williams, Forgas & Von Hippel, 2005:280). Leff, Kupersmidt and Power (2003:46) feel that girls who are rejected tend to believe that those who are aggressive to them act intentionally.

2.2.2.8 Retaliation

James and Owens (2005:82) describe retaliation or revenge as the way in which girls do to others what was done to them. In fact, they use their friendship as a weapon. This retaliation is considered contradictory to what society expects of a female, who is supposed to be peaceful, compromising and obliging.

2.2.2.9 Manipulation

Dellasega and Nixon (2003:8) are of the opinion that girls manipulate other girls to cover their own flaws. They have an underlying fear or insecurity which is disguised by the bravery exhibited during manipulation. Unfortunately the victim often lacks confidence and accepts this form of behaviour as she may feel she deserves it. The bystanders are often afraid to interfere as they have no wish to become victims and they often have low self-esteem as well. There are occasions when girls threaten other girls in

order to force them into specific forms of behaviour according to Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2003:211).

2.2.2.10 *Insults*

Girls often insult each other about intelligence, race, weight and about being different (Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowan, 2001:141-144; Geiger & Fischer, 2006:342). These insults result in the girls feeling sad, unhappy, hurt or rejected. The unfortunate additional problem is that the insults are often internalised by the girls, whether they are true or not. Les Murray (1994) (in: Rigby, 2002:111) states that these girls are often referred to as “wallflowers, ugly, wimps, unstylish, drips, nerds, pathetic, fat, frigid, creepy...” This form of insult often reinforces an already negative opinion that the girl may have of herself. Casey-Cannon, Hayward and Gowan (2001:141-144) are of the opinion that for many girls being mean or hurtful to other girls appears to be a way of life.

2.2.3 Causes of aggressive behaviour

2.2.3.1 *School environment*

Orpinas (2006:47) says that problems arise in schools that have no specific policy regarding aggressive behaviour. Aggressive behaviour is allowed to continue with no specific rules to discourage or prevent it. Bohart and Stipek (2001:384) confirm that schools may actually encourage a negative self-concept as they are often inclined to make children feel academically incompetent instead of focussing on other more positive areas in the child’s life. Rigby (2002:73) adds that schools constitute the area where the child experiences the greatest power imbalance and that the child is more vulnerable to peer misuse in the school situation.

2.2.3.2 *The home environment*

The home environment has a significant influence on the child. Roelefse and Middleton (1985) (in: Rigby, 2002:162) identified six important dimensions in family functioning which have a positive effect on the child. These include:

- structure where roles are clearly defined and consistent;
- children are allowed to express themselves freely;
- good, clear communication;
- democratic control;
- positive values; and
- external systems connected to the world

Rigby (2002:153) maintains that parents do influence the behaviour of their children. In many instances aggressive parents will have aggressive children as this is the example set for the children to follow. Rigby (2002:159) also emphasises the fact that studies in Australia found that there is a correlation between the treatment of a child and the way in which the child behaves. Girls, who are either less cared for, or more controlled, by their parents, tend to be more aggressive. The Family Systems Test (Gehring & Wyler, 1986 in: Rigby, 2002:161) found that patriarchal families tend to produce more aggressive children.

According to Michelle Elliot of *Kidscape Charity* (in: Harris, 2006:13; Dyanti, 2006:13) many young girls are indulged at home. They are brought up to believe that they are perfect and should be 'adored' by everyone else just as they are by their parents. The girls are inclined to be very influential at school and their parents often serve on the Governing Body of the school. Because they are so used to having everything their own way, they learn to be aggressive to those who treat them otherwise. Elliot emphasises the fact that they are not openly aggressive as that would be regarded as bad behaviour. Parents often believe that their daughters are just assertive when they are actually

aggressive in order to be treated the same at school as at home (Harris, 2006: 13; Dyanti, 2006:13).

There are also parents who feel that “Might is right” and that gentility and compassion are signs of weakness. De Wet (2005:1) suggests that they believe that it is acceptable to dominate others. The example presented by the parents may not be the positive example expected by society.

Children who have an unsatisfactory or frustrating relationship with their mother or caregiver may also resort to aggressive behaviour in order to attract attention according to Orpinas (2006:69). A further problem according to Foster and Kuendig (2006:162) is that of negativity and criticism from the mother which may also influence the behaviour of the daughter. It is very difficult to establish successful relationships with peers or adults if previous attachments have been unsuccessful. Peplar (2005:14) states that hostility in the relationship between mothers and daughters may cause negative social cognitions which in turn may cause more trouble in relationships. Any form of relationship problems with parents may be manifested in aggressive interaction in close relationships with peers. Difficulties experienced in developing a positive interaction style in the family situation may place the young girl at higher risk for aggression and also for victimisation.

A further problem, according to Peplar (2005:16), is that of aggression between siblings. The girl may be aggressive towards her siblings with little possibility of retaliation which may encourage the same form of aggression towards friends but with different results.

Children also need firm, but supportive discipline in order to develop into young adults, which is only possible if the home environment provides warmth, love and sensitivity (Bohart & Stipek, 2001:386). Underwood (2003:158) emphasises the importance of attachment between parents and children since insecure attachment may pose a threat to relationships. There is a possibility that attachment may influence anger and aggressive

behaviour. It is important for parents to focus on the consequences of the behaviour of the child so that the child will learn the correct behaviour (Bohart & Stipek, 2001:386). The relationship between the parents can also have an effect on the child.

Marital conflict is of concern to Underwood (2003:160) as it may threaten the emotional security of the child which could cause the child to be at risk for behaviour problems. Behaviour seen in the home may become the model for behaviour enacted by the child. Parents need to be aware of their importance as role models.

2.2.3.3 Hereditary and biological factors

O'Connor et al. (1980) (in: Rigby, 2002:151) showed in his studies of twins that aggressive behaviour is inherited to a large extent. More recent studies show that genetics could have an influence on aggressive behaviour.

Genetic factors, hormonal problems and the rate at which the young person matures may influence the amount of aggressiveness present in a child (Bell, Foster & Marsh, 2005:163). Further studies need to be conducted to evaluate the extent of biological influences.

2.2.3.4 Boredom and attention seeking

Rigby (2002:112) believes that aggressive behaviour is displayed when boredom is experienced. It serves as a way of keeping busy and creating excitement (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:224). Juvonen and Graham (2001:225) add that aggressive behaviour may also be a means of getting attention. Boredom has been identified as a cause of aggressive behaviour by girls questioned in various studies (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:224).

2.2.3.5 Competition

Vanzetti and Duck (1996:184) discuss the importance of friends in developing a positive or negative identity. Rivalry and competition can affect self concept and social behaviour and may cause aggression in adolescents. It is easier to be friends in a situation where a balance is found between friends who are similar and friends who are different. Too much competition is not conducive to good friendships. Unfortunately society is very competitive which often causes a distortion of social relationships (Duncan, 2004:149). Cowan and Ullman (2006:497) identify specific areas of competition which include weight, attractiveness and clothing. These are often focussed on by society in a negative way. Competition may result in a feeling of personal inadequacy, hostility and low self-esteem, according to Cowan and Ullman (2006:400). This may cause unnecessary aggression between individuals.

2.2.3.6 Community, culture and the media

Siegel (2004:158) believes that “[m]edia violence contributes to aggression”. According to him the average child views approximately 8000 murders on television and in cinemas before completing elementary school. In the USA the 11-14 age group rent more violent movies than any other age group. The problem with this is that the violent movies provide the child with a script which is easy to remember and follow. Children learn by observing what is shown in these movies, especially considering that these movies make violence appear acceptable. The ‘good’ people may use as much violence as the ‘bad’ people (Orpinas, 2006:52). In many instances the violence is justified in these movies and it may even seem that there is a reward for violent behaviour. Orpinas (2006:52) stresses the fact that retaliation is often seen to be more acceptable than even considering peaceful solving of problems. Violence may be a quick solution to a problem.

Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006:431) confirm the fact that violence in the media increases aggression in children. It may also result in children being desensitised to the

feelings of those that are hurt by the aggression says Orpinas (2006:52). A lack of empathy may be the result.

Orpinas (2006:65) adds that “[c]hildren model their behaviour after what they observe”. If the role models they see set examples of aggressive behaviour, the latter becomes the norm. They also learn that they only need to escalate the aggressive behaviour in order to obtain what they want. Dellasega and Nixon (2003:34-35) have also found that song lyrics and videos influence the behaviour of young girls as they often make aggression against women appear acceptable. They also encourage people to fight back as violence is considered to be acceptable. Magazines and television also encourage girls to compete against each other and to dislike each other.

2.2.3.7 The peer group

The peer group is the training ground for relational skills according to Dellasega and Nixon (2003:17). A girl needs the acceptance of the peer group in order to develop a positive identity. The peer group also assists the girl in learning important social skills such as sharing and cooperating. Peers and families influence the child’s lifestyle, ideas and beliefs.

Peplar (2004:16) emphasises the fact that the peer group and the family influence the child at the same time. Same-sex peers tend to exclude someone in their own group or disapprove of them more easily than they would members of the opposite sex. A group of peers may seem more hostile and rejecting than expected which may result in a girl feeling isolated, rejected or even victimised. Bell et al. (2005:169) is of the opinion that aggressive behaviour promotes rejection which often decreases affiliation with pro-social peers and may increase interactions with others who have poor social skills. According to Crick and Grotpeter (1995) (in: Bell et al., 2005:170) those girls who are liked by many and disliked by many are often rated higher on relational aggression than girls who are rejected.

A further problem is the emphasis on intimacy and exclusivity that prevails in the relationships between young girls (Bell et al., 2005:171; Kikas, Peets, Tropp & Hinn, 2009: 147). This provides the opening for easier manipulation of relationships that are threatened by friendship loss which is considered and, indeed, experienced as devastating given the importance of friends during adolescence (Dellasega & Nixon, 2003:16; Underwood, 2003: 167).

2.2.3.8 Need for power and popularity

Duncan (2004:143) explains that girls need to understand and accept their place in the peer hierarchy. De Bruyn and Cillessen (2006:443) believe that girls may act aggressively in order to gain popularity. Duncan (2004:144) adds that popular girls are those who have a high social status and are attractive to boys. Being well known and the centre of attraction may be the ultimate goal for some girls. To some girls the status level of the group is also important as low status groups do not afford enough social power. Often the popular girls are those who are overly confident, have a strong fashion sense, are loud and successful with boys. They appear to be the example of social success. Underwood (2003:143) believes that popular girls do not want to be friends with unpopular girls.

Duncan (2004:149) states that often the “success of the most popular girls [is] tied to a relentless public narcissism”. Clothes are a problem for many girls, state Dellasega and Nixon (2003:39-40), especially if a family is not financially secure enough to make a difference to the appearance of the girl by purchasing designer brands. Any criticism from their peers may have disastrous effects on their self concept.

Some girls may view aggressive girls with awe, admiration and even envy which in turn provides the aggressive girl with the feeling of superiority that she may crave (Baron, Byrne & Branscombe, 2006:437). These girls may be elevated to levels of power and popularity because of their behaviour. Popular girls are more concerned with being

attractive because their peers tend to assume that attractiveness provides higher social status (Kupersmidt & Dodge, 2004:130).

2.2.3.9 Feelings of frustration

Graves (2007:134) explains that female adolescents have to maintain a balance between being assertive and having more passive peer interactions. Fear, anger and frustration must be internalised or they may erupt into violent aggression. Girls struggle to negotiate conflict.

2.2.3.10 Puberty/Adolescence

Peplar (2005:9) is of the opinion that early maturing girls may not have the necessary social skills to enable them to cope with the requirements of society such as romantic relationships, mixed peer sex groups and increasing independence as they get older. These girls may be affected by early maturation, deviant peer group involvement and family conflict. Graber et al. (2006:414) adds that early maturing girls show poor adjustment in various areas and may also suffer from depression at later stages in life.

Many young girls' social perceptions of other's behaviour are often incorrect (Bohart & Stipek, 2001:385) with the result that they respond inappropriately. Hadley (2004:346-347) believes that girls in the adolescent stage are involved in intense relationships. This, together with the many changes during the adolescent period, may cause challenges concerning gender issues, personal identity, separating from the family, belonging to a peer group, knowing their own will and ensuring that others understand this. Underwood (2003:135) states that girls going through adolescence may have more sophisticated cognitive skills which may increase their ability to cope socially, as well as their ability to hurt their peers.

2.2.3.11 Emotional problems

Bohart and Stipek (2001:376) state that negative emotions cause destructive behaviour while positive emotions are more constructive. A feeling of shame is considered to be negative as the person may develop a negative opinion of herself and this may influence her to be more aggressive. Children with emotional problems need treatment in order to cope in society, advises Peplar (2005:21). These children need to learn to feel empathy in order to feel what other children experience when they are hurt, whether emotionally or physically. Empathy can be valuable as part of the socialisation process of children and in helping them develop moral rules (Bohart & Stipek, 2001:377).

2.2.4 Consequences of aggressive behaviour

Aggressive behaviour may have many undesirable consequences. Various researchers have focussed on these consequences in their research. Delfabbro, Winefield, Trainor, Dollard, Anderson, Metzger and Hammarstrom (2006:72-83) refer to a few of these consequences that they have come across which are similar to findings which were also identified by other earlier researchers:

- Poor self-esteem (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Karatzias, Power & Swanson, 2002; Olweus, 1993; and Rigby, 1999 in: Delfabbro et al., 2006:72-83; Geiger & Fischer, 2006:353; Egan and Perry in: Storch & Ledley, 2005:33)
- Depression/anxiety (Olweus, 1978; Rigby, 2002; and Slee, 1995 in: Delfabbro et al., 2006:72-83)
- Poor physical health (Rigby, 1998 in: Delfabbro et al., 2006:72-83)
- Social adjustment problems (Rigby, 2002 in: Delfabbro et al., 2006:72-83)
- School drop-out and decreased possibility of tertiary study
- Greater possibility of substance abuse

For the purpose of this study it is important to briefly discuss each of these consequences as they substantiate the need for addressing aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls.

2.2.4.1 *Poor self-esteem*

Dellasega and Nixon (2003:8) believe that the victim of aggressive behaviour definitely has to live with a feeling of fear and insecurity which results in a lack of confidence. Many victims actually believe that they deserve the treatment they receive and that they simply have to live with it. The feelings of inferiority and guilt may cause a loss of self-esteem.

2.2.4.2 *Depression/anxiety*

Studies by Kaltialo-Heino (1999) (in: Rigby, 2002:112) found that the victims of aggression are often more depressed than others in their peer group. Surprisingly, some schools have found that the aggressor and the victim may both suffer from depression (Rigby, 2002:122). Vanzetti and Duck (1996:17) state that those suffering from depression have lost their self-worth. They feel that they, as individuals, no longer matter in society. Depressed adolescents may also perceive that they have no control over their environment according to Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:154).

2.2.4.3 *Poor physical health*

Rigby (2002:123) emphasises the fact that victims may suffer from poor health as a result of the demands made on the child surpassing the child's ability to cope. The timing of the aggression is often unexpected and unpredictable, resulting in increased stress. A further problem is that of ambiguity as the child may be faced with the confusion of nastiness being interchanged with kindness. Often the victim is faced with humiliation that is difficult to cope with (Rigby, 2002:123). The situation often seems inescapable and the child may have nowhere to turn. Rigby (2002:124) also adds that the

child may have no opportunity to control the situation which could cause further frustration.

2.2.4.4 Social adjustment problems

Bell et al. (2005:169) believe that aggression promotes a feeling of rejection which decreases the general affiliation with peers who are more inclined to socialise. The aggressor and the victim may tend to interact with others who also have poor social skills. Children who are rejected by others often spend more time alone and when they do have friends these tend to be younger than they are (Welsh and Bierman, 1998:2). Being excluded prevents the child from having the necessary social interactions. Excluded children tend to become very isolated as they lack the inter-personal skills to form social networks (Rigby, Cox & Black, 1997; Smith & Sharp, 1994 in: Delfabbro et al., 2006:72; Roth, Storch & Coles in: Storch & Ledley, 2005:34).

2.2.4.5 May drop out from school

Welsh and Bierman (1998:2) state that children who are rejected often dislike school. This is possibly because of the negative attitude of peers and educators. They may be labelled 'unpopular' and eventually believe that they cannot succeed (Woodward & Fergusson in: Storch & Ledley, 2005:34). Dropping out of school may seem to be a better alternative than suffering failure at school. This may unfortunately also result in a reduced possibility of tertiary study.

2.2.4.6 Greater possibility of substance abuse

Aggressive behaviour results in a greater possibility of children using drugs because of affiliating with antisocial groups just to be 'in' (Welsh & Bierman, 1998:5). Acceptance by an antisocial group gives the child a sense of belonging and so they do what the group pressurises them into doing whether society finds this acceptable or not.

Further consequences identified by De Wet (2005:1) include the following:

- Headaches
- Bedwetting
- Suicidal thoughts, or suicide attempts
- Loss of appetite
- Stress, fear, confusion, pain
- Poor concentration

2.2.5 Aggressive behaviour and social development

It is necessary to briefly focus on the social development of the child in order to understand the different stages of development through which the child moves and, in so doing, hopefully gain a better understanding of the way in which adolescent girls develop, react and become aggressive in specific circumstances.

Socialisation is a learning process which should ultimately result in the achievement of behaviour acceptable to the society in which we live (Penner, 1978: 227). The social development of the child may directly influence the manner in which the child reacts towards other children or the child's perceptions of the way in which other children react to him or her. Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:99) state that children may be more aggressive as a result of their social experiences during the various stages of childhood, and as well as the success they achieve using specific types of aggression. A child who achieves what he or she desires by being aggressive learns that this is the way to behave and aggression may become a way of life for that person (Louw, Van Eede and Louw, 1998:273).

Aggression affects the future social and emotional development of the young girl. It is therefore important to look at the manner in which social development takes place in the child as a possible means of gaining a better understanding of the causes of aggression and the manner in which it affects the young person. In the long term every aspect of a

person's life is affected by his or her social development. Social development takes place from the moment the baby is born by means of the initial parental influence (Louw, Van Eede & Louw, 1998:224), followed by that of other adults, siblings and peers. The child passes through various stages of social development to eventually fit into society as an acceptable, socialised being.

2.2.5.1 Developmental stages in socialisation

Welsh and Bierman (1998:1) specify that a child is expected to react differently in different circumstances or at different stages as certain actions may only be acceptable at certain times and not at all times. It is therefore important to look at the different stages of social development of the child.

Erikson (1956) (in: Meyer, Moore and Viljoen, 2003:198) formulated the theory that a person moves through eight developmental phases during a life time. The eight stages include the following:

- Infancy or Learning basic trust versus basic mistrust (Hope)
- Early childhood or Learning autonomy versus shame (Will)
- Play or Learning initiative versus guilt (Purpose)
- School age or Industry versus inferiority (Competence)
- Adolescence or Learning identity versus identity diffusion (Fidelity)
- Early adulthood or Learning intimacy versus isolation (Love)
- Adulthood or Learning generativity versus self-absorption (Care)
- Maturity or Integrity versus despair (Wisdom)

Erikson's first four phases are important for this study as they basically equate to the stages commonly referred to as the infant stage, the pre-schooler or early childhood stage, the middle childhood stage and the early adolescent stage.

Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003:199) state that the first stage, known as 'basic trust versus basic mistrust', covers the first year of the child's life. During this period, also called the infant stage, the baby should have a close relationship with the mother, the father and other people with whom it comes into contact. Oden (1987:1) is of the opinion that the child develops socially and emotionally if this bonding period is a positive experience. Children who feel secure are able to go out into the world and explore their social environment for themselves. Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:273) believe that children may experience aggression towards the end of this phase when they begin to interact with other children, as they still have to learn acceptable behaviour. The researcher believes that this stage is important for the development of a positive self-concept. If the parents accept and love the child it will be easier for the child to accept him or herself.

The second stage of 'autonomy versus shame' occurs from the second year to the third year in the child's life (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003:199). It is during this period that the pre-school child becomes more independent. Many children go through stages of tantrums and stubbornness during this period but this is all part of developing and learning to interact. The child is still unable to control emotions and has to learn from the models around him (Louw, Van Eede and Louw, 1998:234). The child is in the process of learning norms and values which are important for further social interaction. It is important that the models with whom the child has contact are positive in order for the child to learn the accepted way of interacting in society.

According to Meyer, Moore and Viljoen (2003:200) the third stage of "initiative versus guilt", takes place from approximately three to six years of age. Wicks-Nelson and Israel (2003:31) also refer to this stage and the early part of the fourth stage as the middle childhood period. During this period the child continues with the exploration of the social environment. The child who is confident is able to interact with others and to fantasise. Children who lack confidence struggle to use their imaginations and are wary of interaction (Oden, 1987:1). Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:273) state that some children experience more aggression during this stage as they begin to understand the

intentions of others and learn to retaliate. It would be beneficial for children to learn a variety of coping skills during this stage in order to facilitate solving further problems as they get older.

During the fourth stage, 'industry versus inferiority' which includes the six to twelve year olds, the child has to cope with working with peers, learning formal work and being part of the group (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003:200). This stage includes the end of middle childhood and early adolescence. A child who has successfully reached this level will be able to work through this phase with a minimal amount of stress, but the child who is insecure or lacking in self confidence may struggle through this phase. Such a child will have problems working with peers and successfully completing school work. This may also impact negatively on future development. One of the more difficult stages of social development, namely that of adolescence, occurs at the end of this fourth stage. Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:388) regard it as a time of change and development. This stage can be very difficult for some young people, especially if they do not have the necessary social support. It is this difficult stage of social development that this research focuses on.

As can be seen by the discussion of the developmental stages, children come into contact with a variety of people who are important socialisation agents at various stages in their lives. A few of the most important social groups will be briefly discussed in the following section.

2.2.5.2 The most important factors influencing social development

There are a number of factors that influence the social development of the child, but the interactions between the child and the family, the child and the peer group and the child and school are the most important factors.

2.2.5.2(a) *The family*

As mentioned previously, the social development of the child is directly influenced by the interactions that the child has in his or her environment. According to Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:224) the initial contact with the parents forms the basis for further development. Confidence and self-acceptance begin directly with the way the parents interact with the child. The child who is encouraged and supported will develop a more positive feeling of self-worth and will find the school setting and the peer group less daunting. Bukatko and Daehler (1992) (in: Louw, Van Eede and Louw, 1998:225) state that parents influence their children by means of direct teaching, the role models they present and their control of the children's social interactions with friends (Louw, Van Eede & Louw, 1998:225).

Oden (1987:2) emphasises that it is important to bear in mind that the child is also influenced socially by the other adults with whom there is contact. These are all role models for the child.

2.2.5.2(b) *The peer group*

The child is in contact with children of a similar age from toddler stage. Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:312) explain that this form of interaction teaches the child the manner in which to react towards other children as well as acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour. Social skills are learnt in this manner and the child also learns about the different types of friends. The child distinguishes between those friends that are good to have as friends and those that are not good to have as friends according to Oden (1987:2). Friends have a strong influence on the child's social development (Duffy & Nesdale, 2008:134) because they are often very close to the child and their attitudes may affect the way in which a child perceives himself. Oden (1987:2) further adds that children who adjust easier to high school are those who were relatively well accepted by their peers. Although it is important for the child to have good interactions with peers, the child also needs to make decisions independently if required to do so (Louw, Van

Eede and Louw, 1998:368). Children who are not accepted by their peers tend to be isolated and eventually have few peer encounters. Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:79) emphasise the fact that “[f]rom their friends they [children] learn the necessary personal and social skills that help them become part of the adult world”.

2.2.5.2(c) School

Day-care centres, pre-schools and schools are all involved in the social development of the child as they assist in the realisation of the child’s physical, cognitive, emotional, moral and social aspects (Pretorius, 1994:20). The interactions that take place in these environments influence the social development of the child. Louw, Van Eede and Louw (1998:360) state that the types of interaction at school are different from those that take place at home because they confront the child with new demands. These new demands may be a source of stress for the child, especially if it is considered that it includes the expectations of the peers. The educator (teacher) plays an important role in the life of the child as an educator, facilitator of learning, helper with acquiring social skills and provider of counselling if necessary (Louw, Van Eede & Louw, 1998:362). Gouws, Kruger and Burger (2000:75) are of the opinion that educators are role models who often spend more time with children than their parents and that they therefore have a significant influence on the development of the identity, self-concept and future aspirations of the child. Educators who value their learners and give them opportunities to achieve success can positively influence the self-esteem of the learners. This provides a good basis for future development.

According to the researcher the socialisation of the child should provide the child with the skills to interact with other children. Unfortunately many children are exposed to role models or influences that have a negative effect on their social development thus preventing them from reacting acceptably according to society. These young people often do not realise the impact that their actions may have on the children around them. Aggression is one of those actions which may have severe negative repercussions if not attended to in time.

2.3 FINDINGS OF PREVIOUSLY CONDUCTED RESEARCH

The extent of aggressiveness displayed by girls is apparent when one looks at research conducted in Australia, England, the USA, and throughout Europe. Qualitative and quantitative methods of research, focussing on aggression, have been conducted in same sex schools and in mixed sex schools with varying results.

Salmivalli and Kaukiainen (2004) completed a study of girls and boys in which they specifically considered whether indirect aggression is typical of girls and also whether girls make more use of indirect than direct aggression. The study found that boys are generally more aggressive than girls, that highly aggressive girls use more indirect aggression and that highly aggressive boys use more direct aggression. They also noted that boys do make use of indirect aggression as well (Salmivalli & Kaukiainen, 2004:161).

In Adelaide, South Australia, James and Owens (2005:73-74) conducted qualitative research in a single sex school by means of a letter writing exercise. The girls who participated in the research had to write letters concerning their conflict with other girls. The girls were given a guidance sheet in advance which gave them ideas on dividing the letter into sections which included identifying the problem, why it happened, feelings experienced, what actions took place and the final result. The research identified certain forms of aggressive behaviour including indirect and direct victimisation, as well as some important causes of aggressive behaviour. According to this investigation an important reason for girl aggression is loyalty towards their friends. The girls also identified their educators, mothers and peers as people to turn to in time of need. The study is important because it validates the claim that aggressive behaviour displayed by girls is largely motivated by relational goals as girls wish to establish their place in society (James and Owens, 2005:86). A number of other studies have also focussed on the reasons for indirect aggressive behaviour.

Owens, Shute and Slee (2000:19) conducted qualitative research involving fifty four 15-16 year old girls and ten educators in South Australia in order to ascertain the reasons why girls are indirectly aggressive to their peers. The research was based on earlier results of, amongst others, research by Feshbach (1969) (in: Owens, Shute and Slee, 2000:20), who first referred to indirect aggression after a study of 6-year old girls where it was found that girls use this type of aggression a lot more than boys. Before discussing the results of Owens, Shute and Slee, it has to be mentioned that later research conducted by Lagerspetz et al. (1988) (in: Owens, Shute and Slee, 2000:20) also came to this conclusion and the type of friendships formed by girls was seen as a reason for the occurrence of relational aggression. Many of the previous studies were conducted by means of quantitative research which did not allow for an in depth look at the relationships between girls. (Recent research includes more qualitative forms of research, which are, according to this researcher, inclined to be more meaningful when dealing with this type of problem.)

Owens, Shute and Slee (2000) made use of focus groups and pair interviews, as well as individual interviews with a sample group of educators in their research. When the girls were interviewed the researcher presented a vignette to set the scene after which the discussion and questions followed. The interviews took place during a class period of forty five minutes. The educators were questioned separately from the girls and individually about the occurrence of, and reasons for, aggressive behaviour amongst the girls. One of the important results of the research (not mentioned in earlier research) indicated that the girls considered indirect aggressive behaviour as giving them something to do or providing excitement (Owens, Shute & Slee, 2000:43). Further reasons for aggressive behaviour included the fact that it was used as a way of gaining friendships, and prompted by jealousy, revenge, or self-protection. The educators (teachers) substantiated the findings by reporting the same or similar reasons for indirect aggressive behaviour.

In a further qualitative study conducted in Australia, Shute, Owens and Slee (2002) examined non-verbal socially aggressive behaviour displayed by girls as well as the role

this type of behaviour plays in their lives. An important finding was that although the behaviour may be indirect, the actual intention is to ensure that the victim knows exactly how the aggressor feels (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2002:367). Certain forms of nonverbal behaviour are used to control the environment in which the girls happen to be, whether to exclude or include certain girls or to show disapproval or acceptance. Clothing plays an important role in determining who is to be a part of the group and who not. Shute, Owens & Slee (2002:368) added that nonverbal behaviour may, in some instances, replace or strengthen the verbal behaviour. These researchers noted that the apparent lack of research into indirect aggression and the resultant lack of assistance available could result in girls having to continue to endure this form of aggression due to a lack of the necessary coping mechanisms with the result that their social development would continue to be inadequate. Girls need to be educated about problems concerning aggression in order to learn to cope and to be aware of its effects (Shute, Owens & Slee, 2002:370).

In a quantitative research study completed in America, Remillard and Lamb (2005) attempted to determine the effects of relational aggressive behaviour on a friendship. They looked at the friendship before, during and after the manifestation of aggressive behaviour. Eighty two girls in Grades 6-12 from urban and rural areas, from various race groups, were selected for the research. The researchers described personal experiences of relational aggression and then questioned the girls about the value of friendship and the feelings evoked by the incident described. The 66 item Revised Ways of Coping Scale of Folkman & Lazarus (1985) (in: Remillard and Lamb, 2005:224), was employed to identify the way the girls coped with specific forms of aggression. This research found that the closeness in the relationship affects the amount of hurt experienced by the girl who suffered the aggression. It also found that a girl who was close to her friend before the incident was just as close after the incident. According to Remillard and Lamb (2005:227), this form of behaviour could actually encourage a closer friendship, possibly because the behaviour was not as damaging as first expected or that the girls had actually found ways of coping with this type of behaviour. A further finding was that the more angry the girl was, the less likely the friendship was to last. The amount of

hurt experienced by the girls also determined how much they blamed themselves for the incident, indulged in wishful thinking, tried to reduce the tension or ignored each other. The girls were also found to be more willing to look for social support in coping with their problems. This enabled them to continue the friendship after the incident.

Crick, Ostrov and Werner (2006:132) completed a quantitative study in America over a period of a year, examining the relationship between relational aggression and social-psychological adjustment as well as physical aggression and the way in which girls and boys adjust. The research further examined whether relational aggression influences social adjustment to a greater extent than physical aggression. The assessments were conducted in two parts, one at the beginning and one at the end of the twelve month period. Equal numbers of boys and girls participated in the research. They were in Grades three and four (Crick, Ostrov & Werner, 2006:134). The results of the research confirmed that relational aggression affects the future adjustment of learners and that a combination of relational and physical aggression has an even greater effect on future adjustment. Of specific importance is the fact that girls also react outwardly and hurt others intentionally as a result of their experiences. The study also confirmed that children who are physically aggressive are also inclined to be relationally aggressive (Crick, Werner & Ostrov, 2006:140).

In the USA the *School Aggression Prevention Program* or SAPP, specifically aimed at reducing aggression and fostering empathy in Grade five girls, was examined by Capella and Weinstein (2006:435). Grade five girls were specifically targeted in order to teach them possible coping strategies for later problems. The study was completed in California and involved a broad group of the community. The girls were between the ages of nine and twelve. Groups of girls were exposed to leaders who used techniques such as discussions, role play and games to assist the girls in understanding aggression and to find possible solutions to these problems. The girls were actively involved in the presentations. A majority of the girls attended most of the presentations. The results of the intervention were positive as the girls changed both the way in which they approached social problem-solving and their actual behaviour. Girls who were more

aggressive showed the biggest improvements in developing empathy. Positive social behaviour was more positively affected by the intervention with less effect, either positively or negatively, on negative social behaviour. Girls with many social problems were more influenced by the intervention. A problem associated with this study was the fact that the girls were possibly younger than the actual age where these social problems really develop (Capella & Weinstein, 2006:453) which could have resulted in unrealistic results.

Crain, Finch and Foster (2005) completed two studies in which they examined the use of negative responses by girls in relation to the form of aggressive behaviour displayed by someone else, their understanding of social issues and their expectations from a relationship. They made use of the Social Information Processing Model, reformulated by Crick and Dodge (1995) (in: Crain, Finch and Foster, 2005: 214), in order to study the way in which girls react to certain stimuli in a social context. In contrast to Crick, they only selected girls for this study.

In the first study 134 fourth to sixth grade girls were selected from a middle income group across the spectrum as regards race (Crain, Finch and Foster, 2005:217). Vignettes were used as a starting point. These, which were ambiguous, presented a challenge for the girls. Educators were also required to rate the relational aggression of each girl. This study determined how girls understand and interpret their social interaction. It was found that relational aggression in the groups of girls was not related to specific social goals, or to negative previously formed ideas (Crain, Finch and Foster, 2005:236). The findings were contradictory to previous findings and could possibly have been affected by the girls not wanting to admit to their aggressive behaviour.

In the second study Crain, Finch and Foster (2005:229) once again used Grades four to six girls. This time 125 girls were included in the study, again from the middle income group and from all race groups. Six educators and a principal assisted in formulating three of the new vignettes which were used in the study. The girls were expected to rate the use of specific responses to situations. One of the confusing findings of this study

was that the girls saw very little difference between girls who would react overtly or girls who would react relationally aggressively. An important finding was the fact that relational and overt aggression were very difficult to separate.

De Bruyn and Cillesen (2006) completed a study of girls in the first year of senior school in the Netherlands. They aimed to identify two groups of popular girls, one group who would be positive towards academic achievement and one group who would be negative towards academic achievement (De Bruyn & Cillesen, 2006:437). 813 girls were included in the study which was conducted by means of questionnaires which had to be answered by the girls and educators. The study eventually identified five subgroups. These included two popular groups, two unpopular groups and an average group in terms of popularity. The first popular group included girls who were positive towards academics and well-behaved, while the second popular group included girls who were negative towards academics and badly behaved. The two unpopular groups were made up of girls who were respectively positive towards academics and well-behaved, and negative towards academics and badly behaved. The average group of girls showed no extreme behaviour. The finding which was the most surprising was that pertaining to the popular group with negative attitudes. According to the study a possible reason for the popularity of a girl with negative behaviour could be ascribed to being fashionable, attracting attention and possibly having a certain charisma or being very persuasive (De Bruyn & Cillesen, 2006:442). Of concern was the fact that the popular negative girl could eventually be a total failure.

A study conducted by Duncan (2004) among year ten girls also confirmed that it is very important for girls to be popular as it provides a higher status for them and a definite attraction for boys. Popular girls are able to manipulate others and to change social relationships amongst girls. Popularity in higher status groups is the ultimate aim, as lower status groups do not provide the same social power (Duncan, 2004:148).

Crothers, Field and Kolbert (2005: 349) examined the way in which fifteen year old girls in the United States are relationally aggressive. Girls who followed the more traditional

female role were more inclined to use relational aggression than those who followed less traditional female roles. By using more indirect aggression these girls felt they were still living up to the expectations of the adults with whom they came into contact. These adults may not actually have been aware of the aggression taking place. The girls realised that direct aggression would not be acceptable (Crothers, Field & Kolbert, 2005:353).

Camodeca and Goossens (2005) completed a study in Amsterdam in which they aimed to determine how seventh and eighth grade boys and girls thought aggressive behaviour could be reduced. They also wished to determine whether retaliation against the aggressor would be used, or if the issue would merely be ignored. Assertiveness was the solution chosen most often by the children (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005:101), although the aggressors often chose retaliation and many of the victims did the same. The children generally felt that a solution needed to be found to address aggressiveness.

A study conducted by Casey-Cannon, Hayward and Gowan (2001:141) amongst Grade seven learners in Northern California also confirmed that most of the learners had, at some stage, been victimised by other learners. The incidents, of which relational aggression was most prevalent, took place at school, on the bus or in the neighbourhood.

In South Africa little research has been undertaken on aggressive behaviour. That which has been conducted has focussed more specifically on physical aggression. There has been little research specifically focussed on aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. In a study of secondary school boys and girls undertaken in the Free State only 29.2% of the learners had not been exposed to direct aggression and only 32.15% had not been exposed to indirect aggression. In most instances it was a member of the same sex who was guilty of the aggressive behaviour (De Wet, 2005:2). Only 16.22% of the learners believed that aggressive behaviour was not a problem in their schools.

Smit (2003) completed research amongst primary school boys and girls to determine the amount and type of aggression in schools in Gauteng. Boys and girls reported that there

was a relatively high incidence of aggressive behaviour at school. Boys and girls reported similar frequencies of aggressive behaviour. The types of aggression that occurred most often included calling each other names, being hit by someone, being threatened or spreading of rumours. Boys tended to be more involved in physical aggressive behaviour than girls (Smit, 2003:31). Girls tended to make more use of verbal and indirect aggression.

This researcher is of the opinion that there is an urgent need for research on aggressive behaviour in South Africa with specific focus on aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. The types and long term effects need to be gauged in order to find possible ways to address the behaviour and its effects. The studies that have been concluded around the world do not appear to have found solutions or a successful form of managing this problem.

In a study by Camodeca and Goossens (2005), conducted in the Netherlands, children were asked how aggressive behaviour could be addressed. The most frequently selected intervention was assertiveness, although many of the more aggressive children viewed retaliation as the best solution (Camodeca & Goossens, 2005:101). A number of the younger and the older girls preferred ignoring the problems as a way of preventing further problems. Underwood (2003:3) agrees that assertiveness training assists the girls in expressing their needs more clearly, but that they have to learn to accept conflict as a part of life and relationships.

Young's (2002) proposed solutions for aggressive behaviour include creating a positive school community, identifying and focussing on the strengths, ensuring that policies and procedures regarding aggressive behaviour are in place in the school and teaching learners to have respect for individual differences regarding feelings, values and beliefs (Young, 2002:6-9). Social skills training and improving the self-esteem of young people could also possibly decrease the effects of aggression. It was expressed by Young that the problem of aggressive behaviour should be dealt with and not merely be ignored (Young, 2002:17). In order for this to work Geffner, Braverman and Galasso (2004:229)

believe that educators need to be trained to recognise and deal with aggressive behaviour. Learners need to be taught the skills to cope with aggression and these need to be rehearsed regularly (Geffner, Braverman & Galasso, 2004:229).

Further suggestions by Bohart and Stipek (2001) include teaching learners empathy so that they become more sensitive to other learners' feelings, and educators and adults being positive role models for young children. The ideal would be to have the media included in this endeavour (Bohart & Stipek, 2001:394) as the effect would possibly be more permanent. Dellasega and Nixon (2003:121, 123, 143) advise that relationship boundaries need to be established, that girls should be empowered to solve problems and that role-play, videos, reading or even storytelling be used to assist in working with aggression. It is important for girls to be taught tolerance and self acceptance adds Garbarino (2003:63). Girls should also feel accepted at home as this will give them a sense of security which will make the challenges of life easier to accept. Raskauskas and Stoltz (2004:213) stress the fact that aggressive behaviour cannot be ignored. It must be taken seriously.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Research conducted on aggressive behaviour has identified various forms of aggressive behaviour which include gossiping, spreading rumours, exclusion, negative facial expressions, sarcasm, negative gestures, rejection, retaliation, manipulation and insults. These forms of aggressive behaviour may be caused by the influence of the school, community, culture, media or home environment, hereditary and biological factors, boredom and attention seeking, competition between peers, a need for power and popularity, feelings of frustration, puberty or adolescence, or emotional problems. Unfortunately the aggressive behaviour may have negative consequences for the victims such as poor self-esteem, depression or anxiety, poor physical health, social adjustment problems, dropping out of school or a greater possibility of substance abuse. As the child develops socially the problems caused by aggressive behaviour may be need to be addressed.

Although there have been a number of studies regarding aggressive behaviour in girls, there is still much to be done. The studies that have been concluded have confirmed that there is definitely aggression amongst girls and more than was originally believed. The forms of aggression are often just as harmful as physical aggression and in many instances may even have negative long term effects on the girls involved.

Because of the long term effects it is necessary to find ways to address aggressive behaviour in girls. South Africa has a problem with aggression amongst boys and girls in schools and this area should be focussed on in the future. Research is required if this behaviour is to be managed. This researcher believes that the problem of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls is a serious problem that ought to be addressed by schools, parents, society and the girls themselves.

Chapter three will describe the research methods and procedures implemented to achieve the aims of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will specifically focus on the research design. Justification for the choice of research approach and the data collection methods implemented will be provided. Furthermore, the researcher will discuss the sample groups selected for the research, as well as the background to each of the schools involved in order to clarify their place in the South African school system. The specific interviews and questioning techniques will be explained and the researcher will also provide an explanation of the data analysis applied in the research.

Aggressive behaviour is an escalating problem in South African schools (De Wet, 2005:2). This is particularly evident in public schools as is apparent in the amount of media coverage in recent times. This type of behaviour unfortunately appears to be increasing in independent schools as well and more specifically in adolescent girls in these schools. The types of aggressive behaviour, as well as the reasons for this behaviour, the consequences and possible management strategies need to be determined in order to create a suitable environment in which to educate young girls. This study specifically focuses on the occurrence of aggressive behaviour displayed by early adolescent girls in relatively small independent schools where one would not necessarily expect to encounter this type of behaviour, especially among girls. The researcher will address the causes and consequences of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls with a view to providing guidance to educators and adolescent girls for addressing aggressive behaviour.

3.2 BASIC METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES UNDERPINNING THE RESEARCH

In this section the emphasis is placed on the research approach, the basis for sampling and the pilot test before the research procedure is explained in section 3.3.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research

The researcher selected a qualitative research method to conduct this study. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:395) “[q]ualitative research describes and analyses people’s individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions”. In order to achieve the aims of the research it was necessary to access the required information directly from the participants, in a less formal situation (Mouton and Marais (1990) in: De Vos, 2002:80), which better suited the age of the participants. Reid and Smith (1981) (in: De Vos, 2002:80) believe that there should be more flexibility when conducting research and that qualitative research provides this flexibility. The researcher is of the opinion that this type of research requires working closely with the participants and learning more about their actual experiences, specifically at school in this instance. These experiences need to be retold in the language of the participants in order to clarify the problems associated with aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. Creswell (1998) (in: De Vos, 2002:106) suggests that qualitative research takes place in the world of the participants and the results are told from the participants’ point of view.

Qualitative research employs multi-method strategies to study phenomena (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:396). These include observation, interviews, artifacts and supplementary techniques. The flexibility of qualitative research allows the researcher to make changes concerning data collection strategies during the research. The researcher is at all times deeply involved with the participants, continually observing and recording findings.

3.2.2 Sampling

For the purpose of this study the researcher decided on purposeful sampling for selecting the participants. According to Patton (1990) (in: McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:400) purposeful sampling is “selecting information-rich cases for study in-depth”. The researcher specifically identified the criteria with which the participants should comply in order to be included in the selection for the research and only those most suitable were selected. De Vos (2002:334) emphasises the fact that “[c]lear identification and formulation of criteria for the selection of respondents are of cardinal importance”. The specific criteria identified by the researcher in this instance included the age and sex of the participants, the type of schools attended, the grade of the participants and the socio-economic category into which they fell (see also section 3.3.1).

3.2.3 Pilot test

An initial pilot test was completed in order to test the interview guide and to ensure validity of the process. A group of eight girls aged from twelve to thirteen and in Grade seven were interviewed. The site selected was similar to that of the final sites selected as the pilot test also took place at a small independent school in the same area, with classes averaging twenty learners per class. The racial distribution was 40% White, 40% Black and 20% Indian and Coloured, and the socio-economic status of the families was also the middle to upper middle income group. The pilot test provided the opportunity of testing, altering and reformulating the data collection strategies to be completed.

3.3 RESEARCH PROCEDURE

3.3.1 Sample selection

Using purposeful sampling, the researcher selected five local independent schools in which to conduct the research. The schools are co-educational schools with relatively equal numbers of boys and girls. The largest of the schools has approximately 350

learners. Each of the schools caters for the middle to upper income group. The schools comprise members of all race groups with approximately 40% white, 40% black and 20% Indian and Coloured. The classes are small with the general size being twenty learners. The learners receive a considerable amount of individual attention and the premise is that the educators tend to be more aware of what is happening in each class which allows them the opportunity of being able to deal with problems as they arise.

3.3.1.1 *Research sites*

Research site A is a Christian school. Parents enrolling their children at this school are required to be practising Christians from a Protestant church. The school was established by a local church eleven years ago and is still growing at a constant pace. Entrance into the school is highly valued by the parents in the area. The school fees are reasonable, in comparison to some independent schools, which ensures affordability for the middle income parents who wish to enrol their children at a quality school. The school is situated on the premises of the church and has the financial support of the church. Christian values are regarded as the basis of teaching in this school. This provides the learners with the opportunity of completing their schooling in a protected environment which suits many parents. The school caters for learners from nursery school age to Grade 12. There are fifteen Grade seven girls in the school, of whom seven were given permission by their parents to participate in the study.

Research site B is an independent school catering for learners from nursery school age to Grade 7. It has been in existence for twelve years and caters for learners of all denominations. Its fees are considerably higher than those of Research Site A and it is aimed at the upper middle class income group. The school provides quality education in a more affluent environment. Learners leave the school at the end of Grade 7 and many of them move on to the local independent high school which also caters for the upper middle class income group. Six of the twenty four Grade seven girls in the school participated in the study.

Research Site C is an independent school which was initially influenced by Eastern Transcendental Meditation. The learners were originally expected to participate in Transcendental Meditation as a form of relaxation to facilitate improved focus on school work. This is, however, now optional and few learners do participate in Transcendental Meditation at present. The school is twenty years old. It caters for learners from nursery school age to Grade 12 in the middle to upper middle income group. Twelve of the fourteen girls in Grade seven had permission to participate in this research.

Research Site D is a small independent school which bases its teaching on the Steiner School Ethos which focuses on the group rather than the individual (Rivers and Soutter, 1996: 361). The school has been in existence for fifteen years and provides education for learners from nursery school age to Grade 7. The classrooms are mostly temporary structures and the school still has a considerable amount of development potential. The fees are similar to those of Research Site A and suit the middle income group. The learners are taught to show respect for all and in return they expect to be shown respect by all. Competition is not encouraged as it is seen as a cause of aggression. There are thirteen Grade seven girls in this school, eight of whom participated in the research.

The fifth site, Research Site E, is situated on a large piece of land. It is twelve years old and caters for learners from nursery school age to Grade 12. The school accepts learners from all religious backgrounds and has no specific focus on any one belief or denomination. The school is growing slowly but consistently. The educators are working hard to make the public more aware of the school in order to encourage further enrollment. This school also caters for the middle to upper middle class income group. Seven of the fourteen Grade seven girls participated in the study.

3.3.1.2 The school principals

The principals of the schools were interviewed by means of the informal conversation interview method which, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:443), requires few specifically planned questions. This form of interview was implemented so that the

principals could provide the necessary background and an introduction to their specific schools in a relatively informal situation.

Principal A (see Appendix H) was extremely helpful and supportive. He is in his late thirties and has been teaching for fifteen years. He was appointed principal two years ago. He is the head of the Pre-primary school, the Primary school and the High school with one deputy and a number of heads of department. He is very busy since he is very actively involved in the school and with the learners. He is of the opinion that the girls in the school definitely display aggressive behaviour, and he perceives that the problem is more predominant in the grade six group of girls. He also feels that certain groups have more problems than others and that some grow out of the problem while to others it becomes a way of life.

Principal B (see Appendix H) has been principal of this primary school for ten years. The meeting between the researcher and this principal was very brief and she then appointed one of the senior educators to work with the researcher regarding further arrangements. This principal is in her late forties and has been in the education profession for approximately twenty five years. The researcher's experience of this school was that work was quickly delegated away from the principal depending on what was perceived to be important. The senior educator with whom the researcher worked is of the opinion that there is a definite problem of aggressive behaviour between the girls and that the school continually works at addressing the problems and assisting the girls where necessary. There is a counsellor on the premises to deal with problems as they arise.

The principal at Research Site C (see Appendix H) reacted in the same manner as principal B. She is in her late forties, has been principal of the primary school for ten years and was recently appointed Director of the whole school. The amount of work required by her management position limits her interaction with the learners and also with her staff. The researcher briefly discussed the requirements and was then introduced to the person teaching Life Orientation, who then continued with the

arrangements. This educator was most helpful in setting up appointments and providing further information on the school. She emphasised the fact that there are problems of aggressive behaviour amongst the girls at the school, and that these problems are addressed in the Life Orientation classes and by a qualified psychologist employed by the school.

The researcher was invited to a formal meeting with Principal D (see Appendix H) who requested a copy of the interview guide to be used for the focus group interviews in order to ascertain whether or not they would be in line with the school ethos. She required a thorough knowledge of the research in order to answer parent and learner questions that might arise. She is in her mid-fifties and has been head of the school for ten years. Principal D provided an excellent background to the school, explaining that they followed the Steiner School Ethos and she is of the opinion that they experience far less aggression as a result. This principal was involved in the study throughout and was most accommodating. She appears to be very involved with the learners and their experiences at the school.

Principal E (see Appendix H) has been in the teaching profession for approximately fifteen years. She has been head of the school for five years. She was not interested in the research at all. After an initial brief discussion her personal assistant continued with all further arrangements. This lady was reasonably helpful with the arrangements. The school appears to have no significant means of addressing the problem of aggressive behaviour amongst the girls other than in the Life Orientation classes. They do experience aggressive behaviour amongst the girls, but on a smaller scale according to the principal.

3.3.1.3 The sample group of girls

The sample group (n = 40) specifically selected for the research was the Grade seven group of early adolescent girls aged between twelve and thirteen, attending five similarly sized independent schools. Parental consent determined the final number of participants.

The girls find themselves at the beginning of senior school. This is the period in their lives when they are faced with many challenges (Penner, 1978: 229). They are in the process of establishing a self identity and are still developing the social skills that will be required of them as adults. (Bezuidenhout, 2004: 91)

Their experiences at school affect the way in which they face the challenges of adult life. (Young, 2002:5) It is therefore important to examine their school experiences. A total of forty girls from the five schools were involved in the study. The girls were divided into groups of six to twelve girls per group. There were five groups in total, one from each school.

The girls in Group A (see Appendix H) were initially shy and needed encouragement to participate in the discussion. They were of average height and weight. These girls were well disciplined and very cooperative at all times. They appeared to get on well with each other and once they began to participate, they lost their shyness and spoke openly about their experiences. There were seven girls in this group, of whom five were white and two were black.

Group B (see Appendix H) consisted of six talkative girls who were very eager to participate in the interview. This group was very open and honest about their feelings towards each other and about their school experiences. Two of the six girls appeared to be more dominant in the group. The group was generally more inclined to draw attention to problems experienced with close friends and at times had to be calmed down not to argue with each other. The girls were of average height. There were two black girls, one Indian girl and three white girls in this group.

Group C (see Appendix H), the group of twelve girls interviewed at Research Site C, were inclined to be less disciplined, possibly because of being such a big group. They were initially very interested in the interviews, but eventually treated this as an excuse to miss class work. The interviewer had to control this group more firmly than the other groups, firstly because they were more excitable and secondly because the school

insisted on one big group of twelve rather than two smaller (more manageable) groups. Three of the girls in this group were very prominent: one girl had previously been expelled from another school; another girl appeared to prefer physical aggression; and the third girl, the shortest in the group, often attempted to dominate the interview. Because of the size of the group it was necessary to complete the interview in two stages. These girls were generally more untidy and rather noisy. The group consisted of six black girls, three white girls and three Indian girls.

Group D (see Appendix H) included eight girls from Research Site D. The girls were very eager to participate and provided a considerable amount of information during the interview. The girls treated each other as equals and there was no specifically domineering member in the group. There were three black, two Indian and three white girls in this group. One girl was taller than the others who were of average height.

Group E (see Appendix H) consisted of seven girls who were very reserved initially. These girls were inclined to be smaller and appeared to be less confident. They only began to participate actively halfway through the interview. The girls needed a considerable amount of encouragement to respond to the questions and to open up to the researcher and to each other. There were four black girls, two white girls and one Indian girl in this group. They had minimal interaction with each other during the interview.

3.3.1.4 *The educators*

Individual educators from each school were interviewed as key-informants who are knowledgeable about the Grade seven girls because of their daily interaction with the girls. Sites A and D provided two educators for the interviews, while sites B, C and E provided one educator each. One male educator and six female educators were interviewed.

Educators One and Two (see Appendix H), from site A, are in their mid thirties. Educator One is a white female and Educator Two is a white male. Educator One

teaches Grade Seven Afrikaans and Geography and has been teaching for ten years. She is also the netball coach for the Grade Seven age group and therefore has a considerable amount of interaction with the girls. According to her, the girls seek guidance and reassurance from her when having to deal with their daily problems. They see her as their mentor. The male educator, Educator Two, teaches Economic Management Sciences to the Grade sevens. He has been teaching for twelve years. He is less involved with the girls as he only works with them for three periods per week.

Educators Three and Four (see Appendix H), from site D, are white females from predominantly Afrikaans backgrounds. They are both in their late twenties. Educator Three teaches English and Social Sciences to the Grade sevens. She has been teaching for six years. Educator Four teaches Afrikaans to the Grade sevens and has been involved in teaching for five years. Both educators were very interested in the research and were most willing to be interviewed. Because of the subjects Educator Three teaches, she spends a considerable amount of time with the Grade seven girls and should be more aware of problems that occur between the girls. Educator Four only teaches the girls four lessons per week and has less interaction with them.

The youngest educator is Educator Five who teaches at site B (see Appendix H). She is in her early twenties, is white and has only been teaching for one year. She teaches the Grade Seven class Afrikaans and Technology. Because of the informality of a subject such as Technology, this educator often works with the learners in a more informal class situation where more social interaction occurs between the individuals than in the more formal subjects such as Mathematics. She also teaches Drama as an extra-mural activity and many of the Grade seven girls are part of the Drama class. Because of her age, the girls tend to identify more closely with her.

Educator Six (see Appendix H), at site C, teaches the Grade sevens Mathematics and Natural Sciences. She is Indian and in her mid thirties. She has been teaching for approximately thirteen years. She is also the Grade seven register class educator and

netball coach and, as a result of this, is the person who addresses many of the problems experienced in the class.

Educator Seven (see Appendix H) is black and she teaches English, Social Sciences and Economic Management Sciences to the Grade sevens at site E. She was born in Zambia and has been teaching for approximately ten years. She is in her early thirties. She has a considerable amount of interaction with the girls as a result of the subjects she teaches them.

3.3.2 Ethical considerations

When working with the human element one needs to take certain matters into consideration in order to prevent emotional, psychological or physical harm and to protect the participants. The researcher specifically protected the participants by fully informing them, ensuring the confidentiality of information supplied and the anonymity of all participants while this research was planned and completed.

According to Strydom (in: De Vos 2002: 64) it is essential to ensure that the participants in the research are fully aware of the purpose of the study and exactly what their participation entails. This enabled the participants to decide if they wished to continue with the study or if they wished to withdraw. They were also made aware that the study could possibly focus on issues that could be embarrassing for them and for this reason they were given the alternative of an individual interview if they wished to discuss more sensitive issues than would be appropriate in the group. None of the girls requested individual interviews.

In this specific research it was necessary to inform the parents of the exact requirements as all of the girls were under the age of eighteen. The parents were requested to sign a letter of consent (see Appendix B) before the girls were approached (cf. Mouton, 2001:244). The girls were then informed of the exact nature of the study and its purpose. They were also permitted to ask questions should they become confused.

The schools involved in the research, the parents who gave consent and the girls who participated were assured of complete confidentiality and anonymity throughout the research. The girls were referred to by numbers as a form of code name. The participants were informed of the recording of the interviews as the researcher felt that it would be beneficial for this type of study to be able to refer directly to what had been said by the girls and the educators, rather than to take notes which would have been more disruptive and possibly less accurate (Strydom in: De Vos, 2002:69).

3.3.3 Gaining access to the research sites

The researcher telephonically contacted the principals of each of the research sites and explained the details of the research. A letter was then sent to the research sites requesting permission to work with the Grade seven girls (see Appendix A). The researcher then visited each of the research sites to interview the principals (see Appendix C). The purpose of this visit was to gather background information on each research site and the particular group of girls who would be interviewed. Field notes were made on these initial interviews (see Appendix H). As suggested by Mouton (2001:244) the researcher offered to provide the research sites with a summary of the findings.

The researcher then provided the principals with letters requesting permission from the parents to interview each of the girls as mentioned in section 3.3.2. These letters were sent home to the parents and a reply slip was returned by those parents who gave permission for their daughters to be interviewed. Approximately 50% of the parents gave permission for their daughters to participate in the research. Once all of the reply slips were returned to the schools the researcher was contacted by the schools to collect them. The researcher then determined how many girls at each research site would be participating so that the number of groups could be identified. The research sites were then contacted and dates and times were booked for the focus group interviews. This was done with as little inconvenience to the research sites as possible.

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.4.1 The focus group interviews

The researcher used focus group interviews as the predominant method of data collection. The focus group interviews allow the researcher the opportunity of obtaining information concerning a variety of problems experienced by each individual girl with personal comments and language appropriate to their age (cf. De Vos, 2002:307). The focus group would also provide each individual with a sense of security which could make participation easier. According to De Vos (2002:309) focus groups are an important way of obtaining an understanding of feelings, reactions and problems in a group, which are considered important components of this research. Schurink (1995:5) emphasises the fact that "...they [focus group interviews] facilitate the natural, spontaneous discussion of events or experiences by the participants". Careful planning was needed to assure the success of the focus group interviews. The researcher completed a pilot test, as previously discussed (see section 3.2.3), in order to finalise the content and procedure of the interviews.

The focus groups were made up of six to twelve girls (see section 3.3.1.3). The time allocated was between twenty and thirty minutes. The researcher arranged for a second or even a third interview in instances where the time was not sufficient, especially in the bigger groups. The size of the group of girls at research site C necessitated a second interview in order to complete the interview.

The focus group interviews were arranged according to the schedule at each of the research sites. In some instances interviews were arranged during a school break, and in other instances the interviews took place during a Sport or Life Orientation period. The interviews were held in a vacant classroom at each site and the girls were seated in a circle during the interview procedure.

The researcher explained to each of the groups exactly what could be expected and the purpose of the interviews. The girls were also informed that the interviews would be recorded, but that the content was completely confidential. They were encouraged to ignore the tape recorder and to relax.

The researcher then proceeded to introduce the subject of aggressive behaviour by asking the girls for a short definition of aggressive behaviour as they perceived it. A few brief, informal remarks were made and then the actual interview began.

The researcher questioned the girls with the aid of an interview guide (see Appendix D). The questions were asked in the order that appeared appropriate for the group and for the responses received, and not necessarily as they appear in the guide. The girls were encouraged to speak freely, but to allow each other to speak without interruption. This was often difficult as the girls became rather excited when the situation affected them directly and they were very eager to voice their own opinions or to expand on their personal problems and experiences.

The questions were modified as required by the answers given by the girls, and additional questions were asked where necessary. The girls were encouraged to expand on their answers and to give as much information as possible. For this purpose the questions were open-ended.

The interviews were recorded and then transcribed so that references to what was said by the girls would be more specific. The transcriptions were then dissected and analysed in depth. The findings were then categorised. These categories included types of aggression, reasons for the aggression, strategies implemented by the girls to manage the aggressive behaviour and the feelings evoked by the aggressive behaviour (see section 3.5).

3.4.2 Individual interviews with educators

Educator interviews were only held individually. Once the focus group interviews with the girls were completed the researcher arranged with the principal of each school to interview at least one of the Grade seven educators. The interviews were arranged at a time suitable for the school and for the respective educators.

The educators were very willing to answer the questions and all had at some point experienced problems with aggressive behaviour between the girls (see Appendix E). Once again the questions, all open-ended, were merely used as a guide and were modified as required by the educators' answers. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed. The results were then analysed and divided into categories similar to those of the girls. Throughout the analysis the girls' comments and the educators' comments were used comparatively to substantiate the actual extent of the problem.

3.4.3 Observations

During the focus group interviews the researcher observed (see Appendix H) the participants, identifying physical differences and similarities, listening to their verbal responses, but also noting their actions and reactions to each other, their body language, attitudes expressed non-verbally and the underlying feelings between the girls. These field observations provided important information that did not evolve from the spoken word. The composition of each group was also carefully noted by the researcher. At the conclusion of each focus group interview the researcher carefully compiled field notes describing all observations which were then used to substantiate and corroborate the findings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:454).

The researcher also made use of observation (see Appendix H) during the individual interviews with the educators, once again to gauge any underlying issues that were not presented verbally. These observations were carefully recorded at the conclusion of each

individual interview. In many instances the opinions expressed by the researcher result from the non-verbal responses observed.

3.4.4 Official documents

Official documents are an important source of information in research as they “describe peoples’ experience, knowledge, actions and values” according to McMillan & Schumacher (2001: 451). Those involved in education have a rich source of documentation available for providing additional information and understanding of the problems they have to address on a daily basis. For this reason the researcher briefly examined the Codes of Conduct for Learners and the Policies on Behaviour implemented by each of the schools, extracts of which appear in Appendix F. The purpose of this was to determine the attitudes of each of the schools towards aggressive behaviour and to determine the level of importance given by each school to addressing this type of behaviour.

3.4.5 Problems experienced

The problems experienced during this research included the following:

- poor interest shown in the research by the principals of schools B, C, and D;
- group C was too big, but this was a decision made by the school involved;
- a large percentage of the girls was not included in the study;
- time constraints as the schools were so busy; and
- no girls were interested in individual interviews.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The aim of the data analysis is to provide an understanding and explanation of the information collected (De Vos, 2002:341). McMillan and Schumacher (2001:466) state that “[i]t is almost impossible to interpret data unless one organises them”. The

researcher has to work carefully with the information in order to reach conclusions and achieve the specified aims of the research. It may be a lengthy process, but it is essential if the validity of the study is to be successful.

The focus group interviews were recorded to provide the necessary accuracy required for the research. The recordings were played back immediately after the interviews, listened to carefully to hear what was actually being said, and were then transcribed. The interviews with the educators were also recorded and then played back and transcribed. The researcher also made field notes of observations during the interviews to assist with the analysis and to gain a better understanding of the participants and their reactions towards each other.

For the purpose of this study the transcriptions of the focus group interviews and individual interviews were carefully analysed and coded in various colours in order to distinguish the important facts identified. These facts were then divided into categories for easier management of data. This enabled the researcher to identify the types of aggressive behaviour experienced, the reasons for the behaviour, the consequences of aggressive behaviour as displayed by girls of this age and the people approached by the girls to assist them with the problems they experienced. The field notes were used to substantiate, elaborate on and corroborate the findings. The emotional concerns regarding aggressive behaviour were then carefully considered in order to identify methods of addressing aggressive behaviour displayed by girls in Grade seven.

3.6 CONCLUSION

For the purpose of this research the researcher elected to implement a qualitative research method. This was perceived to be the better method of gaining the required information directly from the respondents. Their experiences needed to be explained from their own perspectives. An initial pilot study was conducted to enable the researcher to test and modify the questions as necessary. The respondents were purposefully selected according to the requirements of the research.

The researcher made use of focus group interviews, individual interviews, observations and a study of official school documents to achieve the aims of the study. The girls were given the opportunity of discussing their own experiences and the effects of these experiences on their school lives. These ideas were then corroborated by the educators.

In Chapter four the findings of the research will be discussed in depth in order to ascertain the actual occurrences and extent of aggressive behaviour displayed by early adolescent girls in Grade seven. The findings from the interviews with the educators will be used to substantiate these further. A brief discussion of the document study will provide a better understanding of the level of importance the management of aggressive behaviour has in schools. The researcher will also attempt to clarify the causes and consequences of aggressive behaviour and consider possible management procedures.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF DATA AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter four will focus specifically on the data collected during the research conducted at the five independent schools discussed in Chapter three. The researcher aims to present and explain the findings by referring to the observations made by the researcher, the comments made by the learners in the focus group interviews and the comments of the educators made during the individual interviews. The researcher will also briefly discuss the official documents obtained and examined at the research sites.

After the initial interviews with the school principals and having received the necessary permission from the parents, focus group interviews were arranged with the girls at times and places suitable to the schools. The girls briefly discussed aggressive behaviour as an introduction to the research questions.

Using the interview guide (see Appendix D), the girls were asked a total of thirteen questions which were divided into three categories pertaining to the aims of the study. The questions were modified where necessary in order to encourage more open participation and to provide the opportunity for an explanation of the answers given by the girls. Any additional information supplied by the participants was also accepted by the researcher.

During the individual interviews the educators answered six questions (see Appendix E) and these were also modified as required by the answers given. The educators were also given the opportunity of expanding on their answers as might be required by each individual.

During the focus group interviews the researcher carefully observed the girls in order to determine the underlying issues determined by their reactions to each other. The document study gave the researcher greater insight into the level of importance given to aggressive behaviour in the broader picture of each individual school system.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS

As mentioned previously, five independent schools were selected by the researcher for the purpose of the study. The Grade seven girls aged twelve to thirteen were purposefully selected to participate in the research in order to assess the extent, cause and consequences of aggressive behaviour in early adolescent girls. The girls who eventually participated did so with written approval by their parents. The focus group interviews were recorded to provide accuracy and detail. The recordings were then transcribed and analysed in depth to reach the final results.

The educators who participated in the individual interviews were selected by the principals of the schools by virtue of being involved with the education of the Grade seven girls and were therefore considered to be information-rich participants. The interviews with the educators were also recorded and then transcribed. These were then analysed in depth and combined with the results of the learners to complete the research.

4.3 THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.3.1 Perceptions of aggressive behaviour

All of the girls interviewed have at some stage in their school lives been involved in one or other form of aggressive behaviour, either by having been the victim, the aggressor or by having witnessed others being treated aggressively. To many of the girls the various forms of aggressive behaviour are perceived to be a part of life, as one girl stated when asked about gossiping: “I think it’s something we do all the time” (see Appendix J). Another girl added: “It’s like a habit” (see Appendix J) and a third girl said: “And you

just have to do it” (see Appendix J). A few of the girls explained that telling other girls the secrets that someone had told you was a ‘bad habit’ (see Appendix J) but “We’ve done it ever since you start having friends because you get used to it and then you can’t stop” (see Appendix K). One of the educators supported this feeling by emphasising that it was all a part of growing up and that there would always be issues to sort out (see Appendix P). Another educator felt that it was not necessarily malicious and merely happened (see Appendix O).

Many of the girls shared the opinion that “people just expect it to happen” (see Appendix I) and aggressive behaviour is just one of the difficulties of life with which they have to live. One girl added: “It’s going to be rough. Life’s not for ‘sissies”” (see Appendix I).

Throughout the interviews the girls identified a number of forms of aggressive behaviour including physical aggression, verbal aggression and non-verbal aggression. It is interesting to note that the educators were far less aware of the problems than the girls, possibly because the aggression occurs so subtly or the educators do not really understand what is going on between the girls they teach.

4.3.2 Types of aggressive behaviour identified

The participants referred to a number of different types of aggressive behaviour during the interviews, many of which matched those discussed in Chapter two.

4.3.2.1 *Gossip*

Gossiping was one of the types of aggressive behaviour most often mentioned by the girls. When asked if this type of behaviour did occur, most of the girls replied, almost eagerly, that it did. One of the girls commented that: “it’s impossible to refrain from doing that” (see Appendix L), while another girl explained: “I think all girls do [gossip]” (see Appendix L). A number of the girls referred to this type of behaviour as almost

impossible to control and that often things just slipped out. Another girl had this to say about gossip: “We love it” (see Appendix I).

The general feeling was that those who gossip sound as if they intend to make it obvious that they are gossiping about someone because they actually look at the person they are discussing and when that person is within hearing distance they quickly change the subject and speak about something else. Often the girls would rather speak about someone behind their back than to actually confront them directly to sort out a problem (see Appendix K). The problem with this is the fact that the gossip was normally relayed to the girl being discussed, irrespective of whether it was meant to be or not. Some of the girls did not even realise that they were gossiping about someone, because they were “so used to it” (see Appendix K). They emphasised that it was very difficult to stop gossiping about other girls. The teachers did not refer specifically to gossiping as a problem experienced by them, possibly because this is done rather subtly and not in the open.

4.3.2.2 *Spreading rumours*

This is another type of aggressive behaviour that was identified by many of the girls. In this instance the girls told stories about one or other girl with the explicit goal of making that girl look bad. The types of rumours spread by the girls included telling everyone that a specific girl was pregnant (see Appendix J), or that someone was a lesbian (see Appendix K). The general feeling was that rumours were most often spread concerning sexual activities. The girls in Group C generally appeared to have more experience of this type of rumour spreading with a sexual innuendo. It was felt by a few of the girls that this type of behaviour was aggravated by the fact that some girls “spiced up” (see Appendix J) what they had heard in order to make it worse than it initially was. One girl felt that it was very easy to lose a good friend through rumours being spread by that person. She stated: “One second she’s like your best friend, the next second she won’t talk to you, and she spreads rumours about you and she drops you” (see Appendix J).

4.3.2.3 *Joking/teasing*

There was a general consensus that the girls often joked about or with each other, or teased each other without realising the consequences. They did not realise that what was amusing for one person might not be amusing for someone else. Some of the comments made jokingly were inclined to be personal in nature and caused far more hurt than intended. The feeling also surfaced that it was often difficult to judge by a person's tone of voice whether they were serious or not, which often resulted in the wrong reaction to a comment, e.g. "sometimes she makes it sound like she actually means it" (see Appendix J) . In this instance the aggression could also be physical, for example if someone poured water over one of the girls and this was not seen as a joke, it could lead to further problems if there was retaliation, either of a verbal or physical nature.

The educators generally saw this type of aggressive behaviour as fairly common in their classes. It was noted that the girls often teased each other about their achievements or lack of achievements. One educator specifically commented: "They don't realise how... how such a comment actually does hurt" (see Appendix N).

4.3.2.4 *Exclusion and being ignored*

A further form of aggressive behaviour experienced by these girls is that of exclusion. A few of the girls explained that they had experienced exclusion when a third person came into a relationship. The new girl became more popular and the original best friend eventually excluded her from the friendship in favour of the new girl. One of the girls felt: "[S]he started like pushing me out" (see Appendix J). It was interesting to note that either the old friend or the new girl could be guilty of the exclusion. The girl who was excluded often felt that she had been replaced by the other girl. It was also felt that either one of the other girls often used the third person when they needed a friend and the other girl was not available. The friend who was used would then be dropped when the other person returned, as one girl explained: "[W]hen her friend's not there I'm her best

friend” (see Appendix K). Most often the girls did not know why they were being excluded from a group.

A few of the girls had also experienced being left out of a group who were invited to a party, while others had been invited to parties only to be ignored and excluded from a specific group at the parties. Some of the girls felt that their ‘best friends’ often made them feel excluded when they interacted with other girls and the friend was not invited along.

The educators noted that this type of behaviour did occur. One educator commented: “[T]hey’re very into their clothing. If you don’t have the right clothes you’re not in our group, if you don’t have the right attitude you’re not in our group...” (see Appendix R). This educator felt that the best solution could actually be to make new friends and to find a group more suitable.

4.3.2.5 Degrading remarks and swearing

Most of the girls acknowledged the fact that they did swear at each other. Some of them felt that this was often meant to be a joke, but that it was taken seriously. Many of the girls were offended at being sworn at by anyone. One of the other problems experienced was that the girls often called each other names such as “cow”, “whore” and “bitch”. This was also often done jokingly, but was easily misunderstood, which caused further problems (see Appendix I). They also had a bad habit of saying things about each others’ mothers or friends, with the explicit aim of hurting the person to whom they were speaking.

Girls who did speak to an educator or parent about their problems at school were often asked: “Why did you have to go and tell? It’s so not nice!” (see Appendix K) or something similar which discouraged them from asking for help. One of the girls had specifically been called a “bitch” by one of her educators and it seemed as if this type of problem had been experienced by a few of the other girls (see Appendix L). This

specific group of girls, Group D, felt that it was “not fair for us to get into trouble if we swear and they don’t” (see Appendix L). Many of the girls accepted swearing as part of life.

The educators did not remark on the swearing between girls as it was probably something that occurred at break and not specifically in the classroom situation.

4.3.2.6 Confrontation

The girls generally discussed confrontation from two perspectives: confronting someone with their opinions and confronting someone to sort out problems.

Confrontation is initially used to solve the differences the girls may have with each other, but because of the way they confront the person with whom they have the problem it actually tends to cause even bigger problems and often results in full scale arguments. Confrontation is therefore considered by many of the girls to be a form of aggressive behaviour. Some of the girls did not know how to deal with someone who was crying because of the things that had been said to them (see Appendix K).

A further problem with confrontation, according to a few of the girls, is that some of them believe that it is better to be open and honest about the things you like or do not like about other people (see Appendix K). Unfortunately it causes problems when someone is too direct and tactless. This actually causes more harm than not saying anything. One of the girls commented: “[B]eing up front is not always the right thing to be because some people really get angry” (see Appendix K). Another girl felt that she would rather have people gossiping about her than saying things directly to her, as the directness could hurt much more (see Appendix K).

One of the educators felt that the girls do not understand how to discuss their differences and that that could cause further problems between two girls. When they do confront each other with a problem they go about it in the wrong way which complicates matters.

According to this educator: “They don’t know how to negotiate around a point yet. So their negotiation skills are lacking” (see Appendix N).

4.3.2.7 Retaliation

A number of the girls felt that retaliation was also a form of aggressive behaviour. It often occurred as a result of some other form of aggression and was basically explained as “you do whatever they did to you” (see Appendix J) instead of rather trying to solve the problem. It was done as a form of “getting back” (see Appendix J) at a person for any hurt they may have caused to someone else. In some instances the girls admitted that the aim of the retaliation was to cause as much hurt or even more than had been initially experienced. If they perceived that someone was being aggressive towards them they would “get back at someone” (see Appendix J).

4.3.2.8 Sarcasm and criticism

A number of the girls mentioned this form of aggressive behaviour as it is commonly used by them. Many of the girls seemed to take pride in the clever remarks they made, often at the expense of someone else (see Appendix L). The victims of these remarks often felt humiliated. The remarks tended to cause initial amusement for the group listening but the victim was degraded and embarrassed by what was said. The researcher is of the opinion that often the sarcasm, known by the girls as “dissing”, was not just sarcasm but actually indicated the real feelings the girl had for the person she was addressing.

One of the educators commented: “And lots of ‘dissing’ and you know ... and you can see that some of them just try to laugh it off but you can see that after they’ve stopped laughing ... they don’t actually like what’s happened” (see Appendix P). A few of the educators felt that the girls sometimes tended to be very critical of each other which often caused hurt and humiliation. They often hear comments that are inclined to be very sarcastic and unkind.

4.3.2.9 *Non-verbal aggressive behaviour*

Only a few girls referred to non-verbal behaviour as aggressive behaviour. This could either be as a result of it being such a common occurrence that it is not even noticed or that it does not appear as aggressive to the aggressor as it does to those watching from the side-lines. Many of the girls do notice how a look can carry a whole message and how silence can also convey a number of feelings.

The educators specifically notice and comment on the subtlety of non-verbal aggressive behaviour, such as “the roll of the eyes or a sigh” (see Appendix O), when someone tries to answer a question. One educator referred to the “dirty looks” (see Appendix Q) that often pass between the learners to convey dislike, while another educator referred to the “funny gestures” (see Appendix T) that the girls make towards each other. These types of non-verbal aggressive behaviour convey the message that there is a certain amount of tension between the girls which all of the educators wished to sort out. The researcher is of the opinion that the non-verbal reactions often conveyed far more than the girls realised.

4.3.2.10 *Letter writing, telephone calls and cellular phone messages*

The girls only touched briefly on these types of communication in terms of aggressive behaviour. Those that did explained that they find it far easier to explain their feelings when not facing their opponent. The general problem, however, was that they realise that they often say far worse things as a result of not speaking directly to their friends. It was felt that one could hurt someone emotionally far more easily when not with that person. One of the girls commented: “It’s easier to say over the phone” (see Appendix I). In this way they did not see the expression of hurt on the face of the victim. Another girl referred to the fact that the educators often find nasty letters being sent around and have to deal with this (see Appendix I).

The educators did not mention this type of aggressive behaviour at all, but the researcher felt that this was possibly because it is once again executed subtly and that the letters sent to friends are often not discovered. The telephone calls and text messages are not made known to the educators unless they cause problems directly requiring educator assistance or intervention.

4.3.2.11 *Physical aggressive behaviour*

A few of the girls had been exposed to physical aggressive behaviour, but this appeared to occur when they were a lot younger. There were, however, a few who stated that they prefer sorting out problems physically as the problem is then resolved quickly. One girl explained: “when you hit it’s like over ...” (see Appendix I), while another girl added: “Girl aggression as in talking like in mean ways to each other ... is hurting the other person more than violence would” (see Appendix J). A third girl stated: “I’d rather be hit than being picked on, nailed every single time by your friends” (see Appendix J). One of the girls at School C was very verbal about the fact that she rather sorted her problems out with physical aggression as this seemed to be the only solution for her. She explained: “Even though you say sorry I will hit you but I’m done with you” (see Appendix K). A further feeling explained by the girls was the fact that some felt that if one uses physical aggression the other person will realise that you are serious and will hopefully not cause any further problems. This aggression is most often a form of retaliation as a result of some other form of aggression experienced, “and it will just tell them this person is not to mess with and then they’ll stop gossiping about you” (see Appendix K). Another girl, however, felt that physical violence only creates a feeling of fear and that there is no respect for the violent aggressor. Another girl stated: “people respect you more if you use your mind rather than your fists” (see Appendix K).

The researcher gained the impression that a few of the girls, specifically from Group C, who stated that they would use physical aggression said this because of the impact that it would have on the focus-group and that they would not, in reality, actually use physical

aggression to sort out their problems. These girls also appeared more immature and generally more aggressive than the girls interviewed as a whole.

The educators all agreed that, in their experience, no physical violence occurs in their schools. The general feeling was that, while there is 'bitchiness' and other forms of indirect aggression, there is no evidence of anything relating to physical aggression. The girls who believe that physical aggression solves their problems are either very careful about hiding this type of violence, or it does not take place on school premises and is therefore not seen by the educators. The researcher is of the opinion that this type of aggressive behaviour is not common in any of these schools and, should it appear, that it would be strictly dealt with.

4.3.3 Causes of aggressive behaviour

Throughout the interviews the girls mentioned a number of causes for the aggressive behaviour they experience. The views of the educators often coincided with the girls' but there were a few causes mentioned by educators that were not mentioned by the girls. The causes of aggression identified included jealousy, attention seeking, habit, idleness, biological, parent influence and the media.

4.3.3.1 Jealousy

When asked what possibly could cause aggressive behaviour a number of the girls mentioned jealousy. This problem appears in various forms. One of the types of jealousy most often mentioned is that caused by a third person coming into a friendship (see Appendix I). Many of the girls found it difficult to accept a new person into their friendship with another girl. There is a considerable amount of jealousy as a result of the fear of losing a friend and this often causes the girls to be aggressive towards the new person. Their initial friend sometimes becomes aggressive to them because of wanting the new friend for themselves.

Being jealous of another girl's possessions or physical attributes was identified as a considerable cause of aggressive behaviour. Many of the girls, specifically in groups C and D (see Appendices K and L), realised that they often want what other people have and they become aggressive as a result of this. They realise that aggressiveness is often initiated by something minor. Two of the educators commented on jealousy as a possible cause of aggressive behaviour. They realised that some of the girls are very jealous of what they perceive the other girls to have and that treating those girls badly makes them feel better. One of the educators commented on the fact that some of the girls are also jealous of the performance of other girls on an academic level (see Appendix Q). This appeared to be more of a problem in Groups A and B.

4.3.3.2 *Attention seeking*

Attention seeking was seen by the girls as a definite cause of aggressive behaviour (see Appendix J). They noticed that some girls are more inclined to spread rumours about other girls possibly because this attracts attention, needed to be accepted into new groups. It appears important to know something about someone that nobody else knows or to spread as nasty a rumour as possible. Telling someone's secrets to a third person is also presumed to be done "[to] get the centre of attention" (see Appendix J).

One of the educators noted that the girls tend to exaggerate during class discussions in order to attract attention and to make someone else look silly. They appear to ignore the fact that they can possibly hurt someone else in order to get as much attention as possible. Girls have a definite desire to "impress everyone else" (see Appendix J).

4.3.3.3 *Habit*

A few of girls remarked on the fact that nasty comments often 'slip out' (see Appendix M) as if they are part of a bad habit and that gossiping is specifically seen as part of a habit that they acquired (see Appendix K). These habits had become a part of their everyday life and are very difficult to break. The girls agreed that many of the things

said through habit can actually be prevented if the girls allow themselves the time to think before saying something nasty.

4.3.3.4 *Misunderstanding*

The girls often commented on the fact that aggressive behaviour was caused by a misunderstanding between the girls. Sometimes they interpreted the manner in which something was said incorrectly or they misunderstood the tone of the voice, as one girl mentioned: “Sometimes it’s not really what you think though ...” (see Appendix L). Another girl added: “We imagine something that’s maybe not really there” (see Appendix L) and another girl said: “so just the tone of your voice can change something completely” (see Appendix L). One girl added: ‘You can’t really explain and they get the wrong idea” (see Appendix M). The general feeling was that past experience influences how things are perceived. Unfortunately these incorrect perceptions often result in retaliation and further aggressive behaviour.

Many of the girls also feel that they are often inclined to be over sensitive and to interpret things incorrectly. This often occurred when a girl told them about a new item she had been given. Some of the girls thought the girl was bragging and reacted aggressively, when in actual fact the person just needed to tell someone about a positive experience (see Appendix L). They also realised that often aggressive behaviour is caused by something very small and can be prevented.

A few of the educators agreed that the girls did on occasion misinterpret what was said, as one educator remarked: “I’m not certain that it’s always malicious” (see Appendix O). The researcher agreed that misinterpreting events or comments can be a possible cause of aggressive behaviour as the girls often referred to incidents that were relatively harmless but had upset them significantly. If they had just carefully considered what had actually happened they could possibly have prevented the resultant problems.

4.3.3.5 Age

Only one of the girls referred to age as a possible factor causing aggressive behaviour because she was of the opinion: "...like everyone's growing up too fast" (see Appendix J), which implies that girls are expected to be adults too soon. One of the educators agreed with this problem of accelerated maturity as a cause for aggressive behaviour as she said: "they're maturing a lot faster" (see Appendix P). She felt that they need to be treated differently as a result of this faster maturation if the problem of aggression is to be addressed.

The educators generally felt that age was of paramount importance as regards causes of aggressive behaviour. Comments such as "They are at a stage where they are trying to establish or exert themselves to find their own 'who am I'" (see Appendix N), "That's something you learn with age" (see Appendix N), "I think it's a maturity issue" (see Appendix O) and "Because they are also the age, in Grade seven, where they have changes in their bodies and their emotions...you need to teach them how to deal with it" (see Appendix S) reflect this acknowledgement of change and a need for understanding and acting accordingly.

The researcher agrees with the educators that these changes do cause problems for the girls, but it is very clear that the girls do not realise the challenges of physical change and many do not have the necessary coping mechanisms to manage this change.

4.3.3.6 Home influences

There were a few girls who realised that events at home can influence the way in which a person reacts at school. One girl specifically referred to incidents of abuse initially witnessed at home which could be seen as the norm and quite acceptable in the bigger world. Parents who were angry with each other may take out their anger on the daughter who subsequently believes that she can take out her anger on her friends at school (see Appendix L). There was one girl who commented on the fact that since she could not

take out her anger on a guilty sibling, she took that anger to school and was aggressive to people who were not involved in her experiences at home.

A number of the educators agreed that home issues affect school aggression. Children may be angry with parents who get divorced and this anger is then taken out on friends at school who cannot really retaliate. An educator noticed that her learners were not always happy when they got to school, possibly due to unresolved issues at home (see Appendix N). Another educator commented on the fact that the parents are often not the examples they should be (see Appendix P). She felt that the parents often do not follow their own rules and that the children then consequently do not follow these rules either. Some parents are angry and stressed and this has a negative influence on their children as well. The general feeling of the educators was that, irrespective of what they taught at school, the parents have the most influence on their children (see Appendix O) and that if the parents are too busy to be with their children, their offspring would be negatively influenced. The researcher is of the opinion that too many people have forgotten what their role is as a parent and primary educator, and that parents rely too heavily on society to educate their children in the basics of growing up.

4.3.3.7 Media

The media as a cause of aggressive behaviour was widely accepted by the girls as well as most of the educators. The girls believe that the media influences them in many ways and that the media contribute to the way they react towards each other. One of the main ways in which they are influenced is the manner in which they see themselves in comparison to how they believed the media expect them to be. Many girls are excluded from groups because of the way they dress (see Appendix I). Their clothes are not what the media portray as being fashionable. Often only the skinny girls fit into the group and “cat fights” between girls are considered to be acceptable and a part of life (see Appendix M).

The girls, specifically in groups B and D (see Appendices J and L), also remarked on the characters shown on television or in movies which portray being nasty as being acceptable. “Dissing” was seen as one of the specific forms of aggressive behaviour learnt via television. Some of the girls make a point of using what they have heard with their friends. One girl stated: “You kind of forget that you’re in the real world and not on the TV” (see Appendix J).

The educators generally felt that the girls are positively and negatively influenced by the media. The male educator did not specifically notice whether the girls actually dress according to the fashions dictated by the media. The female educators felt that the clothing that the girls wear is considerably influenced by what the media suggests. Girls who do not wear the right clothes are ostracised and excluded from the ‘in’ group. One educator said: “[T]he way they dress and carry themselves ... tells you that they’re very governed by the media” (see Appendix Q). Some of the educators believed that the programmes the girls watched influence their attitudes towards each other. They agreed with the girls that the examples they see on television are often inclined to encourage aggressive behaviour. One educator mentioned that even the older women in the shows are often aggressive and this carries the message that it is acceptable (see Appendix P).

The researcher realises that the media has a considerable influence on these girls and it is necessary for their parents to be aware of the content of the media to which they are exposed.

4.3.3.8 Competition

Only a few girls considered competition to be a possible cause of aggressive behaviour. They felt that girls compete for the attention of the boys in the school because it is important to have a boyfriend in order to impress their friends. They also compete for attention from their teachers. In this regard a number of them commented on “teachers ... [having] favourites” (see Appendix L). The educators specifically commented on the

amount of competition between the girls in terms of wanting the most attention, the most friends and the best academic results.

The researcher realises that many of the possible causes for aggression are based on competition whether for marks, popularity, attention or fashionable clothing. In most instances the girls do not realise that they are continually competing for a place in society and striving for self- actualisation.

4.3.3.9 Peer pressure

All of the girls have at some stage been influenced by their peers. The pressure they feel to wear the correct clothes in order to belong to the ‘in’ group, as well as the fact that girls in different groups are not allowed to socialise with each other, is a direct example of this. One girl noted: “It’s like you can’t talk to that girl in that group because we’re like rivals or something” (see Appendix J). Speaking to the wrong group could result in exclusion from the present group according to the girls.

Another problem that a few of the girls identified is that friends often aggravate a problem by overreacting and encouraging the person who is upset by someone to retaliate more harshly than the problem actually required. One girl, in Group C, explained:

[L]ike some people like fight about something that you said about them or said to them and then they go to their friends and then their friends are the ones to cause the problems because they tell them: “You’re letting her treat you like that, you just got to leave her” and then the person gets like angry ... and then starts fighting like physically with you ... (see Appendix K).

Only one of the educators referred to peer pressure as a possible cause of aggressive behaviour. The researcher noted that many of the other causes are related to peer pressure such as the need for attention and the influence of the media.

4.3.3.10 *Sense of power*

“[S]ome people, they go up front and then be nasty just to hurt that person, just to see like ... the hurt on their face” (see Appendix I). For a number of the girls this was a distinct cause of aggressive behaviour. They believed that there are a number of girls who enjoy the feeling of power they had over those that they upset or hurt. This hurt can either be emotional or physical. It appears that those who enjoy the sense of power also enjoy creating a feeling of fear in their victims. One of the girls emphasised this by saying: “I’d rather just leave her alone for the fear and not that I respect her ... for the fear that she’ll do something back to me” (see Appendix K). Other comments regarding the sense of power as a cause of aggressive behaviour included: “It makes you feel empowered” (see Appendix I) and “You feel like the hero who’s got all the power ... so that you can like control this person and then this person will do anything for you” (see Appendix I). Many of those who made these comments, specifically from Group C, emphasised the fact that the feeling of power is more often associated with physical aggression.

The educators made no reference to this feeling of power or control at all. The researcher believes that it is necessary to have experienced this type of behaviour first hand in order to comment on it. The aggressive behaviour caused by this need for power has not specifically been observed by the educators.

4.3.3.11 *Anger and frustration*

A few of the girls mentioned the fact that sometimes they have “off” days or get upset at home and then take their annoyance to school and take it out on their friends. Many of them see this type of reaction at home where their parents vent the anger felt towards someone else unfairly on their children. Their frustration of being unfairly “moaned at” is reason enough to be aggressive to their friends who have no idea why they are the victims of this behaviour. They feel “what have I done wrong is taken to school and then

let out on other children” (see Appendix L). The girls also commented on the fact that their educators often react in the same way.

Some of the girls realised that they become angry because of comments made by their educators, their friends or the boys in the class. They then overreact in an aggressive way.

One educator remarked specifically on the amount of anger felt by the girls as a result of the problems in society. She commented:

A lot of aggression goes a lot deeper than just classrooms, where crime has played a huge role in their lives. That is aggression outside the class, aggression towards the community. That is where Mom and Dad get divorced ... that is a deep ... hurt (see Appendix N).

The problem with anger or hurt is that it is often turned into aggressive behaviour towards other girls. Educator One (see Appendix N) referred to the fact that girls actually are able to identify what it is that makes them angry and results in aggressive behaviour. There were a few girls who had actually approached her for assistance in solving their anger. She felt that the crime situation in South Africa could exacerbate the amount and type of aggressive behaviour manifested by South African children. As a result of this the aggressive behaviour will also have to be addressed differently to that of learners in other countries.

Another educator commented:

I think that in that type of society where we are pretty much living in a constant trauma, I think it is difficult to come to grips with that. Maybe adults can, I think. Girls do battle to deal with that (see Appendix O).

In the researcher’s opinion violence and crime do impact on the girls as they are an unfortunate part of everyday life. The feelings of anger may also be felt as a result of

their inability to change the situation or even to make a difference. The society they live in does not always provide the examples and guidance they need.

4.3.3.12 Personality clashes and lack of negotiating skills

The girls did not specifically identify a clash of personalities as a cause of aggressive behaviour, but many of the problems they mentioned could be seen as personality clashes. An example of this is the problem with misunderstanding things that other girls say or with reading meanings into remarks that may not be there. One girl said: “We each have our own individual sense of humour” (see Appendix L), which leads one to believe that they do realise that these differences in personality may cause problems. The fact that the girls do not discuss problems more directly for fear of repercussions is a direct reflection on their lack of negotiating skills, although the girls did not identify this by name. In this regard one girl said: “[T]hey don’t know how to fix the problem” (see Appendix L).

Most of the educators’ comments confirmed that there were definite personality clashes between the girls e.g. “They do not yet know how to approach someone with different personalities” (see Appendix N). One educator felt that these differences had caused problems over a long period of time in some instances. Another educator felt that the girls’ personalities are in the process of developing and that the fact that the classes they are in are so small can actually have a negative effect as they have a far smaller group from which to select friends (see Appendix P). The schools are also small and this can be a further limiting factor. The general feeling was that the girls struggle to accept their differences.

One of the educators did comment on the lack of negotiating skills. She said: “They don’t know how to negotiate around a point yet. So their negotiation skills are lacking so then it comes out in aggression” (see Appendix N). Another educator noted: “[I]t is a maturity issue” (see Appendix O).

The researcher is of the opinion that, as their maturity develops, the girls should improve their negotiating skills and that, with guidance, they should learn that people are all different and that all have a place in society.

4.3.4 Consequences of aggressive behaviour

It is important to remember that these young girls are in the process of developing a social identity (Pretorius, 1994:7). In order to achieve this they have to accept themselves and be accepted by their peers. Their future social success is dependent on how they develop during this period. Unfortunately the people with whom they are in contact have a definite influence on this achievement and this influence often has negative consequences.

When looking at the consequences of aggressive behaviour it is important to note that the feelings invoked by the behaviour are personal to the girls and that the educators could not give opinions in this instance. They did, however, intimate that the consequences may be long term in nature.

Most of the girls interviewed realised that aggressive behaviour had consequences, either short term or long term. The general feeling was that physical aggressive behaviour was forgotten relatively quickly and that most girls believed that the effects were negligible, while indirect or emotional aggressive behaviour was something that had long term effects, especially on the victim. There were a number of consequences of aggressive behaviour mentioned by the girls, including:

- feeling upset
- loss of trust
- loss of friends
- feeling used
- feelings of hurt
- guilt

- rejection
- sadness or depression
- anger
- irritation and frustration
- isolation and loneliness
- confusion
- fear
- negative perceptions of self

Many of the girls remarked on the fact that any form of aggressive behaviour was upsetting, especially when it was a friend that was being aggressive (see Appendix I). They agreed that friends were not supposed to treat their friends in an aggressive manner. Two of the girls mentioned that the upset caused by aggressive behaviour could result in a girl finding something else to do away from the aggressors.

One of the girls expressed the feeling that a girl who did not keep secrets could no longer be trusted as a friend (see Appendix I). Some of the other girls explained that any type of aggressive behaviour could result in a loss of trust (see Appendix I), and that it was relatively easy to lose someone's trust and rather difficult to regain that trust. It was hard to accept that someone who had been loyal suddenly no longer seemed to care.

Being treated aggressively could result in friendships being lost according to a number of the girls. The uncertainty created by girls who "backstab" their friends leads to friends perceiving those girls no longer to be their friends. In instances such as this the girls remarked: "I just feel used and backstabbed" (see Appendix J) and "You've been such a friend to them and you tried so hard and then all of a sudden they stab you in the back" (see Appendix J). One of the educators confirmed that sometimes there is no specific solution to the problem between the girls and they rather have to find new friends altogether (see Appendix R).

One of the consequences mentioned most often by the girls is a feeling of hurt. Those who have been the victims of aggressive behaviour report feeling hurt because of the loss of trust, friendship and companionship. Those who are the aggressors sometimes realised that they had hurt their friends because of the pain in their eyes, whereas others had no idea of the consequences of their actions. Most of the girls concurred that the emotional hurt caused by aggressive behaviour is far worse and lasts longer than physical pain. A remark by one of the girls reinforced this: “The words are in you and you know that that person really, really hurt you and you can never really get over that” (see Appendix J). The hurt felt by the girls was mentioned by one of the educators (see Appendix P). She realised that the victims often try to cover this hurt, but this is not always possible.

Guilt was one of the consequences mentioned by only a few of the girls who had been aggressive to their friends. One girl specifically admitted that she did not have a guilty conscience when hurting others emotionally (see Appendix K). Another girl added that she only felt guilty once the action had been completed. Initially this girl did not realise she was doing something wrong. The researcher noticed that many of the girls did not have remorse for what they had done.

One of the more serious consequences of aggressive behaviour that the girls identified was rejection. Many of the girls have experienced a feeling of rejection and not belonging to the group because of the actions of others. A number of them commented on feeling “left out” and one girl stated: “now you’re totally rejected” (see Appendix I). Often it was a best friend who created this feeling of rejection by leaving her friends out of activities and choosing other girls with whom to socialise.

A more extreme consequence of aggressive behaviour briefly mentioned by two of the girls was that of depression. They were of the opinion that this can possibly be a result of aggressive behaviour.

A feeling of anger was experienced by a majority of the girls. This anger was felt by those who are the victims of aggressive behaviour and those who are aggressive. A number of the girls explained that the anger resulting from the aggressive behaviour often ends in a verbal fight between the groups of girls. One of the girls informed the group that being called names or hearing rumours about herself made her angry and usually caused further problems between her and the person who spread the rumours. Another girl commented that the anger would probably build up and make matters a lot worse than they initially were. This type of anger could result in retaliation which makes matters more difficult to control. The researcher believes that many of these girls, Group C (see Appendix K) being a specific example of this, are not able to manage their anger yet and that possibly increases the problems they experience. They also seem to believe that retaliation is quite acceptable, not realising that this does not solve the problem.

There was one girl who intimated that she was embarrassed by the aggressive behaviour; possibly because it felt uncomfortable being left out of the group wondering what she had done to deserve the treatment (see Appendix J). One of the other girls had been embarrassed by the over-reaction of her parents as a result of being treated aggressively (see Appendix L).

“You get irritated because you thought they’re your friend” (see Appendix J) is the way many of the girls feel. This feeling of irritation appears to be caused by the uncertainty of the relationship. The frustration is caused by being forced into making the decision whether to continue with the friendship or not. To most of the girls their friendships are important and they often pretend that nothing negative has happened in order to retain the friendship.

Aggressive behaviour in the form of exclusion from a group often causes isolation and loneliness according to many of the girls (see Appendix J). One girl expressed the feeling of not being wanted by the group, while another girl commented on the fact that her best friend often excluded her from activities. A third girl was totally isolated because a friend convinced the class to turn against her. In many of these instances the

girls blame themselves for the way they were treated. The researcher had the distinct feeling that the exclusion did not bother the groups from which the girls were excluded as they did not realise the hurt they were causing. There was also a feeling of embarrassment as a result of being alone.

Confusion was often felt by the girls because they did not know whether their best friends were still friends or not (see Appendix J). The loss of trust and the rejection experienced by the girls also increases the feeling of confusion. A further problem was the fact that the girls are often expected to conform to the expectations of the groups they are in which clashes with parent, educator and peer expectations and their own needs and wants. They also find it confusing to distinguish between joking and being serious, deciding on acceptable behaviour after seeing the behaviour on television and in the movies and the poor examples set by some of their parents and role models (see Appendix J). It is also confusing trying to decide how to react to the rumours, gossip and other aggressive behaviour. According to the researcher the confusion experienced by these girls is possibly caused by their immaturity. If the girls are assisted in managing their problems they may eventually develop a better understanding of dealing with the aggressive behaviour.

A number of the girls spoke about the fear they feel as a result of the aggressive behaviour of some of the girls with whom they interact (see Appendix K). One type of fear mentioned was that once they had been treated badly they feared being treated the same way in a similar relationship. They are scared of being hurt again. They are also scared of speaking about the aggressive behaviour because people will possibly not believe them, or will embarrass them in a group situation instead of handling the problem sensitively. Those girls who have been exposed to physical aggressive behaviour intimated that they will be scared of the person who is physically aggressive. Fear caused by emotional or physical aggressive behaviour often means that the girls do not look for help because they are worried about retaliation. One girl commented:

[Y]ou'll go ask if you can talk to a teacher about it, but you're too scared to because you think if they find out they'll be upset and they'll bully me so you're scared to let it out because of the consequences if they find out (see Appendix L).

The researcher believes that this fear is one of the reasons why this problem of aggressive behaviour is so difficult to manage.

One of the most important social developments during this stage in a girl's life is the development of self-esteem (Pretorius, 1994:7). These girls need to have confidence in themselves in order to grow as individuals. Many of the girls interviewed attest to having a negative image of themselves due to the treatment by their peers. A girl commented that her friend made her feel that everything she did was wrong (see Appendix K), while another said that her friend treated her like a piece of rubbish (see Appendix K). One girl intimated that she was always trying to please everyone else and the result was that she seldom pleased herself. The researcher feels that the constant competition and jealousy are part of the insecurity within themselves, as well as the constant striving to be something different to what they are. The constant remarks and gossip also influenced their opinions of themselves. For this reason it is important to find ways of addressing aggressive behaviour.

4.3.5 How the girls address aggressive behaviour

When speaking to the girls and the educators a few ways of dealing with aggressive behaviour were discussed. The opinion was expressed that it is a problem that will not go away and many girls feel that it cannot be prevented. The possible options will be discussed briefly.

Of importance to most of the girls is being able to discuss the problem behaviour with someone. The people with whom they discuss their problems include best friends, educators, mothers, fathers and close family members. Unfortunately there are various problems concerning these discussions.

4.3.5.1 *Speaking to best friends*

Most of the girls choose to speak to their best friend before considering anyone else, if this friend is not the actual problem. Many will only speak to someone else if their friend cannot help. The best friend is regarded as the confidant and is trusted to keep the matter secret from the other girls (see Appendix K). They feel that their best friends will not judge them but will generally take their part. Best friends will also not bother to find out exactly what has happened and will accept what their friend tells them. One girl mentioned that she will speak to her group because they understand her and she can tell them anything. Another girl intimated that she speaks to her friends because her mom is seldom home (see Appendix J).

4.3.5.2 *Speaking to educators*

The opinions were divided as far as speaking to educators was concerned. A number of the girls, specifically those in Group A (see Appendix I), did feel that this is a good alternative as the educators are often easier to approach and they work with the girls every day. According to one of the girls: “[A] lot of the teachers have worked with other kids and seen what works” (see Appendix I) and the general feeling amongst these girls is that the educators understand them. The girls from schools where the educators were more open to discussion and where there was a feeling of trust between learner and educator were more interested in approaching those educators for help.

Those girls who disagree with speaking to the educators are afraid of further retaliation from the aggressive girls if they are seen to be informants. These girls are also concerned about the types of punishment they might face if involved in aggressive behaviour. They are also concerned about being forced to “make up” with the aggressor when they do not want to continue the friendship. Another problem the girls experienced is that they feel that the educators do not actually understand the problem and can therefore not assist (see Appendix K). They prefer the idea of discussing the problem in their own group. They are also concerned about the educators choosing sides because of

a lack of understanding or for choosing their perceived favourites. Some of the girls, notably in Group D (see Appendix L), are concerned about the fact that the educators will discuss the problems in class and cause them embarrassment or that their parents, or even the other girls' parents, will be informed which could possibly inflate the matter out of proportion. A girl commented on the amount of hurt she had felt when her mother came home after a parents evening and was told that she could no longer be friends with a girl at school because of what the educator had told her mother (see Appendix K). Her opinion was not even asked in the matter. The girls in Groups C, D and E are also concerned that the educators will discuss the problems in the staffroom and that other educators will then become involved. The girls are unhappy about being forced to discuss the problems in the open.

The educators were generally of the opinion that they are there for the learners and that all educators should be approachable. It is important for the educators to listen to the girls and to give them attention when required. Often the girls just need someone to talk to and the educator can perform this role. They feel that they should create an understanding environment and that teaching values and morals is important (see Appendix O). Educators need to consider each individual girl before assistance can be given which implies that they need to know their learners well. This is more possible in the smaller groups with which they work in these selected schools. The size of the groups also gives each educator the opportunity to have more time for each girl. It is also considered important for the educators to be good examples to their learners as the girls copy what they see. One educator did mention that the problems in society are becoming so complex that educators cannot help with everything. Educators can be mediators, but the general consensus is that outside assistance in the form of psychologists or counsellors might be needed in the more complex cases (see Appendices P and Q). Educators can give advice but the final decisions need to be made by the girls.

4.3.5.3 *Speaking to parents*

Most of the girls are willing to speak to their mothers regarding aggressive behaviour. Only one girl stated that she first speaks to her father and then to her mother. These girls are assured of support from mothers who accept them unconditionally and presume they are always innocent. One of the girls mentioned that her mother always gives her good advice as she experienced aggressive behaviour at school and knows how to deal with it. Another girl explained that her mother advised her to keep to herself and to watch what she says to her friends (see Appendix L). She discovered that she has more friends as a result of following this advice. The few girls that would not speak to their mothers, mostly from Group A (see Appendix I), felt that their parents will blow things totally out of proportion and possibly take matters into their own hands. They also noted that their mothers are out of touch with things happening in school and do not understand how to deal with problems such as these. A girl stated that her mother is very young and does not understand these matters (see Appendix L). This was aggravated by the fact that even if their parents do approach the school nothing seems to change.

The educators did not comment on the girls speaking to their parents, possibly because they did not feel that this will influence their work at school. The researcher realised that many of the girls are not willing to speak to their parents because they are afraid of taking responsibility for their part in the aggressive behaviour. They want sympathy from their parents and not a negative reaction. They do not want to be embarrassed and rather keep the matter away from their parents. The problem with this is that many parents are not aware of the problems their daughters face until the matter has become serious.

4.3.5.4 *Speaking to siblings and other family members*

A few of the girls also mentioned that they would speak to siblings or cousins if their parents are not available. The important thing is to be able to discuss their problems with someone willing to listen. They do not always expect advice, just a willing listener.

4.3.5.5 *Other ways of coping*

A small group of the girls do not believe that speaking to anyone regarding the aggressive behaviour will help matters. They are of the opinion that discussing the problems in their own groups is all that is needed to solve the problems (see Appendices L and J). These girls do not see the educators as being able to help because they do not understand the real issues which result in them being unable to do anything. It is necessary for the girls to get together themselves and solve the problems before they became unmanageable. The educators agreed with the group discussions but felt that the girls need guidance to make these solutions work. The educators need to help them get to the root of the problem to gain full understanding. One educator explained: “Sometimes it’s good if children resolve some of their issues on their own because it makes them mature as well” (see Appendix Q).

The girls generally felt that Life Orientation lessons at school can be used to help them gain a better understanding of individual differences and to make it easier to manage aggressive behaviour. They do not believe that this will be a permanent solution but merely an aid. Three girls mentioned that they need to stand up to the aggressors and confront them directly, but the majority of the girls steered away from this as if they realised it will probably not be possible. The girls from Group C (see Appendix K) mentioned a buddy system that is followed at their school for the guidance of the younger girls. They confessed that this is, however, not successful due to mismanagement. One of the girls was of the opinion that the girls can work through various problems that might be experienced, but she felt that there is no way they can anticipate all possible problems. Keeping the girls busy was another option mentioned by a few of the girls who feel that this would be far more constructive than being idle. An educator mentioned that girls who participate in sport learn to channel their aggression into achieving for the team which cuts down on the classroom aggression (see Appendix N). There were also a few girls who feel that aggressive behaviour is a part of life and that the girls will learn to manage it through experience. One girl explained this as follows:

I think the only thing that can solve it is experience. As you get older you actually realise that doing this is wrong. It's not going to fix the problem so you actually experiment with other things... (see Appendix L)

The researcher is of the opinion that allowing the girls to experiment and experience without some sort of guidance can have long term negative effects on the girls who cannot cope without assistance.

When looking at the various people that the girls would speak to concerning their experiences of aggressive behaviour, the researcher noticed that the girls tended to go to those people who would listen and not make decisions regarding the problem. They were worried that they would have to bear the consequences of what had happened and that they would be embarrassed. Parents tended to be the first choice possibly because they will be less critical of their own daughter's role in the matter and will automatically choose her side, often to the detriment of finding the real truth.

4.4 OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS

In all instances the documents provided by the schools were of little value in adequately addressing the issues of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. The documents were very general and focussed mostly on physical aggression and the disciplinary measures for dealing with this form of aggressive behaviour. All other forms of aggressive behaviour were just briefly referred to as "bullying", with no definition or explanation (see Appendix F). There are no detailed procedures for managing emotional aggressive behaviour in the documents. The wording is rather vague in most instances with terms such as "behave in an inappropriate way" being the norm. The researcher is of the opinion that all of the schools need to work on their documents, define the different forms of behaviour and then reword the documents. These documents need to be specific, with detailed steps to be implemented for addressing aggressive behaviour in all forms.

4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the researcher has endeavoured to explain the actual aggressive behaviour experienced by the girls in the five schools where the research was completed. In many instances the behaviour experienced is the same as that experienced in schools around the world. The researcher has also identified the possible causes of this behaviour. Of concern is the fact that so much aggressive behaviour is evident in these small schools where one would have expected the opposite. In this instance it is important to note that the South African problem is also exacerbated by the problems in society such as crime and the high divorce rate. The consequences of this aggressive behaviour have also been discussed in detail as well as the ways in which the girls and the educators attempt to address the problem. The researcher emphasises that the problem cannot be removed from society, but strategies to address aggressive behaviour need to be identified and implemented so that the girls can have the opportunity to develop into competent social beings.

Chapter five will provide recommendations and guidelines to assist the Grade seven girls and the educators in managing aggressive behaviour displayed by girls.

CHAPTER FIVE

ADDRESSING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE SCHOOL

5.1 INTRODUCTION

There is a growing concern about aggressive behaviour in schools and society today. The research findings in Chapter four confirm that there are a number of types of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls caused by various factors. Although the girls were able to identify the types of aggressive behaviour, they did not appear to have the necessary skills to cope with this behaviour or the consequences associated with displays of aggressive behaviour. Specific strategies should be implemented to provide coping mechanisms when dealing with the problem of aggressive behaviour. Educators, learners and parents need to develop the necessary skills to address aggressive behaviour as it may impact negatively on the social development of the adolescent girl. Leschied, Cummings and Van Brunschot (2001:209) emphasise the fact that all girls need to belong to a group and to feel competent and worthy. A sense of belonging may only be possible if the girls have the necessary coping skills. It is essential that educators and parents are a part of this skills development process.

The researcher is of the opinion that girls affected by aggressive behaviour need to be actively involved in addressing the problem by allowing them to be directly involved in the decision making process geared towards combating the problem of aggressive behaviour. In order to treat girls who have been exposed to displays of aggressive behaviour with the necessary seriousness (cf. Hunter, James & Warden, 2004:388) and to give them appropriate assistance, trained educators can be employed.

The educators interviewed were not as aware of the occurrence of aggressive behaviour as one would expect, possibly because they have not had the necessary training in identifying and addressing these problems. Besag (2006:548) confirms that adults involved with girls at school do not always understand the extent of the social problems caused by aggressive behaviour. The training of educators should, therefore, also be

addressed so that the girls receive the optimal amount of guidance in dealing with aggressive behaviour. Untrained educators cause frustration when aggressive behaviour needs to be addressed (Geiger & Fischer, 2006:350-351). The school can play an important role in training educators.

The role of the school as one of the main socialisation agents in the life of the child is emphasised by Sprott, Jenkins and Doob (2005:72) who state that, in a year, a child is at school for approximately 18% of his or her time awake. This implies that the school has the time and the obligation to assist with the socialisation of the child. Schools need to nurture the child and strive to form a strong bond between the school, the child and the parent (Cunningham, 2007:475). In this way the child may possibly be protected from the impact of negative behaviour and the bonding may also encourage the child to participate in programmes the school may wish to implement regarding the combating of aggressive behaviour. Hirschi (in: Sprott, Jenkins and Doob, 2005:60) is of the opinion that there should be a sense of attachment or caring, commitment to the values of the school, involvement in school activities and a belief in, or acceptance of, the school rules. The school can then implement intervention strategies to assist the child in achieving self-acceptance and a sense of belonging in society.

Walker, Horner, Sugai, Bullis, Sprague, Bricker and Kaufman (1996:195) state that schools should ensure an early identification of at risk learners and those who display anti-social behaviour and assist in addressing problems associated with such behaviour. The school should also be the institution that could successfully address the problems associated with at risk behaviour such as emotional problems, school failure, dropping out of school, rejection by peers and educators and possibly even delinquent behaviour. In the past schools reacted retroactively to aggressive behaviour, but Walker et al. (1996:196) are of the opinion that schools need to act preventatively in order to succeed in addressing and reducing aggressive behaviour. Intervention needs to be well-organised and direct, and should involve all major parties concerned with the socialisation of the child. The coordination and implementation of intervention should be managed by the school as schools work closely with children during their formative

years and much of the aggressive behaviour to which the learner is exposed occurs at school (Cunningham, 2007:458; Storch & Ledley, 2005:35). Many of the children entering school have been exposed to negative socialisation processes, possibly due to neglect or abuse (Walker et al., 1996:196; Dussich & Maekoya, 2007:496). These children rely on the school to assist in addressing the unacceptable behaviour they have learnt. In this regard Walker et al. (1996:197) state: “In order to produce consistent, socially acceptable behaviour changes, we must intervene directly and comprehensively within and across all school settings in which problem behaviours are observed”. The school, which includes educators, learners and parents, needs to be committed to change in order to address aggressive behaviour and reduce long term social problems. Schools, as educational institutions, should realise that they have become educators in basic social skills and not just in basic subject matter.

This chapter will specifically identify strategies for addressing aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls, using the findings of the research. It is important to note that the researcher is of the opinion that, at this point in time, there is no specific solution to the problem, but that strategies have to be developed to address the problem in order to control the impact it may have on the social development of the young girl. Within the unique character and condition of the individual, both the physical and social factors that affect children should be addressed. The desired outcome of addressing aggressive behaviour is the successful social development of a young person who can face the many challenges that life has to offer. The school plays an important role in helping the child face these challenges.

5.2 STRATEGIES

5.2.1 Policies, codes of conduct and procedures

Van der Westhuizen (1995:150) states that “[a] policy should be regarded as general statements or guidelines for decision making to guide those who are involved in the implementation or execution of planning”. As policies are guidelines, they allow people

to make various decisions within specific parameters. In contrast, rules are “specific instructions or fixed decisions which cannot be disregarded” (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:150). Rules are more definite and only have one interpretation. Procedures “prescribe the method used for doing work and provide details on the correct way and the order of doing things” (Van der Westhuizen, 1995:150). Procedures are specific and give step by step guidance on dealing with problems.

When looking at the definitions of the concepts under discussion it becomes clear that school policies provide the broad guidelines on which the code of conduct will be based. The procedures explain how to deal with the problem of non-conformance.

Policies are regarded as an essential part of the daily running of a school and should include positive areas that encourage relationship building (Underwood, 2003:217). All registered schools are expected to have certain policies, in writing, in place in order to provide guidance on the basic running of the school (Umalusi Self-evaluation Guideline for Independent Schools, 2006:22). The policy also provides a reference should problems arise. Rigby (2002:239) emphasises the fact that policies should specifically address the following issues:

- Define the aggressive behaviour
- State the school’s point of view on aggressive behaviour
- Identify the rights of all concerned
- Determine the responsibilities of all parties
- Explain the action to be taken should problems arise
- Continually evaluate the situation

Once the policy is developed the Code of Conduct can be formulated. Larson (2005:34-38) states that Codes of Conduct should embody the following:

- Code of Conduct must be drawn up by the Board of Governors emphasising its legitimacy

- There should be continual development of the Code of Conduct
- It should reflect the mission of the school
- Show the role and purpose of the document
- Address all forms of conduct
- Should communicate to all and encourage good behaviour
- Reflect the rights of all
- Clearly show what is prohibited
- Distinguish between minor and serious misdemeanours
- It should be preventative, educational and assist with solving issues
- It should be taught to all
- It should be regularly updated

The Code of Conduct should be specific and familiar to all educators, learners and parents so that all members of the school know and understand what is expected of them. Learners are encouraged to adhere to the Code of Conduct because of specific procedures put in place to deal with any contravention of the Code of Conduct.

Walker et al. (1996:196) suggest procedures which incorporate an integrated approach to addressing aggressive behaviour in schools. These researchers state that “[i]n order to produce consistent, socially acceptable behaviour changes, we must intervene directly and comprehensively within and across *all* school settings in which problem behaviours are observed” (Walker et al., 1996:197). Walker et al. (1996:196) further encourage a school-based approach that:

- works with the whole school and learners who require individual intervention;
- ensures that the interventions match the behaviour problems; and
- encourages the establishment of learning environments safe for all learners.

In order to address aggressive behaviour adequately the procedures for implementing three prevention strategies in a school have been suggested by Walker et al. (1996: 201-

202). The strategies include Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Prevention Strategies dealing respectively with:

- learners not at-risk;
- learners at-risk; and
- learners who exhibit a considerable amount of aggressive behaviour

Primary Prevention Strategies would deal with the whole school, while Secondary Prevention Strategies would deal with the class or group. Tertiary Prevention Strategies would deal with the individual requiring more specialised assistance. The ideal would be to incorporate these three prevention strategies into the school to ensure maximum success in a whole-school programme.

These strategies and the specific procedures to implement them can be represented as follows:

Primary Prevention (Universal Interventions) for not at-risk learners

Procedure

- Discipline plans for whole school
- Conflict resolution/anger management strategies taught to all
- Procedures for effective teaching and schooling

Secondary Prevention (Individualised Interventions) for at-risk learners

Procedure

- Identification of at-risk learners
- Teaching moral reasoning
- Anger-management and self-control
- Family support and parent management training
- One-on-one interventions/ group interventions

Tertiary Prevention (Wraparound, Comprehensive Interventions) for learners with serious aggressive behaviour problems

Procedure

- Involvement of community-based social service agencies
- Development of individual, 'wraparound' interventions
- Family involvement in planning and treatment activities
- Coordination with social service agencies, law enforcement, courts and corrections
- Drug-alcohol counselling if required
- Alternative placements such as day-treatment centres, specialised schools, residential environments

Source: Adapted from Walker et al. (1996:201)

Further suggested procedures are discussed by Sugai and Horner (in: Walker et al. 1996: 204), using the *Effective Behavioural Support Program* or EBS, which also incorporates the primary, secondary and tertiary strategies. This program constitutes a whole school model containing the following procedures:

- Problem behaviour clearly defined
- Causes of these types of behaviour identified
- Intervention developed according to causes and types of behaviour
- Alternative behaviour clearly defined for learners and educators
- Alternative behaviour taught to learners and assistance provided to gain the necessary skills to change behaviour
- Learners encouraged to improve behaviour by incentives
- Long term commitment required by educators to continually assess and monitor behaviour
- On going educator training provided and feedback given regularly on successes or failures
- Established systems for monitoring and determining successes are implemented

Source: Adapted from Sugai and Horner (in: Walker et al. 1996:204)

Walker et al. (1996:206-207) emphasise the fact that commitment is required from schools if these procedures are to be successful. Commitment to the suggested procedures should find expression in the following:

- Problems to be addressed from a 'schoolwide perspective'
- 'Multiple systems' interact in a school
- Establishment of long term goals where the development of solutions is one of the main goals
- All staff to be committed to working to solve the problems
- 'Proactive and instruction based approach'
- Administration actively involved
- Increase 'behavioural capacity'

- ‘Team-based approach’

McGrath (2005:7) states that procedures are essential if the prevention and management of aggressive behaviour is to be improved in schools. According to her the following procedures need to be in place:

- more effective reporting of incidents such as using e-mails
- methods of recording and tracking incidents should improve in order to identify patterns
- playground duty to improve especially in high risk areas
- activities to reduce boredom
- staff meetings to address aggressive behaviour
- making the move from primary to secondary school easier to reduce problems of aggressive behaviour

Most researchers agree that it is important that schools adapt programmes and implement procedures to suit their uniqueness and their needs. Programmes should, however, include specific procedures involving the entire school community if they are to be of real benefit. Rigby (2002:3) acknowledges the fact that intervention procedures are generally more successful amongst younger learners, that often the number of victims decreased but not necessarily the number of aggressors and that the interventions were only successful where the implementation was more thorough. According to Rigby, the problem-solving approach appeared to be more successful than just using rules and sanctions. McGrath (2005:14) noticed that schools that used an ‘evidence-based’ approach, multiple strategies and worked towards ownership of the programme were the most successful at addressing aggressive behaviour. Procedures specified in the various approaches need to reflect the codes of conduct and the policies on which they are based.

Dellasega and Nixon (2003:71) reflect the opinion of most researchers that clearly stated policies, codes of conduct and procedures may improve the self-confidence of all in the

school and increase the awareness of the problems associated with aggressive behaviour, as well as providing clear expectations to all involved in the school. McGrath (2005:13) further confirms that the policies, codes of conduct and procedures must be an integral part of the school programme and not merely an addition to the programme.

5.2.2 Educator training

Basic educator training does not necessarily provide an understanding of aggressive behaviour or guidance in coping with aggressive behaviour. The researcher believes that educators require additional training in order to understand the problem of aggressive behaviour. Underwood (2003:219) emphasises the fact that staff need to recognise aggressive behaviour and assist in addressing the problems. Areas that need to be specifically addressed in the training include the following:

- Ensuring that educators have a thorough understanding of the types of behaviour included in the broad definition of aggressive behaviour
- Training educators as to the causes of aggressive behaviour so that they may put preventative measures in place where possible (Byrne, 2002:131)
- Providing a better understanding of coping with aggressive behaviour (Orpinas, 2006:81; Storch & Ledley, 2005:35)
- Informing educators of outside assistance that can be obtained
- Enabling educators to communicate better with learners and parents
- A thorough understanding of the procedures to be followed when addressing aggressive behaviour in order to provide a safe school environment (McGrath, 2005:5)

Educators should be encouraged to attend additional workshops organised by the school or organisations to which the school is affiliated, and presented by professionals with the necessary additional knowledge that the educators require. This will provide the opportunity of learning from counsellors, psychologists and educators and sharing actual experiences.

5.2.3 Parent involvement and training

Many parents wish to be actively involved in the education of their children. This involvement needs to be encouraged in all spheres. Underwood (2003:215) states that parents may need to be present at the discussion of problems, but that they may need training to accept the seriousness of all forms of aggressive behaviour displayed by their children. Parent training could focus on the following:

- Problem solving skills (Bohart & Stipek, 2001: 392) so that they may vary the assistance provided
- Child management skills
- Identifying appropriate and inappropriate peer behaviour (Orpinas, 2006:43)
- Emotional problems caused by aggressive behaviour may be more serious than the actual aggressive behaviour (Underwood, 2003:3)
- Parents should also be taught to have a non-judgemental approach to the problem of aggressive behaviour (Young, 2002:21)

Parent training could be presented in the form of workshops held at times most convenient for the parents and the trainers (McGrath, 2005:9). The training could be organised by a committee for aggressive behaviour and either presented by the committee or by suitably trained experts in the field of aggressive behaviour.

The onus would also be on the committee for aggressive behaviour to decide when aggressive behaviour requires direct parent involvement and when problems can be settled at school. An important consideration when informing the parent is to decide what action, if any, is required from the parent. Parents should consider the following when becoming involved in issues of aggressive behaviour:

- Parents should not approach the girls involved in the aggressive behaviour
- Parents should follow the advice of the school, or if necessary, a counsellor contacted by the school

- Parent could request that the school should provide continuous feedback to the parents on the progress of the strategies applied to address the aggressive behaviour
- Involvement as a class representative (McGrath, 2005:9)
- Attend orientation meetings (Orpinas, 2006:46)

5.2.4 Committee for aggressive behaviour

The researcher is of the opinion that one of the most important ways of addressing the display of aggressive behaviour successfully would be by appointing specifically trained people who could assist with addressing this type of behaviour. The School Management Team could form a committee that deals specifically with all reports of aggressive behaviour. In this way untrained educators would not be expected to address aggressive behaviour problems.

5.2.4.1 Members of the committee

- A suitably trained educator, preferably teaching Life Orientation (McGrath,2005:9)
- A representative from the school management team (McGrath,2005:5)
- A counsellor or psychologist (Leadbetter & Hoglund, 2006:2)
- Parent representative (McGrath, 2005:9)
- Learner representative (McGrath, 2005:13)

5.2.4.2 Responsibilities of the committee

- Accessing additional information to assist all learners, educators and parents in understanding aggressive behaviour (McGrath, 2005:14)
- Treating all reports of aggressive behaviour as serious and dealing with them confidentially

- Ensuring that formal incident reports are completed for each incident that is reported. The reports may also provide guidance, should the matter be referred to an external psychologist or social worker (see Appendix G)
- Implementing a whole school approach (Rigby, 2002:72) to ensure that all sectors of the school community are aware of the problems associated with aggressive behaviour and are involved in addressing the problem
- Encouraging learner and parent input (Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowan, 2001:146) as this would provide better comprehension of the problem, as well as a feeling of being involved
- Allocating a specific time slot to a representative of the learners and to a parent representative for their feedback (McGrath, 2005:9). The parent and learner representatives should be able to make suggestions for possible changes to the Code of Conduct and the procedures if these changes are considered to be beneficial to the general school and conducive to addressing aggressive behaviour more successfully
- The committee could arrange workshops for parents, learners and educators as may be required
- The counsellor appointed to the committee can assist in involving all parties by providing a better understanding of the complexities of aggressive behaviour.

The counsellor should also comprehensively evaluate the causes of the problem, gain an understanding of the background to the problem, learn new skills as required, satisfy the needs of the learner and encourage academic development of the learners so that any possibility of failure is reduced (Orpinas, 2006:197). Counsellors would need to work with victims, aggressors, educators and parents to ensure that school becomes a more positive experience for all involved.

5.2.4.3 *Functioning of the committee*

- Meet once a month
- Allow a time slot for parent feedback (McGrath, 2005:13)

- Allow a time slot for learner feedback (McGrath, 2005:13)
- Allow a time slot for educator feedback if requested
- General discussion and assistance to be given
- Evaluate successes and failures
- Find and implement alternative coping mechanisms (McGrath, 2005:14)

5.2.5 The school system

5.2.5.1 *Life Orientation lessons*

An important way of addressing the problem of aggressive behaviour is to utilise the opportunities offered in the school agenda (Young, 2002:21). The subject Life Orientation, or Life Skills, is a compulsory school subject included in the school syllabus from the beginning of the school career and it becomes a separate subject at the beginning of the Grade Four year. The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades 4-6 (2004:199) states:

[Life Orientation] is concerned with the social, intellectual, emotional and physical growth of learners, and the way in which these facets are interrelated. The focus is the development of self-in-society.

Learning Outcome Three of Life Orientation focuses specifically on acquiring the skills to face the challenges presented by society. This can be related to the learners focussing on improving relationships, coping with emotions and learning respect. It can also enable the educator to educate the girls about the important skills required in forming friendships and working towards a successful life which can be interpreted in terms of combating aggressive behaviour. Bohart and Stipek (2001:379) are of the opinion that girls should be taught empathy so that they learn to feel the other girls' pain and realise how much hurt is caused by their display of aggressive behaviour. This may enable them to feel remorse and eventually reduce the problem of aggressive behaviour.

The educators and the learners could also use the skills acquired in Life Orientation for positively developing their social skills. In many instances this type of subject is not given the necessary respect by the learners as the value of the material taught is not completely understood by the educators or the learners. These periods of education should be used to develop an understanding of character differences, issues of confidentiality, accepting responsibility, the need for intervention and possible parent involvement (The Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades 4-6, 2004:199). The skills acquired by each learner in the Life Orientation class should be used to develop positive relationships and positive attitudes.

5.2.6 Intervention in the classroom

Bohart and Stipek (2001:382) emphasise the fact that children need to read the cues on interpersonal relationships correctly in order to manage situations of conflict without aggression. Children need to learn what is acceptable socially and evaluate their reactions before they act impulsively. Specific skills can be learnt and various programmes can be used to assist in coping with aggressive behaviour.

5.2.6.1 *Conflict resolution skills*

The aggressive behaviour displayed by girls can possibly be addressed by organised training to improve the skills of problem-solving or conflict resolution (Bohart & Stipek, 2003:75). In this way the girls can share their experiences and work through different types of behaviour. Discussions of this nature may encourage the girls to find alternative ways of coping with displays of aggressive behaviour and they may also realise that there are boundaries in every relationship (Bohart & Stipek, 2003:121).

5.2.6.2 *Narrative therapy*

Narrative therapy may be one way in which to manage aggressive behaviour displayed by girls. Morgan (2000:3) explains:

Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.

The narrative therapist employs various ways in which to separate the person from the problem so that the problem can be the focus and not the person. One of the ways is by using externalising conversations whereby feelings, interpersonal problems and cultural or social problems can be addressed (Morgan, 2000:21). The value of narrative therapy is that the actual problem can be addressed without blaming either party. Personal likes or dislikes can be excluded.

5.2.6.3 *Assertiveness training*

There are some girls who become victims of aggressive behaviour because they do not know how to express their needs or desires (Underwood, 2003:223). In this instance assertiveness training may be of assistance in teaching them to be calmer about their negative experiences and to express their feelings more clearly. It is important to note that there is a difference between being assertive and being aggressive, and assertiveness training should not be mistaken for the right to be aggressive. Garbarino (2003:146) emphasises the fact that assertiveness training should provide the opportunity of being harassed much less and of receiving more respect from the peer group.

5.2.6.4 *Role play activities*

According to Underwood (2003:223) the use of role-play is widely recommended as a way of managing aggression. The learners have the opportunity to act out the problems and try various ways of addressing the problem. This may assist the learners in recognising the actual problem and may provide alternative ways of coping.

5.2.6.5 *Physical activities*

Physical activity may provide an alternative to aggression as the individuals would have more to focus on than each other if they were kept physically active. Schools should continually encourage their learners to participate in sport, possibly by making participation compulsory. Not only will the learners have less time to intimidate each other, but they will also become fitter and healthier. Underwood (2003:225) is of the opinion that girls need more structured activities to alleviate boredom. Healthy competition should also be encouraged.

5.2.6.6 *Peer support group*

Young (2002:25) suggests that a support group may be a valuable means of assisting in the reduction of aggressive behaviour as it may encourage the learners to feel empathy, encourage them to discuss alternative ways of addressing the problem and may also encourage the members to be more positive. The support group may also provide the forum for more open discussions on actual experiences. Vanzetti and Duck (1996:190) emphasise the fact that friends are an important influence on the development of self-esteem. They also provide emotional support which makes it easier to cope with the challenges of forming friendships.

5.2.6.7 *Discipline*

The strategies that have so far been discussed are specifically aimed at the victim of aggressive behaviour, but are applicable to the aggressor in many instances as well. The aggressor is a member of the peer group attending the Life Orientation lessons and will therefore receive the same guidance as the other learners (Walker et al., 1996:207). In addressing aggressive behaviour the aggressor may also be expected to learn conflict resolution skills, participate in narrative therapy to possibly identify underlying problems that result in aggressive behaviour as well as practising interactions in role-play situations. Disciplinary measures may be required in order to prevent a recurrence

of aggressive behaviour (Orpinas, 2006:63). It is, however, important for schools to remember that in terms of the Bill of Rights (in Guidelines on the Rights and Responsibilities of Independent Schools, 2007:13) “[a] child’s best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child”.

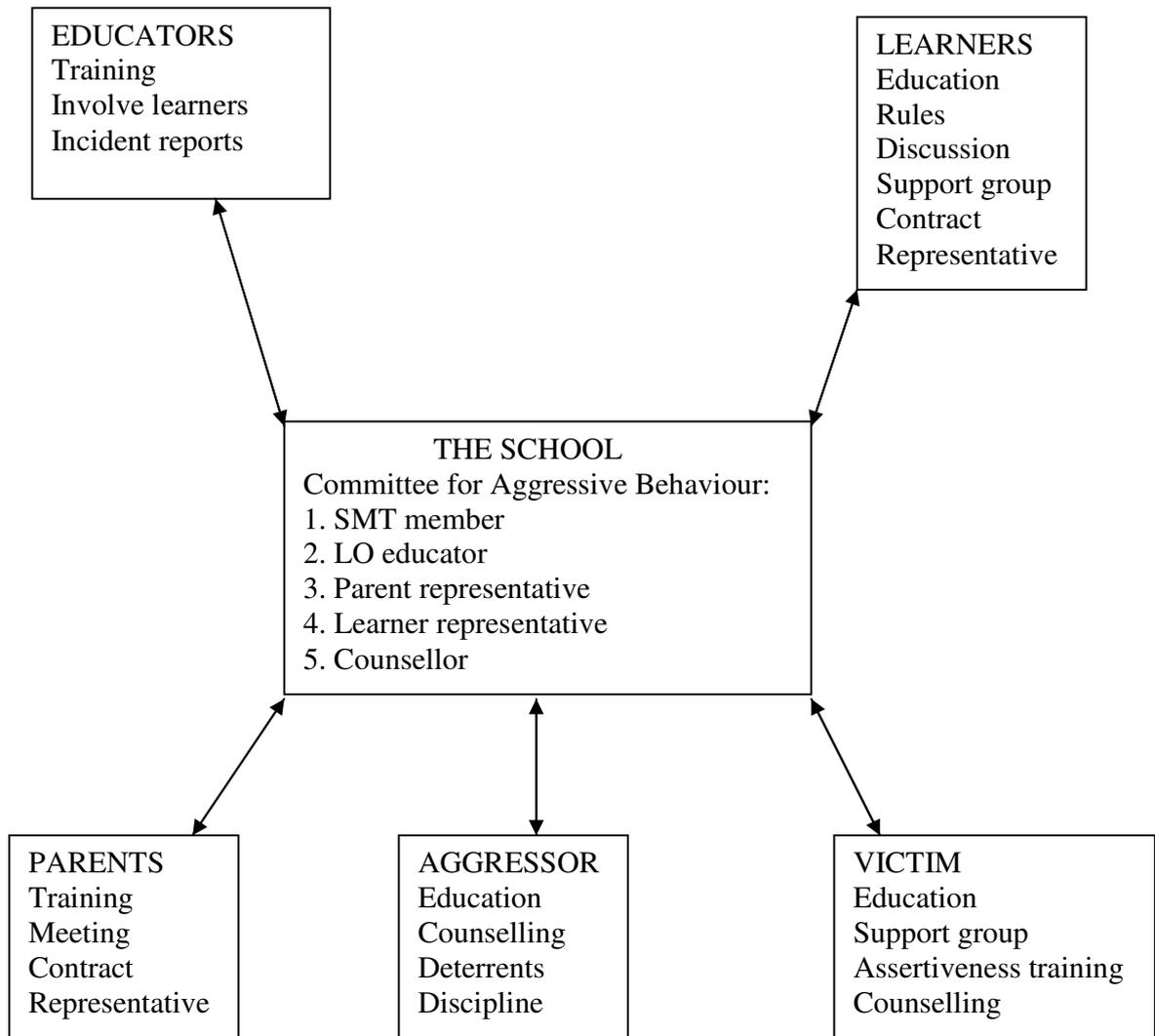
In instances where the aggressive behaviour of the child is a contravention of the code of conduct of the school the committee for aggressive behaviour may decide that disciplinary action is required to prevent further aggression from the aggressor. This action must be procedurally fair at all times (Guidelines on the Rights and Responsibilities of Independent Schools, 2007:8). Community service such as reading to the younger learners or gardening may be seen as deterrents to aggressive behaviour. Time-out or detention may work in certain cases. In the more extreme cases suspension or possible expulsion could be implemented, but the aggressor should be placed in an alternative form of schooling according to Walker et al. (1996:196) and not just allowed to stop attending school. Walker et al. (1996:196) are also of the opinion that learners who display aggressive behaviour should be kept in school for as long as possible so that they may possibly develop their social skills more positively.

5.3 ADDRESSING AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR: A WHOLE-SCHOOL PROGRAMME

The introduction of a whole-school programme may be the most successful way of addressing aggressive behaviour in the school (Franzen & Kamps, 2008:151). The success of the programme would rely on the inclusion of all sectors involved in the education process: the school, the learners and the parents (Leadbetter & Høglund 2006:3). Juvonen and Graham (2001:234) state that the problem of aggressive behaviour may start with the individual, but that it is exacerbated by the system. Vail (2002:15) emphasises the need for complete commitment from educators, administrators, school board members and parents in finding solutions to the problem of aggressive behaviour. These sectors need to be involved as comprehensively as possible in the decision-

making process dealing with aggressive behaviour so that they take ownership of the programme. In this way the programme is more likely to succeed.

Diagram 1: Guidelines in formulating a Whole-School Programme



Source: Adapted from Smit (2003:27-33)

The objective of the whole-school programme would be to ensure that each learner is given the opportunity of positive social development (Walker et al., 1996:198). Learners should be able to interact on all levels, accepting individual differences, respecting their peers and receiving the necessary respect (McGrath, 2005:6). The important elements of

the whole-school programme include the Committee for Aggressive Behaviour, parents, educators and learners (Diagram 1).

The diagram of the whole-school plan could be the basic guide for the implementation of the programme. The following elements are of considerable importance, as depicted by the diagram:

5.3.1 The committee for aggressive behaviour

This committee could be appointed by the School Management Team. It should include a member of the SMT, the educator specialising in Life Orientation, a counsellor, a representative of the parents and a learner representative (cf. McGrath, 2005:9). The Committee could meet once a month or more if special meetings are required.

The Committee could arrange to meet with the parents, educators and learners at the beginning of the year in order to present the Policy on Aggressive Behaviour, the Code of Conduct and the procedures when dealing with aggressive behaviour.

At the meeting, which could be presented in the form of an orientation for parents and learners, the Committee would be introduced to the audience and their function explained (McGrath, 2005:5). Parents and learners would then receive a copy of the Policy, Code of Conduct and procedures specifically addressing aggressive behaviour. These documents could be discussed in detail. The various forms of aggressive behaviour could be discussed and defined. Parents, learners and educators would have time to ask questions throughout the meeting. The researcher feels that at the end of the meeting parents and learners could receive a contract between parent, learner and school that all parties would be required to sign, confirming their acceptance of, and their commitment to the Code of Conduct and the procedures to deal with aggressive behaviour. A copy of the contract would be kept by the parents and a copy would remain at school.

The Committee would be responsible for ensuring that adequate training of educators, parents and learners is implemented to ensure a thorough understanding of aggressive behaviour. Communication between all sectors would be ensured by the Committee. The Committee should receive ongoing training to keep up to date on changes and on new or alternative strategies that could be implemented.

5.3.2 Educators

Educators should receive additional training, presented by trained professionals and educational institutions, to understand aggressive behaviour and to assist the learners where required. They should encourage learner participation in class discussions and be willing to listen to new ideas that the learners may have (Orpinas, 2006:91). Educators should also ensure that the learners are involved in drawing up class rules to assist in addressing aggressive behaviour. The educators would also be responsible for completing incident reports (see Appendix G) once a problem of aggressive behaviour has been reported by a learner.

5.3.3 Parents

Parents should receive training in addressing and understanding aggressive behaviour. (Orpinas, 2006:208). Parents should be encouraged to work with the school and to voice their opinions in specifically organised meetings, such as an annual orientation meeting or Parent Teacher Association meetings (Haye & Swearer, 2006:3). Parents could be expected to sign a contact with the school accepting the Code of Conduct and the policy on aggressive behaviour. According to McGrath (2005:9):

- A parent representative could be appointed for each class. This parent representative would be the person with whom the other parents could discuss their concerns regarding aggressive behaviour.

- Parent representatives would have the opportunity to report to the Committee each month to provide feedback on concerns raised by the other parents and also to provide feedback to the concerned parents.

5.3.4 Learners

Certain Life Orientation lessons would specifically focus on addressing aggressive behaviour and teaching the learners about the problems associated with aggressive behaviour.

All learners could assist the educators in drawing up basic rules for behaviour in class (Casey-Cannon, Hayward & Gowan, 2001:146). In this way they may actually take ownership of the rules and adhere to them more seriously (McGrath, 2005:8). Larson (2006:41) stresses that these rules should be taught to the learners on a daily basis. Alternative coping mechanisms should also be taught to all learners.

Orpinas (2006:92) states that the learners need to learn alternative ways of interacting with their peers in order to reduce aggressive behaviour. Learners need to understand the negative emotional effects of aggressive behaviour and to realise that such behaviour is not acceptable (Storch & Ledley, 2005:35). Learners can be exposed to role play activities, narrative therapy or practise alternative ways of coping with aggressive behaviour.

Learner representatives can form a peer support group to assist their peers in coping with their problems. This could provide a comfortable forum for learners to report problems (Juvonen & Graham, 2001:232) which can then be reported to the Committee.

Each class could appoint a learner representative who would report to the Committee on a regular basis.

5.3.5 Victim

The victims should trust the system sufficiently to report incidents of aggressive behaviour as they occur (Rigby, 2002:124). Education in the class situation should enable them to have a better understanding of aggressive behaviour and how it can be addressed. Where the victim requires assistance it should be provided by the Committee (see section 5.3.1). Assistance could be provided in the form of assertiveness training (Rigby, 2002:248), narrative therapy or counselling. Assistance could also be given by a peer support group consisting of peers with similar experiences (Vanzetti & Duck, 1996:159, 190; Goldstein & Tisak, 2006:359) and an educator who facilitates the interaction amongst the girls.

5.3.6 Aggressor

As a member of the class, the aggressor has access to the same education as the victim and would therefore receive the same instruction in the basic concepts, skills and rehearsal opportunities to support the development in understanding and accepting the school belief system (Geffner, Braverman & Galasso, 2004:229). Should this make no difference to the aggressor's behaviour, the aggressor may need to work with a counsellor to address alternative ways of behaving. The aggressor may need certain deterrents that make aggressive behaviour unattractive. Should the deterrents not have the necessary impact, further disciplinary measures may be required. These could include detention, community service, suspension or, in extreme cases, expulsion. Walker et al. (1996:196) emphasise the fact that all learners should be kept in school for as long as possible to be exposed to the necessary assistance, and that they should be placed into alternative schools rather than just being removed from school.

5.3.7 Communication

Communication between all sectors in the school is essential if this programme is to succeed. The arrows in Diagram 1 (see section 5.3) represent the communication

required in order for the proper functioning of the whole school programme. Communication should be encouraged between the committee and parents, between the educator and the committee, between the learners and the committee, between the aggressor and the committee and between the victim and the committee. Rigby (2002:249) states that the most successful way in which to deal with aggressive behaviour is to include the aggressor, the victim, peers, parents and educators. Garbarino (2003:29) is of the opinion that the onus is on the school to ensure that communication takes place between all sectors.

5.4 MONITORING BEHAVIOUR

At the monthly meeting of the Committee for Aggressive Behaviour the previous month's incident reports would be reviewed. Learner and parent representatives would be given the opportunity to report to the Committee regarding classroom experiences during the month. Class educators may also be invited to provide feedback on class behaviour. The reports could be compared with previous reports which would enable the committee to monitor the amount and the types of aggressive behaviour that are occurring. The committee would also be able to decide which strategies are effective and modify those that are not having the necessary effect (McGrath, 2005:15, 16). The school community could also record incidences of aggressive behaviour.

Raskauskas and Stoltz (2004:213) suggest placing anti-bullying posters around the school to discourage incidences of bullying. A "bully box" could be placed at a strategic place according to Young (2002:38), so that learners could report on aggressive behaviour without being directly identified. The researcher suggests that weekly statistics could be placed on a notice board informing learners on the number of incidents that occurred, if any. The objective would be to have as many aggression free days as possible. In classes where aggressive behaviour is a problem, the educator could use the recording of aggression free days as a form of motivation to reduce the incidents.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Chapter five has endeavoured to suggest strategies that can be employed to assist with addressing aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls. The researcher believes that there is no actual solution to the problem, but that the extent of the problem demands that it be addressed as soon as it occurs. Schools, as important agents of socialisation, need to develop the necessary policies, rules and procedures to ensure that this type of behaviour and the consequences are limited. All girls should be assisted in developing a strong sense of self-worth and coping mechanisms to deal with the challenges in their social development (Wicks-Nelson, 2003:32). All reports of aggressive behaviour should be addressed as soon as they occur and should be treated seriously from the start. Once the full extent of the problem is known, the school could decide on methods of dealing with the problem. Continuous and direct reinforcement and support for victims and aggressors may be required to ensure complete success of programmes implemented.

Of importance is reporting the incident formally and handing the matter over to a committee specifically put in place to deal with all forms of aggressive behaviour. A whole-school programme may be the best solution as all members of the school community may be affected negatively by aggressive behaviour. In this way all members of the school community take ownership of the problem and all have the opportunity to make a difference. The result would be a sharing of responsibility for preventing the occurrence of aggressive behaviour and the school environment could actually have a positive influence on the socialisation process.

Chapter six will briefly summarise each of the chapters and will also provide recommendations for addressing aggressive behaviour as well as possibilities for further research pertaining to aggressive behaviour.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The display of aggressive behaviour by adolescent girls has serious implications for the success of their social development and integration into society. The researcher has attempted to identify the types of aggressive behaviour being displayed, prompted by the growing numbers of schools complaining about the increasing social problems associated with this type of behaviour. The problem of aggressive behaviour is increasing since young girls are influenced negatively by those around them and also by the unrealistic expectations of the community. In many instances young girls are expected to be adults prematurely, even though they do not possess the necessary coping skills to deal with the many social issues they will experience. Adolescent girls require guidance and assistance in coping, but this is often not available as parents are busy and educators are over-worked, and have little time to assist. In many instances the community accepts aggressive behaviour as a part of growing up. Although this may be true to a certain extent, the extreme manifestations of aggressive behaviour that are occurring, with the associated emotional problems caused, are not acceptable, as both victim and aggressor are negatively affected and in turn affect those around them negatively (Underwood, 2003:210).

This research has highlighted possible causes for the aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls. The researcher has focussed on possible strategies which could be implemented to address the aggressive behaviour. As the school plays an active role in the socialisation process of the girls (Penner, 1978:227), it is important to focus on strategies which schools and educators can implement to assist in addressing the problem. There does not appear to be one specific strategy to follow, but a combination of various strategies may be used. Different schools may also find that strategies that

work in one school may need to be adapted to their specific needs in order to have a positive effect in their school.

The importance of developing self-esteem is highlighted by Wicks-Nelson (2003:32) who emphasises that adolescent girls need to develop concepts and feelings about their social environment that allow them to accept their worth and enable them to manage the changes and challenges that they are faced with each day. It can only be assumed that studies such as these may encourage further research to help these young girls to deal with the emotional and psychological problems that the display of aggressive behaviour may cause.

6.2 SUMMARY

In this concluding chapter, which serves as a synthesis of the research conducted, a brief summary of each of the previous chapters is provided. This is followed by the relevant recommendations and the ultimate conclusion.

Aggressive behaviour displayed by girls is a complex phenomenon. Addressing and managing the problem is even more complicated. The various aspects associated with aggressive behaviour have been discussed by the researcher in order to attempt to provide guidance and clarification of the problem.

6.2.1 Summary of Chapter one

Chapter one initially focused on the school as the environment where the child will spend approximately twelve years of his or her life (see section 1.1). As such it should be a safe environment where the child may grow and develop into a competent adult capable of social interactions and able to manage problem situations with tolerance and respect for all involved (Leach, 2007:385). It is during this important stage in their lives that the adolescent girls realise that they may not like everyone with whom they have contact, and that they are not liked by everyone either. This is a difficult reality to

accept, especially when exposed to strangers' reactions to their personalities that may be totally different to their family's reactions. The girls, however, have to learn to manage this. Many of the girls do not understand the aggressive behaviour that they encounter. In the light of these problems faced by the developing adolescent, the researcher deemed it necessary to undertake a study that would focus attention on aggressive behaviour and its causes, with the ultimate aim being to identify strategies to reduce the problem of aggressive behaviour.

Chapter one, therefore, defines the different forms of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls, specifically distinguishing between direct and indirect aggressive behaviour (see section 1.4.3). The researcher then focussed specifically on indirect aggression, referring to emotional, relational and social aggressive behaviour (see section 1.4.4), which occurs regularly and yet is not always identified as aggressive behaviour.

The research methods implemented by the researcher are also discussed in this chapter. Data collection strategies (See section 1.6.2) to be used included focus group interviews and individual interviews as these would allow the researcher to interact directly with the participants involved with aggressive behaviour. It was argued that these data collection strategies would provide a better understanding of the individual problems experienced and therefore assist in articulating some form of guidance for educators working with adolescent girls.

6.2.2 Summary of Chapter two

Aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls is specifically discussed in Chapter two as the researcher examines the types of aggressive behaviour that occur (see section 2.2.2), as well as possible causes of this type of behaviour (see section 2.2.3). There are a number of possible reasons for aggressive behaviour including hereditary and biological factors, the home and school environment, the peer group and media influence, as well as physical development. It is important to understand the causes of aggressive behaviour before any substantial form of assistance can be given.

Consequences of aggressive behaviour (see section 2.2.4) need to be addressed in order to prevent long term emotional problems. The consequences of aggressive behaviour require that the adults working with adolescent girls have a better understanding of aggressive behaviour. Young people pass through various social developmental stages in their lives (see section 2.2.5.1) and these stages are affected by problems occurring at school and in their relationships at home. These social problems need to be dealt with so that the young person can develop optimally into a socialised being, enabled to manage the everyday problems of life successfully.

A considerable number of studies concerning aggressive behaviour have been completed throughout the world, although very little has been completed in South Africa. A number of these studies are discussed by the researcher in Chapter two. The studies have been completed using either qualitative or quantitative methods. The various studies have identified the types of aggressive behaviour displayed, as well as the possible reasons for this behaviour and a number of studies have suggested solutions which could reduce aggressive behaviour. Many of the researchers realise the importance of preventing the aggressive behaviour from becoming a problem, but also how difficult it is to address this type of behaviour.

6.2.3 Summary of Chapter three

The research method employed by the researcher is discussed in detail in this chapter. The researcher focuses on the importance of implementing a qualitative research design when dealing with the human element. The sample selection method as well as the initial pilot study, are discussed (see section 3.2.2 and 3.2.3).

The research sites (see section 3.3.1.1) were selected specifically based on the researcher initially being of the opinion that small schools should be able to provide better understanding and guidance to reduce aggressive behaviour. This was found not to necessarily be the case. In many instances there may even be more problems in these schools where the families are more affluent and have easier access to the media

influence. The smaller groups in the classes may also negatively impact on socialisation as these girls do not have a variety of friends to choose from. They may, in fact, become bored with each other.

For the purpose of this study the researcher elected to make use of focus group interviews with the girls (see section 3.4.1), individual interviews with the educators (see section 3.4.2), observation of behaviour (see section 3.4.3) and a study of the official documents of the schools (see section 3.4.4). It was considered that a combination of these would provide the most comprehensive results. The intention, initially, was also to interview separately those girls who preferred individual interviews, but the girls were most willing to participate in the focus group interviews and were therefore eventually not interviewed separately.

The interaction with the participants was most enlightening and stressed the need for further research in this field.

6.2.4 Summary of Chapter four

The researcher initially discussed the perceptions concerning aggressive behaviour of the girls and the educators selected for the research (see section 4.3.1). It was interesting to note that many of the girls and even some of the educators viewed this form of behaviour as ‘a part of life’. Perhaps this is the most difficult problem concerning the display of aggressive behaviour. Although aggression occurs in the everyday life of all people, it needs to be addressed.

All of the girls admitted to being exposed to a display of aggressive behaviour in some form or another. The types of aggressive behaviour displayed included many of those types discussed in Chapter two. The problem of joking and teasing was, however, highlighted by the girls as being of real concern to them. Often they could not gauge the difference between a joke and a serious comment and this confusion caused additional problems (see section 4.3.2.3). Unfortunately there were a few girls who believed that

physical aggressive behaviour was quite acceptable and even preferable to social aggression (see section 4.3.2.11).

In most instances the causes of aggressive behaviour were similar to those identified in other studies discussed in Chapter two. Important causes identified by the educators were personality clashes and a lack of negotiating skills which need to be addressed (see section 4.3.3.12).

Of particular concern to the researcher was the fact that the girls do not really know where to seek assistance. Many of the girls expressed a need to speak to someone about the problem, but were confused as to what action or reaction they expected from the confidant. In many instances the girls just wanted to speak to someone without action being taken, even though the seriousness of the problem requires action. The girls need to realise that problems that are emotionally disturbing should be addressed.

Further problems identified by the researcher were the apparent unwillingness of the girls to take responsibility for displaying aggressive behaviour and their unpreparedness for its consequences. The latter was specifically highlighted by the constant annoyance expressed by the girls if either their parents were informed of the reported aggressive behaviour or matters were addressed formally in class.

The refusal to accept responsibility for the aggressive behaviour further confirmed the fact that displays of aggressive behaviour need to be seriously addressed. The educators, parents and learners dealing with aggressive behaviour require additional training to be able to assist where necessary.

6.2.5 Summary of Chapter five

Educator, parent and learner training and involvement are regarded by the researcher as the most important strategies to address aggressive behaviour. Educators who know and understand the problem and all of its implications will be able to address aggressive

behaviour far more successfully than those who have been exposed to very little training. Including both parents and learners in addressing the problem of aggressive behaviour encourages a combined and more efficient effort at formulating coping mechanisms.

Chapter five provides a discussion of possible strategies for addressing the social problems aggressive behaviour causes in schools. Care was taken to identify strategies that actually address this problem in a way that would effect a significant difference.

Of importance is ensuring that there are specific policies, rules and procedures in place to address aggressive behaviour. The researcher provides a basic guideline on the manner in which these policies, rules and procedures should be formulated (see section 5.2.1). Schools should allocate far more time to formulating these policies and procedures and incorporate input from concerned parents and learners. Properly trained individuals should take the ultimate responsibility for implementing strategies.

A specific Committee for Aggressive Behaviour (see section 5.2.3) should be appointed to address all forms of aggressive behaviour. This committee should be trained to cope with aggressive behaviour and its associated problems. The committee could also provide the relevant training for parents, learners and educators to reduce aggressive behaviour. Members of the committee would need to ensure that the appropriate action is taken in order to confirm to the school community that the school management is serious about reducing the problem.

The formulation of a Whole-School Programme would possibly be the most successful means to address aggressive behaviour (see section 5.3). This programme would involve parents, learners and educators. The entire school community would be encouraged to work together for the benefit of the learners and ultimately for their own benefit as well. A reduction in aggressive behaviour would create a more positive learning environment for the girls and would also improve relationships between parents, learners and educators. Sharing the problem could possibly reduce it to more manageable

proportions. Allowing input from all sectors could encourage a stronger sense of ownership and increase the learners' feelings of self-worth and importance, resulting in a more positive social development.

6.3 LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

This study is limited as it only focuses on a small group of girls in a very small portion of the community. The full extent of the problem and its actual impact on the social development on girls in general in South Africa is therefore relatively unknown. In these small independent schools the researcher determined that there is a problem. The probable implication, therefore, is that this type of aggressive behaviour is also displayed in bigger schools and presumably on a similar scale.

A further limitation of this research is that it only focuses on independent schools whereas the majority of learners find themselves in public schools. Further research on a wider scale would be an advantage to gauge the full extent of the problem and to implement strategies for addressing aggressive behaviour.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the researcher is convinced that the aims of this research have been achieved. Forms of aggressive behaviour, the causes of these forms of behaviour and specific strategies for addressing aggressive behaviour have been identified. Since the problems of aggressive behaviour may occur generally in schools, this study's recommendations for addressing aggressive behaviour could, in all probability, be applicable to most schools.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.4.1 Recommendations

Conducting this research has been a most enriching and rewarding experience for this researcher. Identifying the forms of aggressive behaviour experienced by adolescent

girls and its causes has been enlightening. The researcher is convinced that addressing aggressive behaviour is a matter that needs considerable focus if further social problems are to be reduced and ultimately prevented.

Possible ways of addressing aggressive behaviour obtained from the literature study, encouraged the researcher to believe that full commitment from all sectors involved in education will constitute the most successful way of addressing aggressive behaviour. Certain factors need to be attended to in order to address aggressive behaviour more effectively so that the occurrence of such behaviour may eventually be properly managed and ultimately reduced in the classroom. These factors include:

- **Policies, rules and procedures, as guidelines**, have been shown to be essential in addressing aggressive behaviour (see section 5.2.1). These policies, rules and procedures should be clearly and precisely presented to parents, learners and educators to ensure that all parties involved in the school are fully aware of expected behaviour and the consequences of unacceptable behaviour. A whole-school approach to addressing aggressive behaviour is essential if the problem is to be managed.
- **A Whole-School Programme** involving all sectors of the school community would be the most appropriate manner of addressing aggressive behaviour successfully (see section 5.3). The sectors include the Committee for Aggressive Behaviour, the educators, learners and parents.
- **The Committee for Aggressive Behaviour** may be considered to be one of the most important ways of addressing aggressive behaviour and of implementing the whole-school programme (see sections 5.2.4 and 5.3.1). The committee should take direct responsibility for addressing all issues related to aggressive behaviour, as well as ensuring that the whole school is involved in working together to find solutions. The committee should consist of an educator with relevant training, a member of the management team, and preferably an educational psychologist. Parent and learner representation is essential if this committee is to succeed.

This committee would have to ensure that all procedures are carefully followed and that complete confidentiality is guaranteed. The learners, parents and educators should clearly understand that this committee will be responsible for all issues relating to aggressive behaviour.

- **Additional educator training** should be implemented if educators are expected to assist with aggressive behaviour management as it is essential that they understand the behaviour and the consequences (see section 5.2.2 and 5.3.2). Educators involved with adolescent girls should undergo relevant additional training to enable them to identify and assist with addressing problems related to aggressive behaviour displayed by their learners.
- **Parent involvement and training** may be considered beneficial in the ongoing endeavour to find suitable coping mechanisms for girls who are exposed to displays of aggressive behaviour (see section 5.2.3 and 5.3.3). This training would also be beneficial to parents whose children are the aggressors. Parents can only cope with the problems related to aggressive behaviour if they have received the necessary training providing an understanding of the problems their children may face. Parents also need to acquire alternative ways of dealing with aggressive behaviour. Parents play an important role in the school and in the social development of their children and should be actively involved in the developments at school.
- **Learner involvement** in the decision-making process would be an asset as most decisions taken at school impact on the learners (see section 5.3.4). Learners would possibly be more willing to accept the decisions and adhere to the rules if their input was allowed. The learners' sense of importance would be enhanced if they realised that their voice would be heard at committee meetings. Decisions that have incorporated their input would be more acceptable to adhere to.
- **Life Orientation lessons for educating the learners** is of crucial importance for the adolescent girl (see section 5.2.5.1). The Department of Education has incorporated

the subject Life Orientation into the curriculum to be used for assisting with the social development of the learners. The onus is on the educators to make use of the subject to assist the adolescent girls in their development. Educators need to treat the subject matter seriously and utilise it optimally.

- **Assertiveness training, role play and narrative therapy** are a few of the alternative methods of intervention considered useful in assisting the girls in interpreting social situations positively (see sections 5.2.6.1 to 5.2.6.4). By using these alternatives the girls would be provided with new choices in dealing with their problems. Assertiveness training, role play or narrative therapy may be used in order to address the problems associated with aggressive behaviour, and also to decrease the amount of aggression. The educator should have a thorough knowledge of the applicable strategies to use them successfully.
- **The victim and the aggressor** need to be involved in learning coping mechanisms (see sections 5.3.5 and 5.3.6). The victim should learn strategies to reduce the effects of aggressive behaviour, while the aggressor should be taught to try alternative ways of coping with issues that result in aggressive behaviour. Mutual respect is important, as well as learning to empathise with someone who has been hurt emotionally. Aggressor and victim may require counselling to accommodate changes.
- **Disciplinary measures** may be required where more serious forms of aggressive behaviour occur (see section 5.2.6.7). The necessary disciplinary measures should be specified in the procedures for addressing aggressive behaviour. It may become necessary to implement disciplinary action should the other preventative measures not have the necessary effect on the behaviour of the aggressor. Disciplinary measures should be implemented according to the general education rules.

6.4.2 Further study

This study and its limitations (see section 6.3) confirm that there are prospects for further research regarding aggressive behaviour. Comparisons could be conducted between independent and public schools, between the various cultural groups and also between the various economic sectors. The researcher believes that these results could assist in addressing the problem from a more holistic perspective.

It would also be beneficial to complete a specific study of the emotional impact of aggressive behaviour on those exposed to such behaviour. Long term problems could be identified and possible solutions could then be implemented. Strategies could also be implemented at various research sites and results correlated to find the most beneficial strategies. The researcher believes that the problem needs to be addressed earnestly and urgently in order to ensure the social development of all young people in the community.

6.5 CONCLUSION

Adolescent girls are in the process of developing socially. This development occurs in a society with specific expectations of the young girl. There are numerous challenges that have to be faced before this development is complete. The researcher feels that schools, and parents, should assist in making this development as uncomplicated as possible. The development of self-esteem, social competence and acting in a pro-social manner are essential to the successful socialisation of the adolescent girl. There is no easy way of solving the problems faced by the girls, but the necessary assistance can make it less traumatic and can assist the girls in developing a more positive self-esteem. If the school, the educators, the parents and the girls work together in addressing and managing aggressive behaviour there should be a significant improvement to the benefit of all involved. It is important that all girls grow up respecting, valuing and liking themselves. They have to believe that they are in control of their own lives. Assistance may be required to eventually achieve this goal.

Further research is required on a far larger scale in order to identify the occurrence of aggressive behaviour in South African public schools and in independent schools. Since aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls may affect the social development of these girls and those on whom it is afflicted, the extent of the problem needs to be explored, as well as the long term effects so that future problems can be adequately addressed and possibly reduced.

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Appendix A

PO Box 2589
Halfway House
1685
1 August 2007

The Principal/Vice Principal
_____ School
Midrand

Dear Mr/Mrs _____

Research for MED with Specialisation in Socio-Education

My name is Cheryl Gouws. I am presently registered for my MED with Specialisation in Socio-Education at UNISA. At present I am working on my dissertation of limited scope and have to complete my research.

The topic of my dissertation is "A SOCIO-EDECATIVE ANALYSIS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR DISPLAYED BY ADOLESCENT GIRLS". In order to complete the dissertation I am required to carry out research with a group of adolescent girls. I have elected to work with girls in grade 7 at several independent schools in the Midrand area. The form of research that I have chosen is qualitative research which means that I will need to interview groups of girls in this grade.

The girls will be presented with an example of indirect aggression and they will then be asked to comment on the example. They will be asked questions about their own experiences of bullying or indirect aggression, reasons for this and possible solutions. The purpose of the research is to determine to what extent there is indirect aggression among girls in early adolescence and also to formulate strategies for eliminating, or at least reducing, this problem.

Would it be possible for me to interview your grade 7 girls? On receipt of a positive reply I shall send home letters to the parents explaining the nature of my work and they will be requested to sign a form giving me permission to interview the girls and record the interviews. The interviews will be completed with strict confidentiality and at no point will the girls' names or the school's name be mentioned. Interviews will be completed at times that suit the school and the learners. I intend to conduct these interviews during the second half of September.

The results of the study will be available for your school, the parents and the girls should they be required. Should it be deemed necessary a feedback session will be held with the girls once the results are available.

I trust that this request will receive a positive response. Should you require further information you may contact my supervisor, Prof Smit at UNISA on 012 429 4509.

I would appreciate a response by 7 August in order for me to continue with the next step.

Kind regards

Cheryl Gouws

Appendix B

PO Box 2589
Halfway House
1685
5 September 2007

Dear Parents

My name is Cheryl Gouws. I am at present completing an MED degree with Specialisation in Socio-Education at UNISA. In order to fulfil the requirements for the degree I am required to complete a dissertation in my field of research. My research topic is "A Socio-Educative analysis of aggressive behaviour displayed by adolescent girls". It is aimed specifically at grade 7 girls.

The research will be done in the form of focus group and individual interviews with the girls. These interviews will be recorded and the information gained will be used to complete the dissertation. Complete confidentiality is guaranteed. At no point will the names of the girls or the school be mentioned. On completion the results will be available for the school, the parents and the girls. A feedback session will be held with the girls should this be deemed necessary.

I do require written parental permission in order to proceed with the research. Please complete the tear-off slip and return it to school by 14 September 2007. The interviews will take place at a time that is suitable for the school.

Thank you for your support and interest. You are welcome to contact me should you require further information.

Regards

Cheryl Gouws
083 379 2338

I, _____, parent of _____ in Grade 7

(Please tick applicable block)

Give my consent for my daughter to participate in this research

Do not give my consent for my daughter to participate in this research

Signature of parent

Date

Appendix C

Interview guide for informal interview with principals

1. Arrange appointment
2. Introduction of researcher
3. Description of research
4. Explanation of assistance required from the school
5. Information required:
 - 5.1 brief history of the school
 - 5.2 socio-economic status of families
 - 5.3 specific religious or other affiliations
 - 5.4 size of the school
 - 5.5 racial composition
 - 5.6 average class size
 - 5.7 ratio male to female
 - 5.8 range of grades
 - 5.9 occurrence of aggressive behaviour displayed by girls
 - 5.10 access to Code of Conduct for learners
 - 5.11 access to policy on behaviour
5. Permission to interview girls
6. Permission to interview educator/s
7. Provision of time and facility for interviews
8. Formal letter of introduction to school
9. Formal letters to parents requesting permission
10. Confirmation of confidentiality and anonymity
11. Access to findings

Appendix D

Interview guide to be used for focus group interviews

Questions to be asked randomly according to answers given

Additional questions may be asked if prompting is required

Questions concerning the occurrence of aggressive behaviour

1. What is aggressive behaviour?
2. Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.
3. How did this make you feel?

Questions regarding the forms of aggressive behaviour experienced and the reasons given for this type of behaviour

4. What types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?
5. Explain how this behaviour made you feel.
6. Have you ever treated anyone else in a similar manner? How did it make you feel?
7. Explain what causes aggressive behaviour.
8. How do the media influence your behaviour?

Questions regarding the management of aggressive behaviour by the individual

9. How do you react when seeing or hearing other girls being aggressive?
10. What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed at you?
11. What do the adults around you do about the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls? (This question was often answered indirectly in questions 12 and 13)
12. Who would you go to for assistance if you were treated aggressively by one of your friends?
13. What should be done by the school about aggressive behaviour displayed by girls?

Appendix E

Interview guide for individual educator interviews

Identification of aggressive behaviour

1. To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

Types of aggressive behaviour noticed and the causes

2. Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.
3. In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

Managing this behaviour

4. How do you address this aggressive behaviour?
5. How does the school address this behaviour?
6. How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

Appendix F

Extracts from Codes of Conduct and Policies on Behaviour

Example 1: Item 8

Pupils should show respect for others at all times. Lack of courtesy, disobedience, swearing, spitting, inflicting bodily harm or any other unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated. Bullying will not be tolerated.

Example 2: Item 1

Christian standards of courtesy, respect, kindness to be practised at all times.

Example 3: Item 7

No pupil is to fight, provoke other pupils, throw objects, play dangerous games or behave in an inappropriate way.

Example 4: Item 4.3.4

Pupils need to guard against doing or saying anything that will bring into discredit themselves, their family or their school. Ungodly language, negative or destructive speech about others, gossip etc. will be disciplined.

Example 5: Item 4.3.6

No pupil has the right at any time to behave in a manner which disrupts the learning process, praise and worship time of other pupils, or which causes another pupil physical or emotional harm.

Example 6: Item 4.3.8

Pupils must treat each other with respect. Intimidation, victimisation, bullying and fighting will not be tolerated.

Example 7: Item 2.3

Children should be taught kindness. Our thoughts and actions must be free from hatred or hurting others in any way. Instead we expect consideration, tolerance, friendliness and forgiveness.

Appendix G

Incident Report

Name of learner _____ Date of incident _____

Reporting person _____ Time of incident _____

Area of occurrence _____

Present at incident _____

Incident _____

Action taken _____

Signed by _____

Date _____

Capacity _____

Principal _____

Date _____

Appendix H

Field Notes

1. Field notes on initial meeting with principals

Research site A

Christian school

Protestant parents

11 years old

Entrance valued

Fees reasonable

Church support and on church premises

Nursery school to Grade12

Principal- Late thirties

Helpful

Principal for 2 years

Heads all schools

Actively involved

Grade 6 girls more aggressive

Some groups have more problems than others

Some can outgrow problems

Research site B

Brief meeting

Nursery school to Grade 7

More expensive

Upper middle income group

Principal- Ten years

Brief meeting

Late forties

Teaching 25 years

Researcher introduced to senior educator

Work delegated quickly

There is aggression

Counsellor on premises

Research site C

Transcendental Meditation

Fees middle income group

20 years old

Nursery school to Grade 12

Principal- Late forties

Principal for 10 years

Now Director

Busy

Little interaction with learners

Delegated to Life orientation educator

Aggressive behaviour does exist

Psychologist on premises

Research site D

Steiner Ethos

Group more important than individual

Fifteen years old

Nursery school to Grade 7

Temporary classrooms

Fees- middle income group

Respect for all

Competition discouraged

Principal- Very involved

Requested interview guide

Mid fifties

Less aggression

Involved in research throughout

Research site E

Large land

Nursery school to Grade12

All religions

Middle income group

Advertising of school is important

Principal- Disinterested

Head for 5 years

Teaching for 15 years

Delegated to assistant

There is aggression, but less

2. Field notes of observations made during focus group interviews

Research site A

Observations

Shy initially

Average weight/height

7 girls participated: 5 white, 2 black

Dressed neatly

Quiet, but friendly

Girls were well-disciplined and eager to participate

There is aggressive behaviour

Girls discuss problems with educators, not parents

Pleasant and disciplined atmosphere

Sat peacefully

Well-mannered

Enjoy school and respect educators

Research site B

Observations

6 girls participated: 2 black, 1 Indian, 3 white

Friendly

Average height/weight

Most of the girls were very talkative and eager to participate

They were very honest about their attitudes towards each other

Most were also inclined to point out their friends' problems and they had to be controlled in order not to argue in the group

Most felt that a friend was a good choice of someone to talk to

Mothers were also seen as confidants

A pleasant group of girls: 2 very dominant characters

Pleasant and easy to talk to

The atmosphere was very pleasant and peaceful

Sat peacefully

Research site C

Observations

12 girls participated: 6 black, 3 white, 3 Indians

3 girls very prominent: 1 previously expelled (proud of this)

1 preferred physical aggression

1 domineering (wants to be the leader)

Group very big

Girls were very excited about the interviews but this excitement was increased as they hoped to get out of class work

It was very obvious that there are a few girls with very aggressive attitudes who would actually like to use physical solutions for their problems rather than other more acceptable ways

The girls had a lot to say- met with them twice to complete the interview

The general atmosphere in the school was rather noisy and less disciplined

The girls were not interested in discussing issues with their educators as they felt that the educators would speak to their parents- not always necessary

Parents are also not seen as the ideal confidants as the girls feel they often overreact

The girls were also inclined to be less disciplined

Fidgeted a considerable amount

Some came in late

Research site D

Observations

8 girls: 3 black, 2 Indian, 3 white

1 tall girl, 6 average height

All equals

Eager participation

Lots of personal information given

Very talkative

Neatly dressed
Laughed a lot
Interesting stories
Some need considerable attention

Research site E

Observations

7 girls: 4 black, 2 white, 1 Indian
The girls were less enthusiastic to speak
They were more withdrawn
Less confident
Less understanding of aggressive behaviour
Minimal interaction
Neatly dressed
Disinterested
Average height/weight
Shy

3. Information on educators acquired from principals and through observations

Educator 1 (research site A)

Mid thirties

White female

Teaches Grade 7 Afrikaans and Geography

Teaching for 10 years

Netball coach

Considerable interaction

Mentor

Guidance and reassurance for girls

Deeper involvement

Educator 2 (research site B)

White male

Mid thirties

Teaches Economic and Management Sciences to Grade 7

Teaching 12 years

Sees girls 3 periods per week

Little knowledge of girl problems

Educator 3 (research site D)

White female

Late twenties

Afrikaans background

Teaching 6 years

Teaches English and Social Sciences to Grade 7

Interested and willing to assist

Appeared unaware of problems of indirect aggression

Educator 4 (research site D)

White female

Late twenties

Afrikaans

Teaching 5 years

Interested to assist

Teaches Afrikaans to Grade 7

Less time with girls- four periods

Educator 5 (research site B)

Early twenties

White female

Teaching for 1 year

Teaches Grade 7 Afrikaans, Technology

Less formal work

Drama classes

Girls identify with her

Rather immature at times

Sometimes reacts like the girls

Educator 6 (research site C)

Indian female

Mid thirties

Teaching for 13 years

Teaches Grade 7 Mathematics and Natural Science

Register class is Grade 7- more interaction

Netball coach

Educator 7 (research site E)

Black female

Zambian

Mid thirties

Teaches Grade 7 English, Social Sciences and Economic and Management Sciences

Teaching for 10 years

Considerable interaction

Old-fashioned values still important

Appendix I

Transcription of focus group interview with girls at research site A

Definition of symbols and terminology used

R= Researcher

G1-G7= Girls numbered 1-7

Teacher= Educator

R: What is aggressive behaviour?

G1: Anger at someone.

G2: Fighting and screaming.

G3: Being nasty.

G4: Swearing.

G5: Spreading rumours.

G6: Leaving people out of a group.

G7: Talking behind people's backs.

R: Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.

G1: Where like they talk about you and then they stop and when you walk towards them they just stop and then they start going on to a different subject.

G2: Yes.

G3: Exactly the same.

R: How did this make you feel?

G1: It makes you feel really upset because you know that ... especially when they're your friends and you ... when you're a friend you shouldn't gossip behind their back and ... It gets you really upset.

G2: I felt hurt and rejected.

G3: Rejected.

G4: You can't trust the person anymore with your secrets. You can't trust them to be your friend anymore, if they do those things.

G5: You thought they were loyal to you but they're not.

G6: If people say the same thing to you over and over again, I'm sure it will stick, but if they say it once-off, I don't know.

G7: I don't take anything personal.

R: What other types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?

G1: Your friends talking about you.

G: Yes, gossip (All).

G2: Girls talk about anything.

G3: There's stories ...

G4: When you hear things about them or they've told you something you're so ... you want to tell other people but it's ... you know it's wrong.

G5: Or else like you ... really ... like you trust them and then they hurt you. And then you say all the bad things.

G6: It slips out.

G7: Yes, we love it.

G1: Swearing as well.

G2: Yes, that's often.

G3: Sometimes people ... they swear at you but they don't mean it. But sometimes you never know if they mean it.

G4: You take offence.

G3: You'd rather take offence than take it as a joke.

G6: It's like ...

G7: Sometimes you just feel like hitting people then you don't really notice and then you just hit them and they get sore. It's like ...

G5: I've had that.

G2: Being teased.

G6: Being hit by like girls in school, they probably like don't want to hit you because they're like really mad at you because girls don't usually fight with fists. They usually just gossip about you which is really worse because now you're totally rejected. And who will you hit? Because nobody will even sit with you.

G4: Also when you hit it's like over and then gossiping goes on for a long time.

G6: It's a few seconds when you're getting hit.

G2: But the teasing ...

G7: Because if someone is like very reliant on what other people think of them they might ... if someone says something bad about them and starts gossiping about them it might ... they might not like ever want to be friends with anyone again for fear that they'll ...

G3: They'll get hurt again.

G4: I was at my friend's party and my friend started a fight with this other girl. They were teasing her about her swimming costume because it looked like a fairy. We were all in the pool and she picked up a brick and she threw the brick in the pool and luckily we all ran away.

R: Have you ever treated anyone else in a similar manner? How did it make you feel?

G7: Other people ... I'm actually guilty in talking about people as well ...

G6: Me too.

G5: And when they come up I'm actually guilty of hurting their feelings.

G4: Ja, lots of times.

G4: Well, if like ... someone like ... say they don't invite you to their birthday party and you like thought they were going to invite you and they don't ... next time when it's your birthday you probably won't invite them either. Then they might not ... they might feel the same way and then ...

G5: You sort of like ...

G6: It doesn't help.

R: Explain what causes aggressive behaviour.

G1: Maybe there's jealousy involved ...

G2: Getting back ...

G3: There's a few situations where like there have been two very close friends ... it happened in our class quite a lot, and another person would come in and then one of the two would befriend the other one as well and people would ... the other one would

think: “Now this one isn’t my best friend anymore. She’s now best friends with the new person that came in.” That happens a lot in our class.

R: How do the media influence your behaviour?

G3: It’s worse.

G4: It’s got worse.

G5: Because now there’s more stuff like if you don’t have the right clothes ... Oh she’s such a what, what, what ... Now there’s more stuff to like get in trouble for. So if you go and do something bad then it’s like: “Oh she did this, that and the other.”

G6: And if you like make a mistake or something and you slip up, they won’t be your friend anymore and they won’t trust you on anything.

R: How do you react when seeing other girls displaying aggressive behaviour?

G1: Try to stop it.

G5: Walk away. It’s not my problem.

R: What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed at you?

G1: Depends how hurt you are.

G2: Depends. They don’t really start a fight.

G3: Normally they write letters ...

G4: Or sms (text messages).

G5: It’s easier to say over a phone.

G6: Because some people they go up front and then be nasty just to hurt that person. Just to see like ... the hurt on their face.

R: What do the adults around you do about the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

G1: They can’t stop it.

G2: It’s going to happen, regardless whether they do it or not, it’s not going to change anything.

G3: They don't really notice, because you don't do that sort of stuff in front of the teachers.

G5: And then if the person who's getting gossiped about they go and tell the teacher then they get left ... they get gossiped about even more.

G6: The teachers find nasty letters and they overhear people speaking. Sometimes they go to them and talk when they hear people fighting and stuff.

R: Who would you go to for assistance if you were being treated aggressively by one of your friends?

G1: A teacher.

G2: A teacher.

G3: Not parents.

G4: They would make it worse.

G5: They would use it against you.

G3: Then they say: "Oh, remember what happened with that other girl ..."

G4: Every time.

G5: It's like I say ...

G6: They might make more of a big deal about it and then you're considered a snitch.

G7: Also girls like ... they keep it to themselves. They go tell somebody else. They don't go tell girls straight up front and stuff.

G3: They rather keep it to themselves or go tell another person or I don't know...

G4: They won't tell the person in front of them. They'll go gossip about them first ...

G5: And then it will reach that person through gossip.

G3: My parents aren't really involved with my friends.

G4: Same here.

G1: I find it easier to talk to my teachers than to my parents.

G1-7: Same here. (General)

G2: It's easier for them like ...

G3: And my parents have known me since I was born ...

G4: You can get like punished for doing something but then when it comes to teachers ... but ...

G1: It kind of feels like they understand you, not understand you, but they've been through a lot of those type of things and if I go to my mom with a fight I had at school she doesn't really know ... she basically went through it but a lot of the teachers have helped other kids and seen what works. They actually know the kids.

G2: And also if you're at fault and you go to a parent they tell you there's shame over you ... and you live with them.

R: What should be done by the school about aggressive behaviour displayed?

G1: There's very little they can do.

G2: It doesn't seem like it's ever going to change.

G4: There's nothing that will ... I don't know.

G5: People just expect it to happen.

G6: You can't take life easier. It's going to be rough. Life's not for sissies.

G7: There's always going to be something going wrong and there's always going to be difficult times but you have to go through with it. You have to make sure who you are at the end of the day.

R: Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix J

Transcription of focus group interview with girls at research site B

Definition of symbols and terminology used

I= Researcher

G1-G6= Girls numbered 1-6

Teacher= Educator

R: What is aggressive behaviour?

G1: Spreading rumours. Hitting someone.

G2: Being nasty to a friend.

G3: Ignoring someone.

G4: Fighting with a friend.

G5: Screaming at friends.

G6: Leaving friends out of games.

R: Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.

G1: I remember once in grade 2 one girl invited everyone in the class to her party, except for me and I told her and she said that she just ignored me and then after the party she came to me and said she was meant to hand me an invitation, but I knew that she actually didn't want to. In grade four I only went to one party which was Megan's because we are family friends.

G2: At my old school in ... Irene, whatever, I used to ... This girl ... I was like best friends with this one girl and then this other girl came to the school and she started like pushing me out. She started making me look like a bad person. So my friend kind of didn't know what to do, so she kept taking her away and I don't know ... but I just got really irritated with her, so I hit her a lot. Then I got so irritated every day I went home and my mom said I just got so mad. She like couldn't get anything through to me, I just sat there. And my mom said I was like talking about how I'm going to kill her. So my mom said: "Ok, we're moving schools." That's why we came here.

G3: Well, (embarrassed laughter from all) on Monday, on the public holiday, we were ... Tina tells us that she was going to Sun City for the day, so we thought we'd get together and do something fun, but then one of us said something that hurt her feelings, that sounded wrong.

G4: She heard us incorrectly.

G3: Sam said by mistake that because Tina's going to Sun City, let's do something fun. So then we thought we'd go bumboarding or quadbiking and then Tina also really wanted to go. And then we kind of said: "Too bad" in a way, in a much nicer way we said so she felt a bit bad, so she felt left out but eventually she got over it.

G4: We ended up not going.

G6: They also invited another girl which... and I felt like I was kind of being replaced and the second she couldn't come they cancelled the whole thing.

G3: It was because kind of like ...

G4: No-one else came. It was only me and Monique.

G3: Monique couldn't come so I couldn't really go.

G6: And also the other night these two went to the play without me ...

G4: Oh, yes.

G5: But it's because your mom wouldn't let you.

G4: Not our fault.

G3: That was the same thing with the bumboarding as well.

G6: No, you said because I wasn't going ...

G3: Oh, gosh ...

G4: That was an accident. I've already explained it.

G6: I was just saying.

R: How did this make you feel?

G6: Left out.

G4: Stephanie also gets left out.

G3: You get left out whenever they ...

G4: Sometimes her mom doesn't always let her do a lot of things. She's quite strict.

G6: My mom... Also because we live quite far away from Nana and stuff. She invites Sam, Tina, and then I can't come. She invites me but I can't come.

G4: I get like really tight ... sorry ... We're all like a really tight group of friends and then when like ... when one of us can't come it's kind of like she'll come next time and when she can't come ... when another person can't come, they'll just come next time.

G5: But ...

G4: I went with Tina and Nana, Sam couldn't come.

G3: It's always fun. We get over it.

R: Other feelings?

G1: Left out ... sad and like ... that they're not really like your friend. You thought they were but they're not. Also embarrassed.

G2: You wonder if they're your friend or not

G3: You get irritated because you thought that they're your friend and then they just completely backstabbed you. You've been such a friend to them and you tried so hard and then all of a sudden they stab you in the back.

G4: I'd probably feel depressed, like sad... Sad because you thought they were your friend but now they're not. It's just they really hurt you because you thought that you could trust them and now you can't.

G5: Well, I'd feel like I've been used because in fact they've used me for all the things I've got and when I'm not there they talk about me and they don't really appreciate the friendship that we have.

G6: I just feel used and backstabbed. I'd just be mad, angry.

G1: You can't trust them.

G2: Ja, like you've been stabbed in the back.

G3: I don't know, because ... I don't know if they like me that much then. I feel that I'm not wanted or anything.

R: Have you ever treated someone in a similar manner? How did it make you feel?

[Laughter (rather embarrassed)]

G1: I kind of have.

G1-6: I think we all have.

G2: I think everyone does.

G3: I think everyone has.

G5: Everyone has done once or twice.

G6: Ja, I've done it.

G1: Look you do whatever they did to you. Trash you. They think you're jealous. Or like maybe I'm jealous.

R: What other types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?

G1: Fighting, terrible rumours.

G2: We have to be very carefully about that.

G3: They're not a friend.

G4: Also telling secrets.

G6: If they get the centre of attention.

G5: And they add on.

G2: We both spread like horrible rumours about everything ...

G3: We both? I didn't spread nothing ...

G4: Rumours also go around quite a lot but people say Nana spreads the rumours because Sarah came up once with like ...

G5: There was a rumour going out that Stephanie was pregnant.

G4: So in Maths Sarah started screaming at me telling me why I'd start rumours like this even though I didn't start the rumours.

G5: But it did hurt. But it wasn't her that started the rumours I think it was Chane.

G4: We don't know really ...

G2: But what I think about is like if I tell Nana ... it's like broken telephone ... like I tell Nana ok, umm ... Steph's mom's pregnant, just saying, but then it gets mixed up and they say Steph's pregnant.

G3: If someone says something really rude and it's like a rumour. It will come to me eventually. I just go there and: "What's your problem?" I mean maybe I have a problem, but I'm sure I'm not the only one. It's happened to all of us.

G4: And also I think now it's not as bad as with the aggression with the boys. Because in a co-ed school we ... it's not as bad but in an all girls school, it's vicious.

G2: Savage.

G3: About gossip, I think it's because they want people to know that they know the stuff, so they'd be like: "Guess what I found out ..."

G4: People like gossip.

G5: It happens all the time.

G3: Like news, people love news, like when they talk to someone and like: "What's news...?"

G4: It's also for attention. It's for attention like if you found out something about someone and this one girl's really popular and you want to get into her good books, you'd be like: "Guess what I found out...nudge, nudge, wink, wink?"

G1-6: Yes, we do.

G2: I think it's something we do all the time.

G4: Definitely. The girls are just trying to impress ... impress everyone else by going out with somebody.

G3: Like everyone's growing up too fast.

G2: It's like a habit.

G4: And you just have to do it.

G3: I think some people see other people do it and they think it'll be cool if they do it.

G5: It's like somebody tells you something, like your best friend tells you something that's very important to them and then you get in an argument with them and you just think ... to make them upset they get put down ...

G6: Cause they get upset ...

G1: They go and tell people that.

G2: I think you should rather trust your friends not to tell them.

G3: But if you like go off like ... come with me to the bathroom and you like ... go around the corner and start talking about them, that's gossiping.

G4: They could walk past and hear you.

G5: You're like ... "Oh, don't you like the movie we watched?"

G6: Let's say Maya, for example I'm walking with Maya and Robyn comes along and all of a sudden I'm pulled away and Maya's just left standing there. She probably heard it's about me. She probably thinks you're talking about me ...

G5: And then we get like into groups. Like this person ... they both get into their separate groups and there's like a war between everybody.

G6: And it's like you can't talk to that girl in that group because we're like rivals or something.

R: Other types of aggression?

G2: Well, my best friend's always leaving me out of things. If I'm not talking to her she always tells me to go away and stuff, so ...

G1: She's always being mean to me and stuff so...

G2: I don't think we're best friend material anymore. She doesn't ever talk to me.

G1: One second she's like your best friend, the next second she won't talk to you, and she spreads rumours about you and she drops you.

R: And?

G4: What I find especially in this grade of girls is like for example I'd say "Maya, you're so stupid" and it's like we're just joking ... We always ...

G6: Ja, but we're very open with each other. If something's bothering us we'll go to the person and say listen ...

G4: You don't like send your friend to that girl and be like come here to me. Like send messages through another person because they can like spice it up and like put in their own words and make it even worse though.

G5: We also joke with each other like ... She says I've got a big butt ...

G1: That was bad ... and then you said I hate you Robyn and I said: "Ok, but you're always saying that ..."

G5: But sometimes she makes it sound like she actually means it.

G1: I know... like: "I hate you Robyn" and I'm like... "Thank you very much, I'm going to go and cry now."

G2: They're not physical, Nana and Sam. They like hurting each other.

G4: They like hurting each other.

G1: The thing we do is we'll fight, but play fighting, but vicious.

G2: Ja...

G1: I'll like slap her and then she'll slap me and like laugh about it.

G2: It still hurts, but we laugh about it.

G3: They hit hard sometimes, but they'll still laugh about it.

G1: And sometimes we try ... we like play games when we see who can 'diss' each other.

G2: But that's also fun until someone takes it seriously.

R: How serious do you think aggression is with girls?

G2: I think you actually can grow out of it though.

G3: Ja, but to a point I think.

G4: Look, like our parents ... they're like in a work situation everyday. I'm sure they hate people but they don't go to someone else in the office area and talk about them.

G5: What I personally think is that violence is...Girl's aggression as in talking like in mean ways to each other...is hurting the other person more than violence would.

G6: Look at boys, all they do is they kill each other or they punch each other and then they're over and they're friends and it's over. You just get stitches and then it's over.

But girls ... it like goes on for like weeks. Talking about it and stuff.

G5: They'll always hold that against you.

G6: It has more of an effect, the girl's one.

G5: I'd rather be hit than being picked on, nailed every single time by your friends.

G6: Or run down.

G2: The words are in you and you know that that person really, really hurt you and you can never really get over that. I think it lasts.

G6: Ja, it lasts for a long time.

G3: Let's say you're going out with like someone and then you break up with them and then your friend goes out with them, that's bad ...

G4: Oh, that is so bad.

G5: Especially if they don't ask if it's ok.

G6: Especially if you're best friends and they've got a boy coming around ... come around and so they start liking them.

G3: And they like go out with them, it's kind of hard ...

G4: Especially if they like convinced the guy to break up with you and to go out with them. That's bad.

G3: I'll be so getting back for that.

R: Explain what causes aggressive behaviour.

G5: A way to get back at someone.

G6: Jealousy.

R: What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed at you?

G1: Sit and talk about it.

G2: That's difficult.

G3: It's always easy to start talking to them but you always know that you're going to start fighting ...

G4: You won't tell the truth.

G5: It never works out that way.

G6: When my other really good friend, Naledi, we were fighting ... we weren't really fighting, we were playing and she poured a whole bottle of water over my head and I got really angry. I'm like

G4: It was so funny!

G6: I can't remember what I did, I just pulled off her skirt or something. So then she started chasing me and I thought it was all a game and then she started hitting me and I thought it was still a game. So then eventually I got the picture that it wasn't a game and I ran faster.

R: How do the media influence your behaviour?

G1: Well, we can get like harsh words from the TV ... Like mean things to say to girls.

G2: Or say you're watching like sitcoms or stuff and then one girl will "diss" this other girl, but they'll make friends at the end and you'll go like: "That's actually a good

“diss”.” If somebody then breaks up with you, you will “diss” them because you’ll probably get back like ... You kind of forget that you’re in the real world and not on the TV.

G3: What I really like doing is, if I’m listening to a very sad song about friendship, I like looking out the window pretending the person passing is listening to the song and wanting to break up with me ...

R: How do you react when seeing other girls displaying aggressive behaviour?

G1: Don’t know.

G2: Try helping, or walk away.

R: Who would you go to for assistance if you were treated aggressively by one of your friends?

G1: My mom ...

G2: My mom.

G3: I speak to my friends because my mom is never home.

G4: I always speak to my best friend first and then if that doesn’t normally work I speak to my mom.

G5: I actually like speak to my sister, then to my best friend and then to my mom.

G6: I speak to my mom and then my best friend, because my sister and brother are too small for me to talk to them.

G1: I normally tell my sister also.

G2: Between this group we do talk to each other.

G4: I tell like Sam ... like a good friend.

G2: Sometimes we think like we should go confront Sam to say what you’re doing ...

G3: We’re a very tight group and we can tell each other pretty much anything.

R: What should be done by the school about aggressive behaviour?

G1: Nothing

G2: When school gets involved ...: They don’t understand. They like say ... “Why don’t you just get on with it?”

G3: And then all the teachers get involved and then all the teachers will put you in like break detention and ...

G2: I think it would be better if the teachers don't get involved but the children just like sit and talk about.

G4: There's a few girls in grade 6 for that for such a long have time been fighting all the time and the teachers always got involved in there ... and the teachers and the girls sat together and talked about it but it didn't work. Some of us look a t... I don't ... but some of us look ... I know the teachers, they don't know anything about why we're fighting, so they won't listen to the teachers but they'll just sit there and do ... They'll just sit there and talk. It won't change. It's just better to sit with ... If I had a problem with Megan, I'd be like: "Megan let's just sit and talk", and then just by ourselves because the teachers ... I don't know ...

G2: The children don't take them seriously.

G3: Because if you talk to teachers sometimes they may pick a side ...

G4: They make you like want to ... they force you to make up with your friend.

G1: You don't want to.

G5: You know that you should not be friends with this person that's backstabbed you.

G6: If school does get involved sometimes you get more scared to come to school ...

G2: Then they stop bullying you in school, they bully you out of school, because then they won't get into trouble that way.

G4: I think it should just be between the two ...

G1: The two girls, not everyone else.

G2: Not everyone in school should know about it.

G3: Cause gossip goes around quickly in the school.

G4: And then the whole school ... nearly everyone knows ...

G1: Even a grade 0 knows.

R: How would it help if dealing with aggressive behaviour was a part of the Life Orientation lessons?

G1: I personally think that might be good, just for like LO. But, not to mention like names ...

G4: Because some teachers will be like... and this girl ... and they'll be like looking at you. They won't say your name but they'll look at you and make sure that you know it's you.

G3: I don't think ...

G5: It's also that ...

G6: If you're fighting with your friend I think it's better if it's just you three, not that you tell your mom and she tells her mom and they will get involved or the teachers get involved, it's just a huge problem because eventually you don't want to talk.

G4: You become like the hated in the school.

G6: Well, we could have like little talks or stuff where we could put three girls against one and let them see what it's like as well ...as well.

R: Thank you.

Appendix K

Transcription of focus group interview with girls at research site C

Definition of symbols and terminology used

I= Researcher

G1-G12= Girls numbered 1-12

Teacher= Educator

Part 1 of focus group interview

R: What is aggressive behaviour?

G1: Nastiness, shouting at someone.

G2: Violence.

G3: Hitting people.

G4: Fighting.

G5: Bullying people.

G6: Violence and fighting.

G7: Talking behind people's backs.

G8: Spreading rumours.

G9: Swearing at someone.

G10: Being angry with someone.

G11: Getting people into trouble for nothing.

G12: Pushing people out of a group.

R: Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.

G1: Ok mam, it was like every time I walk up to them, mam, they run away ... they would like use my name ... make up another name for me and not use my name. Call me something else. Everything I would do was like wrong, mam.

G2: Mam. There was a girl who invited me to a party and she did it on purpose so that when I went to the party she treated me badly, so ...

R: Number 3?

G3: Mam, I went to one of ... Ok, a person's house and the ... when I go there normally they're like all friendly with me. Then that person had a friend over and that she didn't like ... she was, she called me a Goth because I had black nail polish on. She ignored me totally, this friend and then ... This friend, the person who was actually doing ... the person that invited me just was treating me like ... you know... I was a piece of rubbish and then when her friend's not there I'm her best friend.

R: Number 4?

G4: I was like ... I went up to a group of friends, but it wasn't in this school. I can't remember, but then ... I walked up to them and they bluntly ignored me.

I: Ok.

G4: But then if you try to talk to them they like turn their backs on you.

R: Number 5?

G5: All my friends know me as this tough cookie ... but I think it was in Grade Two, before I got expelled. I like ... When I went there I met like two 'chicks' [girls] and I really trusted them with everything and the next moment, like the next day just because one of the chicks found out that I liked the same guy as she did they just ignored me and they started calling me names. Doing stuff like that.

R: Number 6?

G6: My one ... she was my best friend, but she's not in this school ... She told me a secret. And she ... I was sworn to secrecy and I never told anyone. And then ... someone told her that ... that I told my sister and now my sister was telling everyone in her school and then my ... so I asked my sister if she knows what the secret is and she didn't even know and then ... like we went to that school for a netball match and then they were like calling me a whore and everything because they said no, I told the secret.

R: Number 7?

G7: ... saying something about someone's mom ... That one, mam, Kristen. Do you know how many things she's told me about people like secrets, like deep secrets but I keep them. If I could tell she'd be finished mam.

R: Ok.

G8: There was a time, but at my old school we were writing a Xhosa test and this girl didn't understand. So she was like nudging me and asking me for answers but I didn't

hear or feel her nudging me and then at the end of the test she came and she was like: “You’re ignoring me. You’re such a bitch, I don’t want to be friends with you anymore” and she got all the girls in the classroom to turn against me and I spent the whole day alone and ...

G9: Ok, you know you asked if we had been ... I have done that to like people.

R: Ok.

G9: But I’ve done it to people just ... I don’t know. I’m a person who is as hard as a rock. I don’t care how you feel about this stuff. When I did that to people this year I was like ... every time I passed them I realised: “Oh, my gosh I really hurt these people’s feelings.”

R: How does this make you feel?

G6: I just laugh mam.

R: Number 10?

G10: Insecure.

G11: It makes you feel angry.

G12: Mam, I’ve got a short temper so I quickly act but ...

G9: I want to get back at them.

G7: You feel unwelcome.

R: Have you ever treated anyone else in a similar manner? How did it make you feel?

G9: It feels like ... it feels like you have power but if you are a person like that your weakness is looking into the person’s eyes and seeing the pain. That’s the ... that’s how I feel ‘cause I don’t know ... I look into that person’s eyes and all I see is this person hurting inside. So since then I just stop.

G2: Mam, I also do ...

G3: And mam, like this one time I was really angry at my one friend and ... I told my sister about her and then like we were talking about the bad things she had done for me and like on ... because we did it on the weekend and then on the Monday I realised that like ... I’d never said anything about the good things she’s done for me and stuff. We spoke to her friend and then we just like ... I realised that I was always looking at the

bad ... like the bad things about her and my sister told me I don't like her so much why am I still her friend and then I realised that deep down inside I actually liked her badness and the good things about her and her personality.

G4: Ja mam, I also feel terrible bullying people ... and mam it also makes me feel like I'm in charge. No-one can do anything to me but at the same time you don't feel happy with what you're doing. It's like, ok you think you're happy, but if you actually sit down and think about it properly you're not that happy because you're letting out your anger on someone else by treating them badly.

G5: I don't have a guilty conscience, mam. I don't really care when people say things. For the rest of my life, mam. And I've been trying to get ... yes mam ... to get stronger but it's not working, mam. It's in my blood.

R: What other types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?

G10: Mam, but the thing is, when you're gossiping you don't really realise it. You just like say something and the next day you're like ...

G11: You're so used to it. You just talk about someone like ...

G12: Then the next day you're like: "Maybe I shouldn't have said that."

G11: Ja, and then you wonder.

G1: It really depends. I've got this really awesome friend, she keeps all my secrets and then I just tell her everything and she tells me everything. So it's really cool.

G2: I think it's a bad habit. But we've done it ever since you start having friends because you get used to it and then you can't stop.

G7: Mam, yes I've done it. And mam, like, you feel guilty at the end mam, but not all the time. If you're really, really angry with this person, mam.

G3: I really feel guilty about this.

G12: I've gossiped and I've heard people gossip. People have gossiped about others but I think why girls gossip about each other- it's not because of anger, it's merely because of jealousy, it's merely because my friend is prettier than me and my friends are so ugly and they're saying all the horrible stuff about her and then at the end I never feel good about myself. I feel like trash.

G6: Mam, you know the first time you gossip it actually feels nice. Or it feels nice the second time or the third time.

G5: Mam, I'm actually very bad at this but then the thing is I say to the person I don't like your shoes and stuff like that. I'm very up front. I'm up front with the person but then afterwards I'm like ok, maybe I shouldn't have said that but then I don't always feel like that. Sometimes I say well at least they know.

G4: Like being up front is not always the right thing to be because some people get really angry.

G2: I prefer someone to gossip about me and say it over there. It's better that way mam. It's better than if they come up to you and say it to you ...

G4: It hurts ...

G6: ... and you just feel like hitting them.

G11: When someone gossips to like ... if they say something to your best friend and everyone tells you and the gossip goes around and around then eventually those ... everyone starts fighting then that's how people start fighting.

G12: I still think ... and that's why they make groups in girls because if you insult someone in one group then that whole group will get involved and then it will be the two groups against each other.

G6: Mam, I know... just adding on to what I just said ... My sister says I'm easily beat up, but I've never actually been beat up, I'm actually quite fast and I only pick on people that's slower than me and then like people always run away from me.

G12: Mam, you know the whole fighting thing- like some people like to fight about something that you said about them or said to them and then they go to their friends and then their friends are the ones to cause the problems because they tell them: "You know what this isn't fair. You letting her treat you like that. You just got to leave her", and then the person gets like angry and then comes to you and then starts fighting like physically with you and that just doesn't work.

G7: Mam, I must admit it's very hard to stop gossiping like if your friend tells you: "Oh, this person ... ja, x,y,z has such ugly shoes", and then it's ... you can't go: "Ok, I won't gossip, I won't go tell another person, I won't go"... because you're going to tell another person. I find it hard.

R: Any other types of aggression experienced?

G5: I've been slapped mam, and it's not nice.

G7: I hate it when like a girl even like in Grade 3 when you did that to me. Even though you say sorry I will hit you but I'm done with you. If this dreadful thing comes up to you then I just look at them. Like that will work for me. I always ... whenever you do something to me ... I always make sure that people are dead meat then wait until the day I get my hands on you.

G6: Mam, people know me as this girl but mam, deep down ...

G8: Mam, I'm just like Khanyi because the first the first thing I do if somebody comes to me and says: "You know that I don't like you, you're full of nonsense. I'm going to beat you up." First of all I wouldn't talk about it because I mean there obviously has to be a reason why the person doesn't like me and if the person gets physical mam, I try to stop them and then when they make me really, really angry, like seriously angry, I hurt them, but then I don't like hurting people. It hurts me to hurt them.

G9: Mam, I don't really like ... I've never really hit a girl. I don't think that's right. Most of the time I only like saying rude stuff about them. The only person I really fight, I only fight with boys and my sister. That's the only people.

G6: I think you never really find people who are always aggressive fighting with someone else who is always aggressive. You find someone who is aggressive fighting with someone who hardly ever does that.

G5: Physical violence, when someone really irritates you, you just feel like breaking them up.

G7: And mam, to be truly, truly honest I know people say, but from my point of view I think violence is the way to solve something because mam, ok, if someone gossips about you and you get like and you get angry mam ... Slapping them will like ...

G5: Knock it out of them.

G7: Yes. And it will just tell them this person is not to mess with and then they'll stop gossiping about you.

R: Thank you. We will continue with this interview at a later stage.

Part 2 of focus group interview

R: We were talking about physical aggression and hurting people.

G3: I think that if you use your fists it doesn't ... it just makes people scared of you. It doesn't give them respect for you.

G12: And people respect you more if you use your mind rather than your fists.

G7: I'm sorry but it's totally wrong. You know when that first fist ... when you punch that person ... you feel: "Damn that was good." I don't feel that ... I just feel you did this to me, you're going to pay for this. You are going to pay so then I hit you, I just take my anger out on you. And I don't care what my mind does, it's my mind, it's just a brain there. I will hit you, but there's always ... like every time when I fight with a girl ... boys I'm fine, but every time when I fight with a girl I'm sure our fight will last only for like 20 seconds because people will pull me back. Not pull her back, me back so I always get pissed ... I say: "Get off me" and I run somewhere ... I just sit there for the whole day.

R: What causes aggressive behaviour?

G3: And also what could happen is you get your ... some bullies can physically bully you but that could also be from when you're a baby in your mom's tummy then the father or ... father could have ... you know ... physically abused the mother and that could ... Harriet told us that that also has a lot of effect on kids as well. That's why they become bullies because they think it's right.

G5: Some bullies think it's actually fun to bully and it makes you cool.

G7: It makes you feel empowered. You know you must put yourself in that position. I don't know how you take it up because if you do bully somebody you must actually put yourself in that position.

G6: You feel like the hero who's got all the power ... so that you can like control this person and then this person will do anything for you.

G12: Mam, I think the reason girls hit girls is they want to influence the other girls and to get attention and stuff like that.

G11: Well mam, I prefer hanging out with boys. My best friend is a boy. My closest friend in school is a boy.

G5: Mam, I agree with her about the fist thing because I think most of the time when you talk to people nothing happens but when you actually fight with them ... you know physical ... physically they get the message and just leave you alone.

G1: Mam. I only fight with boys ... Because they're like mostly the only ones ... because I'm not really close to anybody in my class except for Bianca, then I'm not close to anybody in my class so then I just leave them. I don't fight with anybody in our class or the other class. I mostly just fight with boys.

R: Any other causes of aggressive behaviour?

G6: Sometimes people randomly wake up in the morning and then come to school and say: "You know what, today I want to mess up her life and even if I can I want to mess up her friend's life and I want to make sure they go home feeling like hell," 'cause, mam, you just get those random people that come up to ... not even her alone, they come up to all of us as a group and say: "You know what? I heard what you said about me ... I know you keep looking at me, keep looking at me." What's wrong with me? It's like you're talking about me, because mam.

G4: We started laughing at something else, totally different from what she was doing.

G3: At the end of what she said ... she said it and then afterwards we looked at her for a few minutes, and that's ... she walked away and then we made sure that she heard that we changed the subject immediately because it just doesn't bother us. So what if she thinks we're talking about her? She thinks that ... if she knows we're talking about her then there's a problem. If she thinks that and she doesn't know, she's never heard us ... that's her problem.

R: What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed at you?

G7: Mam, like if you talk to them then everybody like ... not everybody, everybody doesn't care. The two people start getting emotionally involved like they just start getting emotional and then they start crying. Mam, if somebody's crying you can't really tell them the truth because they came up to you, they told you like ... they told you like

they started fighting with you and then when you told them how you feel ... the truth about them they get angry and then they start crying and mam, it ... you really ... it really looks bad when somebody walks past just to see somebody like shouting because you can't really talk at someone who's crying mam, and you can't really tell them so ... I think the fist is better.

G4: I think talking to someone is the best solution.

G10: Talking about the problem. If you do this then it's not really nice ... and then like the other person will say I understand what you're saying.

G12: Yes, mam, I think discussing it is also better mam, because I'm a person that listens, mam. And like if you were to tell me something it would actually sink in, mam. Like ... if you were to tell me you like boys this is ... wow, mam because they have said it, but then mam, I get ... it gets ... it sinks in but they don't like talk to you ... The people I trust is like my Dad, Thobani and the boys in the school and like my mom, mam. But mostly my dad. So like if I tell him he just says: "You know what, you can't be loved by everyone." That's not possible, mam. I've been trying to please everyone and the thing is that you end up not pleasing yourself, mam. You end up making yourself all look all bad. And at the end of it you don't succeed, mam, because everyone has their own opinion which they can't keep to themselves, mam, which is one thing that bothers me, mam, people can't keep their opinions to themselves.

G8: When those two said that if you have a fight they're not going to mess with you anymore. It's just that they won't be able to come up to you and be honest with you because they're afraid: "This girl's going to punch me if I tell her something straight to her face or she ... if I mess with her it's not going to happen so I'd rather just leave her alone for the fear and not that I respect her ... for the fear that she'll do something back to me."

G2: The only thing I don't like about this whole talking thing ... Ok when I talk to people then they just bluntly ignore me, so that doesn't help.

R: How do you react when seeing other girls displaying aggressive behaviour?

G3: Most people are probably too scared to ...

G9: Ja.

G10: Mam, I don't like getting involved with other people's problems because then it makes everything more complicated for everyone.

G12: That's what I did, ok. Somebody and somebody were fighting and I wanted to get involved and then my mother said I shouldn't because ... you know ... it complicates matters.

G11: If you get involved again the bully will bully you as well.

G8: Sometimes that's true.

R: What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed at you?

G1: You can stand up to the person who is bullying you ... And then they'll like see that because you're standing up to them, you're not so weak after all. And they won't bully you anymore.

G: It's either you both solve it or you're going to a teacher and you say: "Maybe can I talk to this person and go out and get some help from them at adults."

G: I honestly think that girls should be kept more busy, because if a bully has lots of activities they're going to spend their free time ... ok ... say a child who doesn't have any activities, she spends half the time talking about movies, magazines, boys and then she spends the other half of the time gossiping so then if you just kept them busy they would just talk about magazines, movies and boys. There's just that.

R: Who would you go to for assistance if you were treated aggressively by one of your friends?

G1: My best friend, she doesn't go to this school any more but she's the only ... she's one of my best friends, she's ... I can trust her with anything.

G2: My sister.

G3: I'll turn to my parents.

G4: My mom.

G12: My dad, Thobani, Lesego, my other best friend ... she doesn't live here and my friends.

G5: My cousins.

G6: My cousins, my parents and my best friend.

G7: Me.

R: Yourself and no-one else?

G: No, sometimes I tell my cousins and my mom.

R: What should be done by the school about aggressive behaviour displayed by girls?

G9: Mam, the people tell like ... the teachers tell the people please do not bully children and then when the teachers aren't looking mam, everbody ... even the grade 7's mam, the people who are supposed to be accepting ... setting an example ... even the grade 12's mam, nobody can stop bullying, mam. And nobody ... I don't think any of the teachers can help with this.

G11: What I found annoying is when I go to a teacher and say: well, this and this. I actually don't do it anymore. 'Cause it's useless. I say now someone did this and this to me and then they come and then they tell that person and they don't say anonymously, they say like ... this person did this and they start in the anonymous thing but then the person knows it's you and then they say like: "Why did you have to go and tell? It's so not nice" and stuff like that.

G6: No, mam, it doesn't work specially because of me mam, with the situation I'm in, mam, right now, mam. If I could go up to a teacher, mam, like I've done it mam, and say this person ... even if it was the teachers that were bullying you, mam, and your parents actually come in. They don't do anything, mam. Do you know that my dad has come in and I'm going to send my mom in, mam 'cause it's not helping but the minute Ivy does something, mam, if I do one small thing they will go turn it into an explosion, mam. Everyone will be talking about from the minute ... when they feel comfortable when the have to talk about me behind my back, mam and say it to other parents and feel comfortable, but the minute when I do it to someone else it's this big thing mam.

G5: Mam, I think it could help but definitely not with this school, but other schools where it's really enforced, with strict discipline it will really help there but ... at other schools.

G7: Mam, I think it could because ... what she said ... the teachers can sometimes tell other parents and make up things about other children, all sorts of things.

G8: Ok, I've got two things. Ok I've been in that situation where it actually helps to tell somebody. I was too scared to tell that person and then I was too scared to tell that person and then I told another ... I don't want to mention names. Ok, I told another person about this and then I told this person and then this person said to me that it was wrong what they were doing and everything and then spoke to the person who spoke to the person and now ... it's very confusing but I don't like mentioning names and then ... anyway, now we're all happy and joyful and then the second thing was that there was this one person who ... I'm going to make up names, ok? It's not their real names, ok? There was ... Jeff was ... Jeff and I were fighting and then Fred and I were friends and Jeff and I were fighting ok, and then Jeff went and made a rumour ok. I don't want to speak about the rumour because it's a very ugly rumour and then she ... ok ... I can't exactly tell the story if I don't say it. They said that ... Jeff said that I was a lesbian and that I went into the bathroom with this other person Freddie and ... I don't want to mention ... ok? And then that person she said ... she like ... and then everybody was coming to me and asking if I had and then I'm like: "No, where did you hear it?" And then eventually I confronted the person. We had a huge fight and I think we started hitting each other and eventually Harriet was in.

R: What about talking to parents about aggressive behaviour?

G6: Your parents are going to go to the teacher and then you'll still be ...

G9: Bullied ...

G1: Our school has a buddy system and for some people it works, but for other people it doesn't.

G:2 I don't think it works that well because no-one knows anyone who's a buddy. They don't know if they're a prefect or a buddy.

R: Ok.

G10: Some children are afraid to tell people because then they say if they tell someone who's older than the person who's bullying them will find out and then they'll keep bullying them even more and say: "If you tell anyone again I'll keep bullying you or I'll kill you" or something like that. Like threaten really, really badly. And then you'll be afraid to go somewhere.

G12: When I've got a problem with my friend I tell my mom. I tell my Mom everything and my mom will ask me first: "Do you want me to go to the principal?" Then I'll say yes or no. If my mom will go to the principal then I'll go with and I'll tell the story. My mom would then complain.

G4: What Bongi said, ok, understand...the school can't enforce the law, whatever. They can't force it because what like ... it really hurts to know that when your mom gets home from the parent teachers conference when she talks to you and she says you must stop being friends with this person and you know this person to be somebody else, not the person the teacher said the person is.

G12: But I think if you're being bullied and you need to talk to someone I think Harriet or whatever, I think that helps then you don't like keep it bottled in. But I don't think that ... I don't think it always works I think just to talk to somebody helps, but not always.

R: Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix L

Transcription of focus group interview with girls at research site D

Definition of symbols and terminology used

I= Researcher

G1-G8= Girls numbered 1-8

Teacher= Educator

R: What is aggressive behaviour?

G1: Fighting.

G2: Hitting and shouting.

G3: Moaning all the time about someone.

G4: Being rude to someone

G5: Picking on someone.

G6: Nastiness.

G7: Telling stories about someone.

G8: Leaving someone out of a group.

R: Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.

G1: Sometimes people like talk in a group. And then they stop and then when you walk away then they start again. And then when, ja ... then you know that it's you. Because when you come closer then they stop.

R: Ok.

G2: Also sometimes you see like people standing somewhere and then they're talking and they keep on glancing back at you and they laugh a little bit or whatever as well.

R: Ok. Similar experience?

G3: I've had similar experiences ... it usually, in my own experience, makes people feel very angry and they don't know how to let it out any way so lots of other little things like that would probably build up and, in my opinion, make little things like that a lot worse.

R: How did this make you feel?

G1: I actually felt very angry and irritated in a way.

G2: Frustrated.

G3: And very frustrated because I don't really want to break it up, the thing and you don't want to make it worse.

G4: But you're still not the same.

G5: Like if it's your friends you don't want to ...

G4: Like break a friendship ...

G6: Break a friendship and you want to keep it together so you just like pretend you never heard it.

R: Ok.

G7: And you don't know how to handle the problem. You don't know if you should actually consult ... confront them with it or ...

G8: Because you feel betrayed.

G6: Ja.

G3: Sometimes it's not really what you think though, you were thinking something completely different.

R: Ok.

G3: You build it up a lot.

G5: That's the thing that happens.

G3: They could be looking at the classroom behind you and you think they're laughing at you.

G5: Because like a week ago they were talking about you and you didn't exactly sort it out, but you're like talking again.

G3: And they just could be talking about something like last week's camp ...

G5: I went to her house or something ...

G3: And they talk about the exciting things that happened and you just happen to hear your name ...

G5: When they went to the movies and ... a funny part in the movie ...

G4: And then this person laughed and they think that we're talking about that person but we just said that they laughed or whatever.

G2: Ok. We imagine something that's maybe not really there.

G3: Maybe because of past experiences as well.

R: Have you ever treated anyone else in a similar manner? How did it make you feel?

G1-8: Yes (all girls and guilty laughter)

G1: Thinking about it now ...

G2: Guilty.

G3: Guilty.

G4: Ja, it does. Makes you feel really bad.

G5: You feel like you shouldn't have (You regret it) felt so angry when people were doing it to you, when you were doing it back in return.

G6: When you do it in the first place you don't really feel bad ...

G7: You don't really feel like you're doing something wrong, you're just talking socially.

G8: If you had a problem with that person you need to talk about it to somebody, but you don't want that person to know ... gees, I'm so angry with you ...

R: Ok ...

G1: So usually if you've got a problem with somebody in the class you say: "Gees, this person is getting on my straws."

G2: But you'll only speak to your friends, you won't go up to that person and say: "why did you do this ...?"

G3: But a lot of the anger also comes from when you're telling your other friends.

G4: Ja ...

R: Please explain.

G3: Ok, say a group of people are talking and me and my friend are part of that group, and I hear my name I go and tell my friend about it and then she'll start saying: "Oh yes", and last year she also said something similar about that so that's what also builds up your anger because you find out that it's happened before so it's ... there's a big possibility ...

G5: And all the small things that they've done just make more sense now and you just build up on those things.

R: Explain what causes aggressive behaviour.

G7: I think sometimes maybe fights like this one, in this particular case, but recently I've been having a little bit of off days but I think I'm sure everybody ...

G6: In this room ...

G4: Has ... had like recently moments where you just get irritated with your parents.

G3: Yes.

G2: You're happy and then no-one ...

G4: Why don't they understand what I'm trying to say ...

G3: You bring it to school.

G1: No one understands.

G4: For example: this morning my mom got me a whole new duvet thing for my bedroom and she left her keys on my side table. And this morning I said: "Mom, I'm not sure but the last time I saw your keys was on my table." She starts like shouting at me: "What did you do with my keys, why are my keys there? Why are my keys here?" It's like: Why are you shouting at me? I didn't touch your keys. And then only like two days later does she realise that it was her who put the keys there in the first place. So like that frustration and that like stress of: "what have I done wrong?" is taken to school and then let out on other children.

G2: Ja.

R: Ok.

G3: And you know what just makes it worse, is like say your two parents have a fight and you're trying to explain the most innocent thing to your mom ...

G4: And then she lets it out on you ...

G3: And she lets out at you the anger that she has at your dad or whoever, out on you because she doesn't know what else to do for herself.

G5: Even teachers ... teachers also just let out their anger on you when they are angry with someone else.

G6: They like come around the corner and like: "What are you doing here? Get out of my classroom."

G5: And then you don't understand what you did wrong.

G6: You didn't even say anything and then they start shouting at you. And then it like ruins your whole day.

G7: Or when people try to talk to you then you just let it out at them ...

G6: Ja, it's like why did the teachers have to be so ugly and then they think: "Oh, what have I done wrong now?"

R: Any other causes of aggressive behaviour?

G1: I think girls take the smaller things seriously. The same situation, they'll take it to the extreme, they won't just leave it like the boys would.

G2: Ja, we take things too seriously.

G3: We don't want to let things go.

G4: We think ...

G5: Just like this situation, like I was talking to them about it and I was remembering all the stuff that has happened before and it took me like four periods later and then only I went up to her and then we solved it.

R: Other causes of aggressive behaviour?

G1: PMS.

G2: We're more like sensitive ...

G3: Jealousy also sometimes also plays a very big part.

G2: And people will fight a lot. Say something stupid like one girl's got new takkies (running shoes) one day and you've got takkies like what I've got (laughter) and ... and ... you don't want to say I'm so envious, you want to say I hate that girl for getting takkies.

G3: Or if you try and make them feel bad ...

G2: They'll go like: "Say do you like my takkies? I got them yesterday." And like: Ja, they're ok.

G4: But they're not trying to brag they're trying to show you. They like the things that they got.

G5: They're not trying to brag and say mine are so much better than yours but they're just trying to express themselves.

G6: They just want to tell someone.

G7: If you think they're all bragging ...

G2: Bragging ... you know that I don't have nice takkies, just leave me alone.

G8: Just like little extra things like that.

G2: You just don't want to be with that person any more because ...

G3: You think that they're bragging in front of you and like you're jealous.

G2: And it can be like such a small thing, like two people fighting over takkies and then like this person will take that person's side ...

G7: And then the whole class is against you.

G2: You know it's like this group of girls against that group of girls and then the boys help and then it's this horrible ...

G1: The boys are one group.

G2: The boys will like take a shine to one group and then they'll defend that group and then it's like the majority of the class.

G3: Ja, and then it's like with the whole class versus two girls or whatever.

G7: And like it just started from takkies.

R: How do the media influence your behaviour? Watching TV programmes, movies?

G1: Some people in this class, the media also makes them feel a lot more powerful than other people because of the way they look.

G2: It makes us feel better about ourselves sometimes though like me, I tend to watch, when I get the chance, lots of Disney channel. But things like that can't ... can't really affect your self esteem ...

G3: You have to be skinny to do this. You have to be cool.

G4: Say you like watching infomercials and then you see oh my word, she has this machine. How cool is that, I want to be skinny like her.

G5: Ja, then you like think, can I get that skinny in like these three days? I want to go get that machine.

G6: And yet sometimes seeing somebody so thin, like for example Nell, if she's seen someone who's got the same figure as her whose being advertised she'll say: "Gees I look like that."

G7: Ja, it's like ...

G8: Or like, let's see how I can become like her.

G5: On this skinny thing, a person, that her bones are showing out, they think it's real pretty and you have this ok figure but your bones aren't sticking out and then you like: "Oh, I wish my bones were sticking out" and everything.

G8: It's like say even if it isn't the media, say Tracey's lost weight and now she really looks good and she comes walking in, I don't look like she does and I'm like: "What did she do now?"

G3: She's lucky.

G4: The same as the takkies, it would be the same thing but it would be the way she looks not the things she owns.

G6: Also like say for instance now... Buddy says: "Oh, you guys this morning I went to gym and I think I'm really losing weight and everything" and then like we'll say: "I think I should go to gym now. I want to get as skinny as Buddy" Same thing, same situation.

G1: I think sometimes maybe the boys influence the girls as well ...

G2: Ja.

G1: Because they make like little comments.

G2: They say like she's got nice legs. And you think I should have legs like her now.

G1: Like maybe not exactly that but I know I've heard it, and it's been done to me as well where the boys will sit in a group and then they'll say like really loudly: "Gees, Gaby's hair looks like a peacock today ..."

G2: Ja ... the same thing.

G1: And then you'd feel so self conscious.

G2: And then you like ...

G1: Your hair ... and you start like fixing it up.

G2: Or even something you can't change about yourself.

G1: Like Gaby's so fat. Just imagine somebody saying that to you. To be honest from someone who girls are supposed to be impressing.

G4: And you can't do it back to them, because they don't care.

G1: If you go: "Because you're fat too." Then they go like ...

G4: Then there's a 'dissing' competition that you start.

G5: And then the whole class will hate you because you said: “Well you’re fat too.” And with us like normally we have like one against each other but then you have like people back ... They don’t really say anything.

G6: Just the boys ... if you’re fighting with one everyone else is against you. Like if I fight with one of the boys in my class, all the other boys are against you.

G2: And then they like hate you.

G1: And the next day they’re all like: “There’s Claire, everybody move or whatever.” You just said one wrong thing and then all the boys hate you.

G2: Another situation is sometimes they’ll like pick out the girl who looks the best, like: “Oh my word she looks so hot today” and then you’ll say: “Why can’t I be that girl? Why don’t they pick me?”

G5: Ja, like I look similar to her why don’t the same girls ...

G2: Ja, because then you say: “They said you’re nice, now get away from me” kind of a thing.

G1: You’re too good for me.

G8: In my situation I don’t think that that would happen because I’ve got a very close relationship with the boys. I would see them more as brothers than as boy friends so I wouldn’t really get aggressive about that.

G2: But still, like if somebody said you look nice, even if it’s not a boy, if like the teacher’s said: “Why Claire you’re really looking nice today”, then Sacha would think but I look the same as her, why can’t I also look nice?

G1: And then you start like copying the hairstyle.

G2: Then you copy her exactly just so that the teacher will say you look nice.

G5: That’s another thing... copying.

G6: It irritates the living daylights out of me.

G5: Like say I have this hairstyle that I have and then Chanelle... Chanelle will come the next day and she’ll be wearing the same hairstyle. I’m just joking with you Chanelle! Or the next day with the same hairstyle and I’ll think I started that hairstyle, why does she ... meanwhile you actually took that hairstyle from somebody else.

G6: Or even worse ...

G5: And then like Sacha goes and says: “Chanelle, why did you take my hairstyle?” and then she’ll say: “I didn’t” and Claire will go: “I started it” and then there’s a whole fight.

G6: And even if it comes to something like for example you’ve been told that if you’re doing abstract art or something and you’ve been told by the teacher: “Wow, this is so good, it’s so original”, even though you copied it from a book but ...

G3: Yes, Kelly.

G6: And like a whole bunch of other people start copying you which I mean I can’t ... I can’t like say that’s wrong, but I mean sometimes you think gees ...

G4: Ja. Was I first? It was nice for me and then people try copying me. The teacher thought it was nice.

R: What other types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?

G6: Talking about other people.

G1: I kind of find that it’s impossible to refrain from doing that.

G2: I think all girls do.

G3: In this day and age it’s like really, really hard. Because you’ve got ... Even if you try not to do it ... like with the grade sevens, you go to grade sixes and you start talking to them and they go: “Oh my word, did you see Chanelle’s shoes today?” And then you carry on with that. You can’t stop yourself.

G4: Even though you know her shoes aren’t nice. You think they’re not nice.

G5: Keep it to yourself.

G6: You can’t keep it to yourself ...

G7: You can’t.

G8: Other people say try.

G6: You try, but you can’t do it.

G8: Why not mingle with the people who feel the same way as you? You ... recently, not for a very long period of time, but recently I’ve been ... my mom has been drilling it into my head that I must just keep it to myself and let it go and let it go and let it go. And I feel since I actually have been letting things go and keeping most things to myself, not that I keep all things to myself, but most things to myself I’ve actually had a lot more friends. People have been a lot more friendly so right now I feel, people might not feel

the same way about me, but I feel that I actually, I am actually able to go to anyone in the class and have a real conversation and actually feel good about talking to that person, anyone in the class because I've managed to keep most things to myself, whereas they would have found out about it and I wouldn't be able to talk to that person any longer because they don't want to talk to me.

G1: And there's nothing you said that will make them angry. So there's no reason for them to be angry with you.

G2: It's hard to let it go because somebody says something to you and you say why did you say that? And you want to go up to her and ... even if you say it nicely: why did you say that to me then it will really start a big fight.

G3: And they'll be like...

G4: Well, you did this to me.

G2: And then they say: "Why did you say that so angry? or something.

G3: Ja, especially when you're having a fight, and you're just ... like Casey says to me: "You really look funny when you're doing that dance move" just for example, and then I say: "Well, what was wrong with it?" I say in a nice way and then she says: "Well, you look so stupid," but in an aggressive way. Then you feel much worse.

G4: And that's the only reason why we communicate so aggressively. Why ... Casey goes: "You look horrible in those clothes," and I'm like: "Well they look better on me than they do on you." You'll be aggressive back to them.

G3: Because they started ...

G4: Because you know that if you're nice to them, they'll still be aggressive back to you.

G3: You just want to defend yourself.

G4: But even if you say like the simplest thing ... like even if you're saying sorry you go: "Well, sorry Casey!" But they still don't feel good about it, but if you say: "Casey, I'm sorry," so just the tone of your voice can change something completely.

G3: The way you say it ... Sometimes you take things like ... If someone just says something in a way that they weren't supposed to ...

G6: Not supposed to be mean ...

G7: Like very harshly and they weren't supposed to say it like that, it just came out and you'll think very badly of that person, like: "Gees, what did I do now?"

G5: And some people like would say things to impress other people.

G6: They act differently around other people.

G5: Just to fit in.

G6: But I think also ... another scenario is like you're in a group of say two or three people, three or four people, and you come ... you come to school early, early in the morning before school starts and you've done absolutely nothing wrong that you can think of, and your friends are just like ignoring you all the time and you say: "What on earth did I do wrong now?" Ok, and you actually confront them and you say: "Listen what... what's going on? Why are you guys not talking to me and giving the most horrid looks and..." Well my group of friends would actually explain it to you and that's how we sort it out, but sometimes it's actually a really, really big problem.

G7: See the thing is sometimes the girls take... Like we each have our own individual sense of humour, like my group will make the same type of jokes like there's this boy who I really don't... I don't not like him, but I don't spend time with him at all and they'll go: "You're going to marry him one day, there's so many things you have in common, you're going to marry him." And then I understand ... I know that they're joking because I understand what they're doing, but then like that's what happened with Kelly and Claire today... as a joke Claire bumped into Bali like, she went like this ...

G6: Because we got locked in the bathroom ...

G7: She didn't help us. She didn't help us and then like in our way we go: Bali why did you do that? We'll do it in such a sarcastic way that ...

G6: That only we understand.

G7: We understand because we've been there.

G6: And then Kelly would go and she'd comment on it because she thinks it's wrong.

G7: She doesn't understand our sense of humour.

G5: Same thing like I would say to Chanelle ... I'd say like ...or even Gary sometimes, but anyway I'd say like: "You're such a cow, you know" and they'd understand. If I had to say that to Sacha she'd feel really offended, but they'd understand what I'm saying.

G4: And sometimes people would hear things from other people. Like let's say Sacha says: Claire did this and this and then Sacha just goes to Claire and says: "Claire why did you do this and this?" I wouldn't find out the truth first or see for yourself.

R: How do you react when seeing other girls displaying aggressive behaviour?

G1: Walk away.

G2: Try to help.

G3: Don't get involved.

G4: If it's a friend I try to help.

G5: Tell a teacher.

G6: Just laugh.

G7: Try to solve the problem

G8: I try to help, but if I can't I just walk away.

R: What have you done to cope with the aggressive behaviour directed at you?

G1: I think ... I think if we had to think of a solution it should be in my opinion that people are afraid ... they don't know how to fix the problem. They don't know how... if they want to consult them ... or confront them or anything like that.

G2: It still stays with you.

G3: 'Cause I mean all of us have been here for more than one year so we know each other pretty well and I know that a lot of us here have had big fights but I mean as we grow up we've had less and less.

R: Ok.

G4: So I don't think it would really solve the problem if we sorted out the little things because of what's happened before but it would make them easier for the next time.

G5: Like a situation that happened recently ... like Claire and I, this morning we got into a little fight thing. But then in class we sorted it out. But if we didn't and then like Monday if I went and said something to her again then she'd like get really angry with me and it would be worse but if it happened again it might lessen the anger if it did happen again.

G6: It's still probably bad because you think about what she did even if you had sorted out, even if you have sorted it out it wouldn't be as bad if you didn't.

G7: Because you'll think like she's doing it again ... why did she apologise if she's doing it again. But it will still lessen.

G8: But if she didn't apologise ...

G6: It would make things worse ...

G7: Oh, she's doing it again, she's ...

G8: She doesn't stop.

R: Ok.

G4: She's doing it again and she's not ...

R: Who would you go to for assistance if you were treated aggressively by one of your friends?

G1: My mom.

G2: Your teachers.

G3: My parents.

G4: I can't ... like in my case I can't really speak to my parents, because they ... my mom, she is very young, but she still doesn't understand what we go through in everyday life. She ... because it's a completely different generation.

G5: It's a different age.

G6: When it comes to my mom, for example she had a really hard childhood and she knows about bullying and gossiping and all those things and she actually knows this and just lets it go. She knows ... she gives really good advice so I'm glad I have a mom like I do because now I can actually go to her and tell her my problems and she would actually give me some really helpful advice to solve it. Because she's been through six times more than I have so she's prepared for those questions.

G7: It depends ...

G8: Our teacher, she wants us to like trust her and things, so we normally talk to her.

G1: But the thing is, now say for instance ... one of ... ok somebody says ... there's something that happened and you don't like it and then you'll go ask if you can talk to the teacher about it, but you're too scared to because you think if they find out they'll be

upset and they'll bully you so you're scared to let it out because of the consequences if they find out. So that also happens.

G7: I'm going to go back on the communicating subject ... Say I ... there's a situation that I would talk to Claire about because she's my best friend, but then Claire's not here one day and I need to go and talk to someone and I can't really go and really talk to a teacher and my parents aren't here at the moment, so I want to go and talk to Casey and now Casey doesn't ...

G5: Casey's her second best friend ...

G7: And Casey doesn't understand ... she doesn't fully understand what Claire would understand because of the way I like communicate with her and then she'll take things completely the wrong way and she'll maybe take in an offence or in an offence to someone else and then she'll go and tell everybody because to her it would be the right thing to do because obviously if you hear someone said something about one of your best friends behind your back you're going to want to tell them.

G6: And sort out the problem.

G7: But then she would literally take it the wrong way.

G6: Like say Claire says... Casey's so mean and then in front of her or she's saying it to the class and I'm with the class and now Casey's my best friend and I really want to tell her and then I'm holding it back because I don't want ... because they're also friends and I don't want them to get into a fight.

G7: And you don't want to be bullied by those people who are talking about your best friend.

G3: But in that case you think you're keeping one of the most important things ... you're like holding it inside ... what you think is wrong.

R: What should be done by the school about aggressive behaviour displayed by girls?

G1: I think ...

G2: A lot of my aggression also comes from teachers comments.

G3: Yes.

G4: Definitely.

G5: I find that some of the teachers like they have favourites and I say, because I'm a senior counsellor, and a few other people here are and it's bad if you get in trouble. And I haven't been warned, ok, I'm laughing in class and I haven't been warned but there's people who sit ... who are also senior counsellors ...and they sit two seats away from me and they scream and they've been warned ten times, but an action's never been taken against them. A minute later I'm told you're going to see your vice-principal if you don't stop that but I haven't even been warned so I don't even know I'm doing the wrong thing ...

G6: And the worst thing is, I know I've been called a bitch, by ... twice by one specific teacher. And I actually ... I didn't know why. I was too afraid to actually go up to that teacher and say: "Listen why, what did I actually do that makes me what you just called me?" To me it makes no sense.

G7: See, the thing is there is one teacher who tends to swear a lot.

G8: Which teacher? (Laughter)

G7: It's not offending anyone ... Miss V. It's not really offending anyone ...

G8: It's not fair for us to get into trouble if we swear and then they don't.

G7: If someone like ... if she says the 'f' or 's' word in class it's not exactly like ...

G5: It's not like you're going to go tell anyone now because it's a teacher, but it's not like you want to say nothing, because the teacher's swearing.

G8: Because for a teacher it's definitely the wrong thing to do.

G4: And the worst thing is for example like in my case you don't even want your parents to sort it out because, my parents, I've been through a lot of things with teachers and students in my previous schools and ... that's kind of a bad look on me, but anyway ... She [mom] usually tends to actually put action in it. She is the one, she's strong enough to go up and say: "Excuse me"

G3: Our parents take it up ... even if it's the principal. They go up to the principal and say: "Why did you do this, it was wrong, I do not appreciate it."

G4: For example like my mom would ...she has a strong enough personality and she would say: "Who do you think you are?" And the thing is I was too afraid to tell my mom because I knew that she would do that and I didn't want to be in trouble like I was

the last time when I did what I did and it actually made the rest of my life at that school a living hell.

G2: But sometimes like when you've got a problem and you tell your parents they sometimes overreact.

G1: Yes, I'm going to tell all your teachers now, just say for instance you had a fight with a girl or guy in the school and then you tell your mom: "This guy, he's really not nice to me" and then like she'll say I've ...

G3: I'm going to go to the principal.

G1: I'm going to go to the principal and tell the principal I'm going to get you out of that school and I'll say like: "Mom, don't worry it's not that bad."

R: How could Life Orientation lessons help you deal with aggressive behaviour?

G6: Honestly, I don't think there's any lesson, actual physical lesson at school that can teach us this. I think it's actually only experience.

G7: You have to find out yourself.

G3: I think it's within the girls themselves because they have to have experience. I think the only thing I can think of right now to lessen the aggression would be to sort out those little things and the only way to do that is to be the girls themselves to go and say: "Let's sort this out before it becomes a big thing." Because the teachers can't say: "You need to come to me and tell me if there's any little thing" because that's not going to happen every time.

G4: There's eight of us. Now next year we're all going into high school which is a much bigger number. So it's going to be hard if every time you have a little fight to go sort it out with the teacher.

G6: If you have to have like a lesson on it, usually if you want to understand something you have to give an example. There is no way you can give an example of every single little situation to try and help you solve that.

G7: I think the only thing that can actually solve it is experience. As you get older you actually realise that doing this is wrong. It's not going to fix the problem so you actually experiment with other things and you say: "Listen, this really works for me" and then as

you get older, when you get into your teens, when you get like 18 and older you have already gotten through that age of pettiness then you actually let serious things go.

G3: I think another thing that causes aggression in us, like not for all of us, younger siblings ...

G4: Yes ...

G6: I'm so glad I'm a single child.

G3: Younger siblings tend to drive you insane.

G4: But sometimes I get like really aggressive. I really feel I want to kick some ass, strangle my sister sometimes.

R: Thank you for your assistance.

Appendix M

Transcription of focus group interview with girls at research site E

Definition of symbols and terminology used

I= Researcher

G1-G7= Girls numbered 1-7

Teacher= Educator

R: What is aggressive behaviour?

G1: Fighting or arguing.

G2: Talking behind someone's back.

G3: Hitting someone.

G4: Shouting. Being nasty.

G5: Ignoring a friend

R: Number 6?

G6: Spreading rumours and lies

G7: Telling secrets.

R: Describe a situation in which you or a friend may have been treated aggressively.

G1: You have basically been like at break or before school or something like that ... people ... like you're going to your bag or they just walk away.

G2: Being left out of a party.

R: What exactly happened?

G2: I don't know, I just ... I've never personally never like not invited someone but people that I know have done that.

R: How did this make you feel?

G2: I don't know. I just didn't invite them to my party.

G3: It happened to me as well.

G4: But the thing is I couldn't invite a lot of people to that party because it was so expensive.

R: Ok.

G4: Sometimes you do it but not on purpose, like you can only invite ... like to my birthday party I could only invite three people but I was planning to invite like so many and then I could only invite like two or three people.

R: Ok, so it wasn't specifically a place where you ...

G4: Didn't like the person so ...

R: How do you think people feel in a case like this where one person is left out and everybody makes it obvious that they didn't want that person at the party?

G5: Probably feel sad, left out. They might get a bit depressed during the week, didn't want to go ... didn't want to talk to friends and stuff like that.

G6: It's just like everyone gets involved, and there's crying and everything, but we have to go through this whole thing about crying.

R: What other types of aggressive behaviour have you experienced at school?

G1: Not sure ...

G3: Gossiping

G4: Yes, gossiped about me.

R: Ok. Why do you think girls gossip about each other?

G1: They...

G2: People say something ...

G3: Because it's fun.

G4: Sometimes they've got something against you.

R: Have you ever treated anyone else in a similar manner?

G5: We all gossip. (Laughter)

R: How did it make you feel?

G6: Sad.

G7: Sometimes it's hurtful and then people get hurt but you're not trying to ... and sometimes it comes out wrong. You can't really explain and they get the wrong idea and then it starts pretty much.

G7: Ja. That's the problem.

G1: Telling someone's secrets is also a problem.

G4: That's dreadful.

G1: If you tell a secret you have to trust that person, if you tell, because like if I have to tell like I would have to trust that person. I won't just tell them.

G2: Sometimes you just have to get it out. What I do is I like to tell somebody something so that they know something.

G3: But like some people think that like you trust them, but you think that they're trustable, but they're actually not and because I've been ... I've told people secrets and they just go and tell the whole nation and they spread rumours about it and it becomes bigger and bigger and they add on their little comments which makes it even worse.

R: Other aggressive behaviour?

G3: Spreading rumours.

G4: To make you feel better.

G5: Because you want to make the other person feel bad.

G6: Because you hate them so much.

R: Why do we retaliate when we have been treated badly?

G1: To make us feel better.

G2: But that's how girls are. Most girls are sensitive ... over sensitive sometimes.

G3: Maybe they think they can solve it.

G5: Yes, they probably do. Because they're over sensitive.

G4: That causes the problem.

R: How do the media influence your behaviour?

G1: You see all of those like shows ... like movies.

R: Ok, and what about the other expectations that they have of girls ... if you look at the media?

G2: You have to be like thin and popular and you like get cat fights and everything ...

G3: Yes.

G4: Not really.

R: How do you react when seeing or hearing other girls being aggressive to someone?

G1: I let them solve their own problems.

G2: I try to help.

G3: I don't really know ...

G4: Walk away.

G5: Just listen but don't interfere.

G6: See if I can help.

G7: Not sure.

R: What have you done to cope with aggressive behaviour directed towards you?

G6: It's better to talk to someone.

G7: Depends who you're talking to.

G1: Try to sort out the problem.

G2: I just went home and cried.

R: Who would you go to for assistance if you were treated aggressively by one of your friends?

G1: My mom.

R: And...?

G2: Very close friends.

R: How do you feel about talking to a teacher?

G3: I have before ...

G4: I also have.

G5: Like if you're crying in class you have to tell them. They take you outside.

G6: Some teachers gossip like about it in the staff room ...

G7: That's why you don't want to tell them because then all the teachers know.

G4: But if you don't want anyone to find out and then you tell a teacher and they go call that child in and then you're forced to talk about it, even when you don't want to talk about it.

G1: Like sometimes ... when you tell them ... when you try talk about it ... like she said it could come out the wrong way or something and they take it the wrong way. And then they over react or if it becomes really big. Lots of people get involved.

G7: Or you tell somebody and they go: Oh my gosh, oh shame. And then they like try and ... then they feel sorry for you and you hate it when people like: Oh do you need anything and it's like ... no Ok.

R: What should be done by the school about the aggressive behaviour displayed by girls?

G1: They can help the girls.

G2: They can but it probably won't work.

G3: Schools can get involved between two girls that are fighting ...

G4: The problem with that after two months it's back to normal ...

G5: It's just something that you can't do anything about.

R: How can learning about aggression or how to manage it in a subject like LO make a difference?

G1: It won't.

G2: It depends on whether the person...if you can't manage a person then you can't and if you can then you can.

R: Thank you for your time.

Appendix N

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 1 at research site A

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site A

Educator 1

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: It does definitely occur, more verbal than anything else, but yes. They are at a stage where they are trying to establish or exert themselves to find their own 'who am I'. Sometimes that comes out more aggressively.

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: It would be when they're in an argument and they don't see eye to eye. They don't know how to negotiate around a point yet. So their negotiation skills are lacking so, then it comes out in aggression. I don't know if that's specific enough? Discontent almost ...

R: Ok.

E: In sport we experience a lot of positive aggression again. Where the girls are showing aggression but in a more positive way.

R: Ok.

E: So they are trying to balance it.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: I think it's a lack of understanding, a clash of personalities. They do not yet know how to approach someone with different personalities. That's something you learn with age.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: I've had a girl who comes to see me on aggression. She herself felt it that she's got too much aggression in her so she wanted methods to control this aggression. So I just sat with her and asked her why the aggression and she could tell me why and we tried to put methods in place as to how to control her emotions in certain situations. A lot of aggression goes a lot deeper than just classrooms, where crime has played a huge role in their lives. That is aggression outside the class, aggression towards the community. That is where mom and dad get divorced ... that is a deep ... hurt, aggression which is far more serious than just this rolling of the eyes ... At that age they feel it, they feel deeply and they turn that hurt into aggression and that's the scary part. Some of the girls came to me and they told me: "I'm cross because we were high jacked" or "I'm upset because my parents are divorced", "I'm upset because my dad got killed". They give you: "I am upset, I'm not hurt". You know the hurt is there. But they actually identified why I am so cross. It shows a very mature attitude towards the situation in South Africa. They are quite aware of what is out there.

R: How does the school address this behaviour?

E: Our whole team is a support system. Every teacher is there for every child ... formally we are working on it, informally they know of our open policy.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: I think that we can create an environment that is more understanding by maybe giving more practical situations and courses or whatever you call them, lectures on aggression and interactive relationships. That might help for that age I think. I think most schools are battling. You wait until you enter the working environment before you actually play the politics correctly.

R: Yes.

E: They have to play politics. They get used to it with someone else.

R: Thank you.

Appendix O

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 2 at research site A

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site A

Educator 2

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: A little. It can be quite subtle.

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: If they're in a group that they don't want to be in ... and sometimes it's just a ... I don't know how to describe it in nice terms. Sometimes it's just bitchy comments. Sometimes a child will answer in class and ... I don't know ... it's very hard to describe, it's very subtle. Yes. It could be the roll of the eyes or a sigh when someone puts their hand up. It can be that subtle.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: I'm not certain that it's always malicious. I think in many respects it is an immaturity. I think we're talking particularly grade 7's here?

R: Yes.

E: And I don't teach them a lot but I find that a lot of the aggression of the girls is directed at the boys and not at the girls.

R: Ok.

E: I think the boys irritate them and I think it is a maturity issue. I think a lot of them see some of the boys as quite immature and respond accordingly. There's not too much girl on girl.

R: Ok.

E: That's the impression I have, that I've picked up.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: I think a lot of it's modelling. So, if it's possible to ignore a look from a child or a rolled eye and no-one else has seen it, I'll ignore it. I won't make a big deal of it. And if the other child has been hurt, rather than contradicting the child, I'll rather positively reinforce it if it's happened there. I think modelling sometimes the differences, and seeing the positive and criticising the negatives in a constructive way ... I think it's a modelling issue.

R: How does the school address this behaviour?

E: I think that in that type society where we are pretty much living in a constant trauma I think that it is difficult to come to grips with it. Maybe adults can, I think. Girls do battle to deal with that. I think that we are very fortunate in this type of school that they have got approachable teachers. But you know ... I think as teachers ... when the problem is such a complex one and it's not just ... the societal issues are way beyond our control. There's nothing we can do to change those kind of things, but then I think those do play an important part. So I think a lot of it has to be reactive rather than proactive and that's just the nature of the problem. It would be nice if we could change those things but I doubt that we can.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: I think that's where the values and attitudes of the new curriculum is so important. They're teaching a lot more than just knowledge and skills. We are teaching values and attitudes and I think that is an important part of what we do. Then again it is valuable, but it has a limited value. Or a limited success in that the child isn't ... I think we see it every parents' evening- we're not the only influences in their lives. Yes, we see them probably more than sometimes even their parents do, but when it comes down to it- what happens in the home situation will often override anything that we teach them so ... we

do have an impact and we can have quite a big impact but really what happens in the home is going to be what dictates how they respond to situations in life.

R: Thank you.

Appendix P

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 5 at research site B

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site B

Educator 5

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: Well I see them mostly in class, so yes, there is some aggressive behaviour. Ja definitely some aggressive behaviour.

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: A lot of criticism. And lots of 'dissing' and you know ... and you can see that some of them just try to laugh it off but you can see after they've stopped laughing, you can see that they've actually ... they don't actually like what's happened.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls?

E: I think there's a lot of competition. They all want to ... even though they say that there's no boys in the class that they like, I think they still want to be the girl that's going to stand out. So ... it's definitely a lot of competition. They want to outsize each other in looks, personality, brains, everything. So ... and I think also they ... that they don't want to accept that people are different. Well, maybe they're just not 'old' enough to accept that people are different so they can't ... they just think it's easier to laugh about it and to be horrible to the person instead of just accepting that that person's just going to be that way. Because they are changing. They're developing their personalities now and I think the classroom's so small so it's difficult for people who are a bit

different to find friends who are on the same level as them. So I think that that's ... ja ... a bit of a problem. The media also causes problems, at least I think so. Especially in all these programmes where you are still seeing old ladies doing it to each other. It's like no-one really grows up on any of these programmes. It's like it's acceptable to do that even when you're 50 and 60 years old. You know ... and it's not ... There should be a lesson behind it that you shouldn't do it and that when you get to an age like that you should be more mature and I think that they're not seeing that and they're probably not seeing it from their parents either ... that there comes a time when you actually just have to accept the differences and you know ... just live with it. But I don't think they're seeing enough of that.

R: How do address this aggressive behaviour in class?

E: Probably the wrong way. I tend to pick up on the ... on the joking side of it so the person who is 'dissing' the other girl I'll 'diss' that girl back, you know, to kind of stand up for the person who's actually being hurt and then all the kids will see, hey if mam's picking up on it then obviously something's wrong. So, I know that's the wrong approach, but it kind of just calms things down you know and they actually then laugh about it instead of taking it so seriously. Because I think sometimes that they don't realise how serious a funny, they call it funny, but it's not actually funny, how such a comment actually does hurt.

R: How does the school address this behaviour?

E: They ... I mean they need to be aware of it. They need to have rules and methods down ... that's going to ... that there's something that can be done if a bigger issue arises.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: I don't know. I think if it's a physical behaviour then yes, but I think it's ... sometimes I feel it's a normal part of growing up. That they're going to ... some of them obviously you can see that they're a lot more aggressive than others so maybe you can maybe counsel them a bit. Maybe there's something underlying there, that they have that

type of approach, but then others, it's just part of normal routine of what you do when you grow up, unfortunately there will always be those who are at the bottom of the triangle and there will always be those who are at the top. So it's a normal thing. But there are some where you could actually ... I think counselling would probably be the best because they are matured ... they're maturing a lot faster so I think they're more aware of their inner ... what's happening inside psychologically so they actually need to be approached like a more matured child so that you actually give them the responsibility that they can change and that they need to start working on it if it's already coming up now then it needs to be worked on now already ... so ...

R: Ok ...

E: Role models are important. The thing is they don't have it among themselves either because a child who isn't involved in that behaviour is seen as the bottom of the feeding triangle you see, so they're not going to see it as mature behaviour, they're going to see it as you know that this person's shy and timid and weak. You know ... so definitely there's no ... and I don't think they even see it amongst the teachers who should be their role models because there's also a lot of politics between the teachers and the kids pick up on it and you don't think they do but they do. So ... It's difficult. I think everyone is just so overcome with so many things that they forget about what position they're playing.

R: And ...

E: If you're not doing it yourself then it doesn't help. And I mean it stems from ... it stems from home. Aggressive behaviour like that will stem from a home where they see it within their parents. So, if their parents are going to tell them they mustn't do it then obviously it's not going to work because their parents aren't following what they're preaching.

R: Thank you.

Appendix Q

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 6 at research site C

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site C

Educator 6

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: Ok, in terms of aggression are you talking verbal aggression or physical?

R: Any type of aggression, but more specifically non-physical.

E: Ja, I would say verbal but not physical. I have not seen any physical yet, but there is verbal.

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: Excluding others, gossiping, facial expressions.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: Ok, we ... probably would have to do with friendship and the fact that you know certain children do not get on with others and then it becomes a group thing where now they divide themselves and then, you know, take sides and then it becomes a blow out with the people it does involve. So yes, it really got bad at the beginning of the year and ja ... I heard the comments and stuff that was thrown across from both sides. Friendship is a problem. And then I think the second one would be competition in terms of you know, marks, who's getting the higher marks. You hear the comments come from there as well, very sarcastic. In the tone you can hear the aggression, but it's not a verbal attack. Ja, so you do hear it in the comments and apparently in the looks as well, the, if you can put it in inverted commas, 'dirty looks'. So that's the kind of aggression that

comes across there. So I would say friendship, competition which is supposed to be a healthy thing in terms of competition but it isn't. No physical whatsoever, they don't go that way. Also peer pressure, trying to be the popular one, media definitely because if I see the way that they behave, the way they speak, the way they address each other, the way they, when we have 'civvies', the way that they dress and carry themselves out. They are, and the type of material that they read as well, tells you that they're very governed by the media.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: I think if it's something very small then I think maybe we should give them the opportunity to try and sort it out first, but if it gets out of hand and it's going to start affecting the class and you can see that there's a lot of tension then I think we actually can be the mediator there. That's important for the teacher to actually get involved and see exactly what's going on, but not to the sense of invading , but just trying to help to sort out and at the end of the day I think you can give them advice and then allow them to make their own choices and then if it goes further than that then I think maybe it's good to bring in external help in terms of psychologists and stuff like that because maybe there is a child that's got a real issue or a group of children and it cannot be sorted out and then it obviously affects the class time and the teaching time and things like that, even just the general perception in the classroom we know it's getting worse and the kids are not getting on with each other and it affects everything around. So I would say to that point yes, we can get someone professional but if it can be handled, you can give advice. You know, you can go that route.

R: Ok.

E: But only if necessary, if it's not such a big thing ... sometimes it's good if children resolve some of their issues on their own because it makes them mature as well. I always use the statement: Things that you do now can actually go on a bigger scale later on in life, if you don't deal with those issue now. I think you do actually carry it in your life and eventually, one day, if you don't deal with it now it explodes, you know. So it gets blown out of proportion so it is possible if you're a very aggressive person now and

speaking personally as well, you see it in your life as well in terms of the people around you. So if they haven't dealt with it now it becomes a problem later on in life.

R: How does the school address this behaviour?

E: I don't know ... I think it depends on the situation. They can formulate sort of very generalised policies but it depends on the situation you know, and how you handle it.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: It depends what the situation is ... because it could be like we said a very mild form of aggression and then it could be something where it becomes a physical attack and then you would have to deal with it appropriately, but we can actually have a policy like that for example if the person does attack someone else maybe get in professional help. Try and help and if that doesn't work and it continues then maybe suspend the child for a few days, get the parents in to get professional help. Things like that. You don't have to ... because there could be real underlying problems and as teachers we know that it's always something that has to do with the background, so that's coming to school and obviously venting their anger here. So, not all the time but most of time ... sometimes it's just starting off in school ... so, ja at the end of the day it depends on the situation ... You can put in policies but you have to obviously weigh the situation and see what it is like and how to deal with it then.

R: Thank you.

Appendix R

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 3 at research site D

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site D

Educator 3

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: Not aggression, there's a lot of that bitchiness they're starting. That would be the word to use. There's a lot of it. You don't see a lot of aggression from where I'm sitting.

R: Would you define this 'bitchiness' as aggressive behaviour?

E: Yes, I suppose it can be called aggressive behaviour.

R: In your opinion, what causes the bitchiness or aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: I think some of it will be partly jealousy, I mean you know obviously the pretty girls will take a certain amount of flack because they are and then also they'll tease each other in class. Say if one of them doesn't do well then there's that, so the only thing that you kind of look at ... there has to be some form of jealousy underlying it all. Well, you see all these magazines with skinny girls ... they are and they're very into their clothing. If you don't have the right clothes you're not in our group, if you don't have the right attitude you're not in our group so definitely ... I think in the smaller school it seems maybe slightly worse because you've got smaller groups where in a bigger school you might tend to miss it. Because I went to a big school myself and there are so many groups within a big group that you might tend to miss it, where here you've got your ... you can see much better and get to know the kids much more intimately. So you have

more time for them. Ja, so I don't know if the issues themselves would be worse in either size school, but they're definitely more noticeable in a smaller school.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: Well, ideally bring the girls that have the problems in. Myself, I tend to try and talk to each group separately before bringing them together and then ... right this is your side ... this is your side. Let's put the sides together then try and hash it out ... I mean there was one particular incident this year where we tried that and at the end of the day we said this isn't going to work, you need to find new friends. Try and find new groups and friendships because we've talked about it until the end so ...

R: How does the school address this type of behaviour?

E: With policies, perhaps. I think it's very hard because it depends on the children. So it's quite hard to have a certain policy the way you work things out. I mean ... and every teacher's approach is different. My approach might not actually work with these certain girls, but it might work with a different group where another teacher's approach will work with the first group and not with the second group so ... it's about getting to know each of the children and trying to find a way. We need to be stern and disciplined ... is the answer with you whereas another person will be just talking about it and going this is how I'm disappointed in you and why would you do such a thing? How would you feel will work with another child ... So it would be very hard to have a policy in order to deal with the individualities of the children.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: I don't know ... I think do you know what? If you think about it, growing up ... as girls grow older ... and even yourself there's always those issues. There's always those issues.

R: Thank you.

Appendix S

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 4 at research site D

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site D

Educator 4

R: To what extent does aggressive behaviour occur amongst the Grade 7 girls in your school?

E: I have to be honest, in this school I don't really see much aggressive behaviour. I think mostly that they get on well. I think there are maybe one or two that might ...

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: More verbally.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: I think sometimes personality clashes and from what I understand it comes a long way. Most of it's boys, that's the funny thing, that you get it, and I think sometimes it's from home, maybe because they're not always happy when they get here.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: Oh, in class I usually try to find the ... get to the core of it, where it started. If you find that it's not conflict at school then obviously you try to find the reason. You pull someone aside and sort it out during break ... personally try and find out what happened at home or whatever. If it is in class then you try and sort it out with the people right there or if it's something that has a long history you sort it out. Make them apologise or whatever it is that they need to sort out.

R: How does the school address this behaviour?

E: It's difficult. But I mean you can teach them how to deal with it. Because they are also the age, in Grade 7 where they have changes in their bodies and their emotions but they need to ... you need to teach them how to deal with it.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: Maybe with policies ...

R: Thank you.

Appendix T

Transcription of individual interviews with educator 7 at research site E

Definition of symbols used

R= Researcher

E= Educator

Research site E

Educator 7

R: To what extent does aggression behaviour occur amongst the grade 7 girls your school?

E: I would say it does occur to a certain extent.

R: Describe the types of aggressive behaviour you have seen displayed by the girls.

E: I think there's a little bit of jealousy in terms of performance. There are some children who like ... contribute quite highly especially in the English comprehensions and things, question and answer and you would see this reaction among the girls. They would just make these funny gestures towards each other. You know that there's a bit of tension going on and whenever somebody contributes the best they are not in agreement so there's a bit of conflict there.

R: In your opinion, what causes the aggressive behaviour displayed by the girls?

E: You would find when you ask them what they did probably on the weekend or something, you find that some would really like go overboard and exaggerate and the others who probably don't have such privileges they would go ... (role of eyes). Ja.

R: How do you address this aggressive behaviour?

E: Somehow I use the experiences from where I'm coming from. I give them the real life experiences of people who had the privileges like some would have in the class and some experiences where you were underprivileged- what goal are you going towards?

What is your focus in life? Do you just say this is ... I'm like this now, I'll continually be like that.

R: Ok.

E: So, I advise them to have a focus, even those that are doing very well, they are privileged and everything to just have a stand because they can ... they can be side tracked by a lot of things in life and they wouldn't end up what they expected. And so those that are underprivileged I just advise them to study hard and make a better life for themselves.

R: How does the school address this type of behaviour?

E: I'm not too sure.

R: How could the problem of aggressive behaviour be addressed?

E: Ok, I think for some girls they need a lot of personal attention so to speak because sometimes after class some of the children have come to tell you personal things that would have discouraged or encouraged them in some ways, so ja ... I would think counselling would be very good, because some children just need a pat on the shoulder to just encourage them because it's not all gold ... out there. So, probably all of us are busy, are very busy running around in life. But at the end of the day I think it would be good to have somebody or maybe have a teacher who would have just an ear to hear them and ... I think we would just realise a lot of things out of that ... Everyone of us is busy ... Ok, I think today's life is busier than it was. I mean a long time ago you would sit down with the grandma and listen to such stories and of course proverbs and everything you learn out of it but these days everybody is very busy, very busy. Life is very busy. I think we were more privileged ... I don't know about South Africa but back home we had tons of time to be talked to especially as girls. We used to have time to be talked to and when you reach a certain age and how you're supposed to behave and things like that. But sometimes we as parents today, we don't have time for that.

R: Thank you.