A QUANTITATIVE STUDY ON THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE AMONGST LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

by

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I declare that 'A quantitative study on the culture of violence amongst learners in South African schools' 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.

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SIGNATURE   DATE

(MS NICOLA VAN DER MERWE)

SUMMARY

The focus of this thesis falls on school violence. The research addresses the possibility that a culture of violence exists amongst some South African school-going youth. The researcher identified the attitudes and behaviour of learners towards violence as indicators of the culture of these learners. The research specifically focused on the pro-violence attitudes and violent behaviour of learners. The definition of 'culture' which was employed suggests the link between a person's attitude, behaviour and culture. Information was gathered through literature and empirical research. The data was collected by means of a questionnaire with closed-ended questions and a well-tested tool, namely the Attitudes towards Violence Scale. The results of the empirical research were analyzed with the SPSS Windows data editor computer program. Conclusions and recommendations regarding school violence were made. In addition, a programme to curb such violence was proposed. Some suggestions for further research into this subject were also advanced.

KEY WORDS:

School violence; pro-violence attitude; violent behaviour; attitude-behaviour relationship; culture of violence; moral degeneration; victim; juvenile delinquent; learner; school violence prevention; causes of school violence.

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CHAPTER 1

ORIENTATION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

Hit Me, Hit Me, Rape me, Rape me; a common game played by learners on the school grounds throughout South Africa these days. "Radio programmes, television documentaries and newspaper articles scream headlines such as 'More violence in schools!' (Burton, 2006: para.1). Child offenders are increasing in number with some learners slicing each other's throats while wearing ninja masks; whipping out guns amongst fellow learners and using equipment specifically designed to aid their learning such as a pair of scissors, to stab each other in order to resolve an argument. Steyn and Naicker (2007:1) emphasize the severity of school violence by stating that hardly a day passes in which the media does not report on crime and violence in South African schools. Research results, such as De Wet (2003), and Neser et al. (2004) support the above, because the findings in these studies indicate that crime and violence are widespread amongst South African school-going youth. Maree (2000:1) goes as far as to state that South African schools are increasingly beginning to resemble war zones. More violence! More cruelty! Is this what has become of our schools in South Africa?

According to the Education Minister Naledi Pandor (as cited in Anonymous, 2004: para.1) at least 115 assaults, 111 acts of sexual violence and 4 acts of "violence with a firearm" have been reported to occur at South African schools during 2004. Patrick Burton (Burton, 2006: para.1) writes that a flurry of attention has been focused on the violence occurring in schools in South Africa. A national school violence study conducted by Burton, on behalf of the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) in 2008, revealed a definite

increase in school violence compared to the statistics reported by the Education Minister in 2004. The research results presented by Burton (2008a:16) depict that **1,821,054** learners throughout South Africa experienced some form of violence while at school. The report indicated that 690,334 respondents were assaulted and more than 27,000 respondents experienced some form of sexual violence, considerably more than the figures reported in 2004 (Burton, 2008a:16-18).

School violence has become somewhat of a phenomenon in South Africa. The word *phenomenon* is defined as a **significant** physical occurrence, a fact, or proven event out of the ordinary, especially one whose cause is in question (Reber & Reber, 2001:533). As such, the researcher thought it fit to describe the violence in South African schools as a phenomenon. School violence is not only occurring as the exception to the rule any longer, but has also become a significantly ongoing event, visible in all schools under all circumstances. Traditional causes of school violence can no longer be used to explain its frequency and nature. The said phenomenon in South Africa needs to be addressed with immediate urge and seriousness as it is the opinion of this researcher that it has already started to spiral out of control.

This situation may suggest that a spate of immorality and anarchy, leading to a culture of violence, is slowly but surely possessing the lives of our once innocent and loving children. South African authorities have also acknowledged that our society is becoming one driven by morally wrong behaviour (Rauch, 2005). In an attempt to address a state of anarchy in South Africa, the *Moral Regeneration Movement* (MRM) was called into life, with a vision to build an ethical and moral community and a mission to promote positive values (Anonymous, n.d.(b)). In order to do so the MRM aspired to develop strategies aimed at restoring social values in our new democracy and to promote national advocacy for the creation of an ethical, caring, and corrupt-free society. However, during the time taken to implement the MRM,

learners have displayed brutal, violent behaviour at school, which appears to have become more tolerated by learners (and even parents and teachers).

The researcher aimed in this study to research whether a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth, which may be (amongst other factors) a result of the moral degeneration of South Africa and its youth. In order to arrive at a conclusion regarding the above notion, the researcher identified the 'attitudes' and 'behaviour' of learners, as the two variables that will give an indication of the culture of South African learners. One definition of the term 'culture' stipulates the relationship between a person's attitude, behaviour and culture. Haviland (1993:30) defines 'culture' as:

> *A set of rules or standards shared by members of a society, which, when acted upon by the members, produce behaviour that falls within a range of variation the members consider proper and acceptable.*

Attitude (as is seen later in this chapter) refers to the norms, values and rules that regulate the behaviour of an individual. Thus, the researcher will aim to establish what attitude the learners have towards violence, as well as to examine their violent behaviour at school. The researcher will also provide the reader with theory concerning the relationship between attitude and behaviour, in order to explain the noteworthy influence of these two variables on each other. Based on the findings pertaining to the above, the researcher may then be able to reach a conclusion on the possibility that a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth.

1.2 Background

Learners are seldom asked to share their views on school violence. When the issue of such violence is addressed, the tendency is to rely on adults in the community, for example parents, agency representatives and school personnel, to provide the relevant information. Examples of such studies include that of C. De Wet (2003), E.M. Van den Aardweg (1987), A. Kempen (2008) and N.C. De Wet (2006). However, the views of learners on school violence are just as, if not more, important. Jeanette Willert states that:

> *Omitting adolescents from the community conversation means vital perspective is overlooked, a perspective that is perhaps more informed than any other about what is truly happening within the school in terms of school safety and school climate* (Willert, 2002:2).

It is also seldom that school violence prevention programmes address learners' contributory role in this phenomenon. The majority of violent behaviour by learners is blamed on poverty, "apartheid" and racial issues, the media, socioeconomic factors, and external factors, and can be encountered in any school with any combination of learners. However, school violence is no longer restricted to specific neighbourhoods, races, or socio-cultural backgrounds etcetera. This gives rise to questions such as:

1) What causes learners to display violent behaviour at their schools?
2) Do learners develop a pro-violence attitude, which leads to acting violent at school?
3) Do learners react violently at schools as a result of perceived or actual threat or danger at their schools?

4) And does a culture of violence exist amongst South African school-going youth?

Regardless of the answers to these questions, the main purpose of researching school violence should be to find and to explore new initiatives to prevent the increasing school violence phenomenon.

In order to be able to address and curb violence of this type, we need a better understanding of what happens in schools to create negative or violence-filled climates that are injurious and/or fatal to learners' emotional and physical wellbeing. Although research has been carried out, and is currently underway, pertaining to school violence in South African schools and learners' views of what is necessary to maintain or improve the school climate, like that of B. M. Zulu, G. Urbani, A van der Merwe, and J. L. van der Walt (2004); K. Maree (2000); J. Neser, M. Ovens, E. Van der Merwe, R. Morodi, A. Ladikos and J. Prinsloo (2004); C. Burnett (1998); and C. de Wet (2003), only one research study in South Africa has investigated school violence from the perspective of the attitudes and behaviour of learners that contribute to the phenomenon, namely that of S. J. Collings and T. S. Magojo (2003). While the views of learners on school safety have been investigated by J. Neser (2005), an example of research on the perspectives of learners towards school violence, there is still a need to investigate other aspects of the attitudes and behaviour of learners in this respect.

Official and unofficial information sources were consulted to research the school violence phenomenon, as well as the attitudes and behaviour of learners towards such violence. Stevens and Cloete (1996:8) differentiate between official and unofficial statistics. Information stemming from police and governmental departments is regarded as constituting official statistics, while victim-surveys and self-reported studies are considered to be unofficial statistics. The latter are essential because they shed light on the alleged dark figures of crime, in other words the number of crimes unknown to the police (Stevens & Cloete, 1996:8); the official sources do not necessarily reflect the

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true nature and extent of the phenomenon. Thus, unofficial information on school violence can be regarded as equally important to information gathered by the police, department of education and the media. This study will serve as an unofficial source of information on school violence, as information was gathered in the form of self-report questionnaires, completed voluntarily and anonymously by high school learners in Gauteng, Tshwane South district.

The focus of this study will be placed on two aspects of school violence from learners' points of view, namely their attitudes and their behaviour. Of these two aspects, the researcher has identified the attitudes of learners towards violence as the first area of investigation. The researcher will aim to draw conclusions concerning the possibility that a culture of violence is developing amongst learners in Gauteng, which means that such learners may exhibit a pervasive, ingrained identification with violence, leading to their acceptance and valuing of this behaviour. The other likelihood the researcher will investigate is the idea that Gauteng learners use violence in response to perceived or actual threat, in other words displaying attitudes of reactive violence. In addition to examining the attitudes held by the learners in this study towards violence, the researcher will investigate the manifested violent behaviour of learners in the school environment. Based on the findings pertaining to the latter, certain conclusions may be reached on the correlation between the attitudes of learners towards violence and their consequent behaviour. These conclusions may assist the researcher to draw an inference on the notion stipulated in the title of this thesis, whether a culture of violence is forming (or already exists) in (some) South African schools.

1.3 Research Rationale

A school is an institution where parents send their children to learn under the supervision of teachers. A school is also a place where learners go to receive education and preparation for their adult lives. However, when parents send

their children to enrol at school, they do not expect to discover that school is the "single most common" site of crime and victimization, where youth are twice as likely to become victims of crime as adults (South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), 2008: para.4).

Jody Kollapen (as cited in Mail & Guardian Online, 2006b: para.18), chairperson of the SAHRC, argues that violence in schools has escalated beyond that which was normally associated with bullying and now includes serious levels of violence and even deaths. It is clear that violence in South African schools has become a growing problem. Not only is the number of school violence incidents increasing, but the severity of the violence is also worsening. Devine and Lawson (as quoted in Cremin, 2003:938) agree and elaborate as follows: "*when the problem is ignored and neglected school violence is reinforced, or at least condoned. This state of affairs is cause for moral outrage, and it is dangerous, not merely to schools, but to every democratic society*".

Hawker and Boulton (2000:441-455) state that the long-term effects of school violence are not only limited to physical harm, but also include social and intrapersonal forms of maladjustment, such as loss of self-esteem/self-confidence, an increased risk of suffering stress and various other related symptoms. The National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (Naptosa) (as cited in Mail & Guardian Online, 2006a: para.10) avers that violence at schools contributes to low staff morale, which could lead to psychological problems in pupils, resulting in learning difficulties as well as a high absenteeism rate. In addition Graham and Juvonen (2001:49-72) believe exposure to school violence in the early years is a major cause of problematic behaviour in adults, which includes depression, physical abuse of children, spouses and other adults, alienation, and masochistic sex.

Furthermore, Graham and Juvonen (2001:49-72) list the following educational-psychological side effects of school violence:

- loss of self-esteem;
- an increase in anxiety and fear;
- damage to ego functioning;
- creation or enhancement of feelings of loss, helplessness and humiliation;
- enhancement of feelings of aggression and destructive behaviours;
- a shortened attention span;
- attention-deficit disorder;
- post-traumatic stress disorder;
- impaired academic achievement; and
- a self-blaming attitude/attribution set which could lead to an experience of internalising distress.

Burton (2008a:5-6) also identified certain destructive effects of school violence such as high levels of distrust between educators and learners, high truancy rates, low commitment to school by learners and soaring school dropout rates, as possible outcomes of the phenomenon in question.

Patrick Burton (2008a:5) elaborated on the effects of school violence by stating that longitudinal research studies undertaken in the United States and United Kingdom show that violence in schools can serve as either risk or, more importantly, resiliency factors for later offending. Burton argues that children spend just about half of their waking hours in the school environment, which subsequently serves as the second most powerful socialising authority in the child's life, second only to his/her home. Thus, children who are exposed to violent behaviour at school, especially children who are already more likely to engage in anti-social behaviour, are at higher risk of modelling the behaviour learnt at school (Burton, 2008a:5).

The rationale for this study can be summarized by remarking that schools have been proven to be places where learners are highly likely to be victimized or engage in violent behaviour. The effects of school violence are severe and in some cases irreparable. If youth are exposed to violence in an atmosphere where socialization is a prime function, this will almost certainly lead to youth who believe violent behaviour is acceptable. Thus, the widespread occurrence and serious impact of violence in South-African schools give rise to the urgent need for investigation into school violence. Even though research on school violence is being conducted in South Africa, surprisingly, the majority of these current studies and research are predominantly based on perceptions of school administrators, teachers and other school personnel. Few such studies explore the **learners**. As the possibility exists that learners are cultured by means of pro-violence attitudes, the researcher finds it necessary to examine the attitudes of learners towards violence and their subsequent behaviour in the school environment. It is suggested that their attitudes and behaviour are key to the identification and development of successful ways, models and programmes to prevent aspects contributing to the school violence phenomenon, as well as of strategies to change delinquent attitudes and behaviours that contribute to this situation.

1.4 Methodological Foundation

The methodological foundation of the research includes the tools used to assemble the research study. The methodology employed in this study comprised the definitions of key terms, aim and objectives, the research design and the research methodology itself, which includes data collection, sampling and data analysis.

1.4.1 Definitions of Key Terms

To conduct research on the attitudes and behaviour of learners, which contribute towards school violence, it is important to advance a clear definition of the key concepts used in the research. It is also imperative to define the concept of 'culture', as well as elaborate on the characteristics and formation of culture, in terms of the researcher's aims.

School violence

According to Neser (2005:63) schools and researchers in the past used a narrow definition of violence to describe school violence, which was not inclusive enough. Neser (2005:63) states that, today, some researchers are of the opinion that the traditional definition of violence lacks an understanding of the pervasiveness of the problem of violence in the school context. However, Fredick et al. (1995) provide a broad definition of school violence, describing it as an array of behaviours, ranging from verbal taunts to bombing people in a school building. According to these researchers, these behaviours are considered to share common elements in that they are overt, aggressive acts that result in physical or psychological pain, injury, or death. Another broader definition of school violence describes it as "any intentional verbal or physical act producing pain in the recipient of that act while the recipient is under the supervision of the school" (Hurter, MacNeil & Elias as cited in Neser, 2005:64).

For the purpose of this study school violence refers to any type of violence, abuse, destructive behaviour, and criminal behaviour manifesting within the school environment.

Attitude

'Attitude' can be defined in numerous ways. The *Penguin Dictionary of Psychology* (Reber & Reber, 2001:63) defines 'attitude' as "Some internal affective orientation that would explain the actions of a person, an extension of a person's *intention* to do something". In addition, a person's attitude is his ongoing pattern of belief and like or dislike for an item, which can in turn predict his behaviour (Anonymous, 2007: para.1).

For the purpose of this study, attitude refers to a mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways. The attitude a person holds towards a certain object or subject can either be positive or negative; since it reflects how that person views the object and subject, it can influence the behaviour of that person accordingly.

Behaviour

'Behaviour' is a generic term covering "acts, activities, responses, reactions, movements, processes, operations, etcetera, in short, any measurable response of an organism" (Reber & Reber, 2001:82). In the current study behaviour refers to the conduct and deeds of the respondents (the learners).

Culture

'Culture' was defined clearly for the first time by British anthropologist Sir Edward Burnett Tylor in 1871, as 'that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Haviland, 1993:30). Later

and more recent definitions of the term 'culture' tend to emphasize that culture is not necessarily observable behaviour, but rather "the norms and beliefs people use to interpret experience and generate behaviour, and which are reflected in their behaviour" (Haviland, 1993:30). Haviland (1993:29) further defines culture as follows:

> *Culture consists of the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind people's behaviour, and which are reflected in their behaviour. These are shared by members of a society, and when acted upon, they produce behaviour considered acceptable within that society. Cultures are learned, largely through the medium of language, rather than inherited biologically, and the parts of a culture function as an integrated whole.*

In addition to defining the term 'culture' Haviland (1993:30-37), and Popenoe, Cunningham and Bolt (1998:27-33) list the following as characteristics of culture:

- Culture is based on symbols, values, norms and sanctions;
- Culture is shared;
- Culture is learned; and
- Culture is integrated.

In order to understand how culture is formed, Haviland (1993:34) emphasizes that culture is not biologically inherited, but rather learned by growing up with it as well as with the process whereby culture is transmitted from one generation to another.

For the purpose of this study, 'culture' thus refers to a set of rules or standards, and the norms and values shared by a group (the learners). When the members of this group act on these rules or values, this produces certain forms of behaviour, which are considered acceptable, proper and valued by the members of that group. The members of a group learn their culture through socialization and exposure to certain occurrences while growing up. Culture can also be transmitted from generation to generation.

In this study, these key concepts will be explored in terms of the extent to which they contribute to school violence.

1.4.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim and main focus of this study is to establish whether a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth, by examining the attitudes and behaviour learners have towards violence. This will consequently assist the researcher to examine the occurrence and causes of school violence, as the researcher intends to establish what measures can be taken to create a safer school environment.

The objectives of this study are to assist in providing answers to the following pressing questions:

- To what extent do the attitudes learners have towards violence influence their actual (violent) behaviour at school?
- Do learners behave violently at school and what is the nature and extent of such violent behaviour amongst the respondents?
- Do learners have pro-violence attitudes?
- Do learners justify (school) violence and how?

- What causes school violence?
- Does a culture of violence exist amongst South African learners?
- How can the attitudes of learners towards violence be changed?
- What are the key elements for a programme aiming at changing the contributing role, behaviour and attitude of learners regarding school violence?

The researcher will thus utilize the data gathered in this study and aspire to reach the aim and objectives of the study as set out above.

1.4.3 Research Design

Research methodology refers to the methods and tools the researcher will be using to complete the research, whereas the research design is the plan or blueprint of how the researcher intends to conduct his/her research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74).

Babbie and Mouton (2001:72) identified two critical aspects related to research design. The first aspect is to specify as clearly as possible what one wants to find out and secondly to determine the best way to do it. Neser (2005:65) supports this statement by confirming that research design is not only a plan of action in answering the research question, but should also indicate how the data/information will be collected, analysed, and interpreted.

The nature of this study requires a quantitative research design. Quantitative research distinguishes itself from qualitative research in terms of the following key features (Neill, 2007:1):

- The aim of quantitative research is to classify features, count them, and construct statistical models in an attempt to explain what is observed;
- The objective of quantitative research is to seek precise measurement and analysis of target concepts;
- The researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for;
- The researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires or equipment to collect numerical data;
- Data is presented in the form of numbers and statistics;
- Quantitative data is more efficient, able to test hypotheses, but may miss contextual detail;
- The researcher tends to remain objectively separated from the subject matter.

A quantitative research design suits this study, as the researcher is examining the nature, prevalence and causes of school violence. In order to do so, the empirical data should be numerical, gathered via specific tools, analyzed statistically, and relevant to drawing conclusions on the behaviour of the population in question. The data regarding school violence and the attitudes of learners towards violence, gathered in this study by implementing a specific tool, will be statistically analyzed and quantified, in order to seek a precise measurement and examination of target concepts.

1.4.4 Research Methodology

Research methodology refers to the methods and tools the researcher will be using to complete the research (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:74), thus referring to the data collection methods, sampling and data analysis.

Data collection

Delport (2002:171) identifies the following categories of data collection methods for the researcher working from a quantitative approach: a) questionnaires; b) checklists; c) indexes; d) and scales. Researchers (as cited in Willert, 2002:4) who have investigated attitudes and perceptions on school violence have relied mostly on large-scale surveys as these surveys offer reliable results because of the large sample size.

The data in this study was gathered by conducting a large-scale survey making use of personal questionnaires (Questionnaire attached as **Annexure "A"**). The questionnaires were handed to the respondents who completed them independently, with the researcher present throughout the session in case any problems were encountered. The structured questionnaire used consisted of a compilation of demographic questions (age, gender and race), closed-ended questions, as well as a specific scale/tool (discussed hereafter) designed to measure the attitudes of learners towards violence.

The researcher made use of a well tested tool, namely *The Attitudes Towards Violence Scale: A Measure for Adolescents* (AVS), which was originally developed by the "Victims Forum" (as cited by Funk et al., 1999:1124), and then redesigned and adapted, by J. B. Funk, R. Elliott, M. L. Urman, G. T. Flores and R. M. Mock (Funk et al., 1999:1123), to fit adolescents, in order to

investigate the attitudes held by learners towards violence. This scale is a self-report measure, designed to measure the adolescent's attitude about the likelihood of specific responses to potential violent situations. The authors of the AVS reported that the scale also demonstrates good internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and a meaningful two-factor solution: 'Reactive Violence', which is violence employed in response to actual or perceived threat and 'Culture of Violence', which is a pervasive, ingrained identification with violence as an acceptable and valued activity (Funk et al., 1999:1123). The AVS consists of a group of related statements presenting a range of opinions about the attitude in question; hence items were developed based on existing factors contributing to juvenile violence and these items were chosen to reflect attitudes with strong links to violent behaviour (Funk et al., 1999:1126). In this study, the researcher used the AVS to collect a reliable measure of the attitudes of learners towards violence. The scale also demonstrated good internal reliability in the current study with a Cronbach's alpha reading of .85.

In addition to scoring the statements of the learners on the AVS, the researcher also integrated a scoring technique used to measure attitude as given by Ajzen (2005:10). Ajzen probes the attitude of respondents to a given phenomenon, by asking respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. The possible answers to the given statements are then scored as follows:

- strongly agree = 5
- agree = 4
- undecided = 3
- disagree = 2
- strongly disagree = 1.

The score of the respondent is then computed by adding all item scores. High scores subsequently indicate positive attitudes towards the phenomenon in

question (Ajzen, 2005:11). The researcher made use of the statements in the AVS and applied Ajzen's scoring technique to gain an indication, in addition to the findings on the AVS, of the attitudes held by the learners towards violence.

Sampling

A sample comprises the elements of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study (Arkava & Lane, 1983:27). The sample in a research study subsequently refers to the subset of measurements drawn from a population in which the researcher is interested, or in other words a small portion of the total set of objectives, events or persons that together comprise the subject of the study (Strydom & Venter, 2002:199).

The subjects of this study were learners, specifically secondary school learners. Permission to conduct this study was requested from and granted by the Gauteng Provincial Government, Department of Education, Tshwane South District Office (Letter of request attached as **Annexure "B"**). Subsequently four secondary schools in the district were identified for participation in the study (Departmental permission granted as per **Annexure "C"**). Using the non-probability sampling method of purposive sampling, these four schools were chosen. The researcher selected the unit of analysis based entirely on her judgement, as in her view the sample was composed of elements that contain the most characteristic, representative or typical attributes of the population researched in this study. The four schools were specifically selected to heighten the probability of including learners with different social backgrounds and cultures in the study sample. The researcher also took into account the accessibility of the study sample as well as the learners' indication of willingness to participate in the study when selecting the study sample (Letter for parental permission attached as **Annexure "D"**). The

grade nine learners in each of the four schools were asked by the researcher to complete the questionnaire voluntarily.

Data Analysis

Delport (2002:177) emphasizes the comprehensive work involved in classifying and analysing data collected in large-scale surveys. Consequently it is important to utilize mechanical and electronic facilities to analyze the data gathered when using a quantitative research design. The SPSS 15.0 for Windows data editor computer program was used to analyse the data gathered in this study. The researcher used a *p*-value ≤ .05 as the measure of significance when examining correlations between variables by utelizing the Chi-square test.

1.5 Delimitation and Scope of the Field of Study

The field of this study encompassed four secondary schools in the Tshwane South District, Gauteng; hence its scope was limited to this area.

With regard to the literature consulted in the research, the focus fell exclusively on books and articles pertaining to school violence, juvenile delinquency, the 'attitude-behaviour' relationship and culture. These consisted of South African publications, as well as applicable publications from abroad. All of the relevant publications are listed in the bibliography.

In addition, the empirical research was limited to the grade 9 learners of the above-mentioned four schools. The researcher is of the opinion that these learners were well informed about their school environment and the activities

(both legal and illegal) surrounding them at school, yet they were also at a level where they had ample time to participate in a study which required some of their school time (as opposed to learners in higher grades). The data gathered in this research is limited to the views of the learners and can consequently not be generalized beyond the population in question.

The key concepts of the research are identified in this chapter, indicating the denotation and connotation of such terms for the purpose of this research.

1.6 The Respondents

Booyens et al. (2008:29) identify various background factors, personal traits, as well as high-risk behaviours, which enhance the possibility that juveniles may be involved in criminal behaviour. These factors include (amongst others) age, school performance, family integration, drug and alcohol abuse, and neighbourhood (Booyens et al., 2008:29). It is therefore important to include the above factors in research where the probability of criminal behaviour amongst youth is probed, as these factors assist the researcher and reader in interpreting the research findings and results.

The following section briefly outlines the demographic, as well as background, information of the learners who participated in the research. This will assist the reader in understanding the findings in respect of the specific traits of the learners. This information will also be used to interpret the gathered data as well as to draw conclusions on the relationship between the demographic and background information on the learners, and their attitudes and behaviour pertaining to school violence.

1.6.1 Demographic Information

The said demographic information is obtained by determining factors such as gender, age, race and social class (economic class).

Table 1.1: Gender of learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	267	50.2	50.3	50.3
	Female	264	49.6	49.7	100.0
	Total	531	99.8	100.0	
Missing	System	1	.2		
Total		532	100.0		

The information in Table 1.1 indicates that the learners who participated in the research were equally distributed according to their gender, as half (50.3%) of the learners were male and half (49.7%) of the learners were female.

Table 1.2: Age of learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14 Years	165	31.0	32.8	32.8
	15 Years	234	44.0	46.5	79.3
	16 Years	104	19.5	20.7	100.0
	Total	503	94.5	100.0	
Missing	System	29	5.5		
Total		532	100.0		

In all four participating schools grade 9 classes were selected for participation in the research.

Approximately half of the learners (46.5%) were 15 years old. The rest were either 14 (32.8%) or 16 years old (20.7%).

Table 1.3: Race of learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Black**	334	62.8	63.0	63.0
	White	66	12.4	12.5	75.5
	Coloured	95	17.9	17.9	93.4
	Indian	32	6.0	6.0	99.4
	Other	3	.6	.6	100.0
	Total	530	99.6	100.0	
Missing	**System**	2	.4		
Total		532	100.0		

The majority (63%) of learners in the study sample were black, while only 6% of the respondents indicated they are Indian. There was a considerable representation of both white and coloured groups as both almost made up more than 10% of the total of learners in the study individually and 30% collectively.

While selecting the study sample, the researcher aimed to obtain a representative sample of all four of the above races. In this respect, if one considers the Mid-year Population Estimates of South Africa in 2007, released by Statistics South Africa (Lehohla, 2007:1), it is evident that the study sample reflects the same ratio between the black, white coloured and Indian races as in the whole of South Africa. Africans comprise 79.6% of the South African population, coloureds 8.9%, whites 9.1% and Indians/Asians 2.5%. Consequently it can be asserted that the division of races in the current study is representative of the distribution of races currently in South Africa.

Table 1.4: Financial status of the homes of learners

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Low income	86	16.2	16.6	16.6
	Medium income	374	70.3	72.1	88.6
	High income	59	11.1	11.4	100.0
	Total	519	97.6	100.0	
Missing	System	13	2.4		
Total		532	100.0		

The vast majority (72.1%) of learners indicated that they live in a home with a medium income. It was not clear as to what these learners perceive as medium income and to whom or what these learners compared themselves when establishing the financial status of their homes. It can however be said that the areas where two of the participating schools are located are more impoverished while the other two schools are situated in a more developed area, which leads to the expectation that more of the learners should have indicated their families as having a low income. This indicates that learners might be under a misconception regarding the economic status of their households, especially when compared to other households. However, this finding can also be attributed to the reluctance of learners to admit their true socio-economic status in order to maintain a certain 'image'.

Nevertheless, it is important to investigate the relationship between the economic status and violent behaviour of learners; as Booyens et al. (2008:47) noted, criminologists have yet to agree on the link between these two variables. The debate pertaining to the latter is evident from official statistics, where a strong relationship between economic status and crime is identified, while self-reported studies display a much weaker relationship, or none at all (Booyens et al., 2008:47). Comparisons between economic class and violent behaviour, in the school environment in the current study, are intended to assist in exploring the relationship between the two variables in question.

1.6.2 Background Information

This section consists of information pertaining to the background of learners and includes facts on the home environment, childhood and neighbourhood, alcohol and drug abuse, and family and religious involvement of learners.

Learners were asked whether they live in a single-parent home in order to establish the prevalence of broken homes amongst the respondents. The findings of this are displayed in Table 1.5.

Table 1.5: Learners who live in a single-parented home

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	194	36.5	36.9	36.9
	No	332	62.4	63.1	100.0
	Total	526	98.9	100.0	
Missing	System	6	1.1		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 1.5 indicates that more than a third (36.9%) of the learners was raised by a single parent. This can be attributed to various reasons such as divorce, the death of a parent, and/or an unmarried woman giving birth to or adopting a child.

Whatever the reason may be, theoretical explanations for juvenile delinquency emphasize the importance of proper child rearing in developing law-abiding youth. It is argued that appropriate socialization is more difficult in a household where only one parent is present, thus leading to a higher risk of misbehaviour from the children in such a family. In their integrated control theory, named 'the social development theory', Weis, Hawkins, Catalano and their associates concur with the above by emphasizing the importance of

socialization of children to prevent delinquent behaviour (Joubert, 2008:115). This socialization process is achieved through family interactions, starting with attachment to both parents. It is subsequently important to probe the home environment of the learners, in order to interpret the results of this study.

Two other variables that influence the attitude and behaviour of a child towards a phenomenon, e.g. misbehaviour, are their childhood experience and the neighbourhood in which they grew up. This statement is supported by Thornberry (cited in Siegel & Senna, 2000:194) who stipulates that youth who grow up in socially disorganised childhoods and neighbourhoods are more likely to have a weakened social bond, thus more likely to commit crime or behave violently. This is especially true when this delinquent behaviour is learned and encouraged by peers in the childhood and neighbourhood of a minor.

In order to gain insight into the childhood and neighbourhood of learners, learners were subsequently asked relevant questions pertaining to these two variables. The results hereof are displayed in Tables 1.6 and 1.7.

Table 1.6: Learners' indication of characteristics of their childhood

Childhood distinctive	Yes		No		Missing Values		Total	
	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_
Loving	451	84.8	80	15.0	1	.2	532	100.0
Happy	443	83.3	89	16.7	-	-	532	100.0
Violent/ abusive	31	5.8	501	94.2	-	-	532	100.0
Isolated	43	8.1	488	91.7	1	.2	532	100.0
Substance abuse	20	3.8	512	96.2	-	-	532	100.0
Lonely	75	14.1	457	85.9	-	-	532	100.0
Sad	54	10.2	477	89.6	1	.2	532	100.0

N = 532

The information in Table 1.6 displays the responses of learners when asked how they would describe their childhood. It is consequently evident that the vast majority of learners (84.8% and 83.3% respectively) indicated that they felt loved and happy as children. On the other hand, noteworthy percentages of learners chose unconstructive characteristics when describing their childhood, such as 'violent/abusive' (5.8%), 'isolated' (8.1%), 'prevalence of substance abuse' (3.8%), 'lonely' (14.1%) and 'sad' (10.2%). Relationships between these variables and the violent behaviour of the learners will be drawn later in this study, in order to establish the extent to which these variables affect the learners in the sample studied.

Booyens et al. (2008:30) identify 'neighbourhood' as one of the various factors pertaining to a child's background that may increase the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behaviour. Bartollas (1997:71), Siegel and Senna (2000:8-9), and Leggett (2004:23) concur with this finding, stating that unconstructive neighbourhood traits, such as poverty, unemployment and population density, also record a causal relationship with juvenile misbehaviour.

Table 1.7: Learners' indication of characteristics of their neighbourhood

Neighbourhood distinctive	Yes		No		Missing values		Total	
	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_
Safe	374	70.3	153	28.8	5	.9	532	100.0
Friendly	375	71.4	150	28.6	7	1.3	532	100.0
Violent	93	17.5	433	81.4	6	1.1	532	100.0
Substance abuse	101	19.0	426	80.1	5	.9	532	100.0

N = 532

Upon analyzing the data in Table 1.7, it can be concluded that almost a fifth (19.0%) of the respondents live in a neighbourhood where substance abuse is common and substances are consequently easier to access. Almost the same percentage of learners (17.5%) indicated that they characterise their

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neighbourhood by violence and violent behaviour. Even though approximately 71% of the learners perceive their neighbourhood as safe and friendly, the prevalence of violence and substance abuse in some of the neighbourhoods of the learners is of concern, as these factors negatively influence juveniles.

It is a commonly accepted fact that alcohol and drug abuse are positively related to criminal and violent behaviour. Being 'under the influence' is an excuse too often advanced for various incidents of anti-social, violent and criminal activities. Booyens et al. (2008:30) agree with this statement in observing that alcohol and drug use has been linked to the rising and falling of crime and misbehaviour rates, as the growing levels of drug and alcohol abuse lead to an increase in crime rates. Thus, drug and alcohol abuse amongst juveniles may subsequently also have increasing effects on youth crime, including school violence.

Learners in the current study were asked questions on alcohol consumption and drug abuse, so as to establish the prevalence of these factors, in order to draw conclusions later on the significance of alcohol and drug usage in school violence. The findings of the above are displayed in Tables 1.8 and 1.9 below.

Table 1.8: Learners who consume alcohol

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	104	19.5	19.9	19.9
	No	418	78.6	80.1	100.0
	Total	522	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	10	1.9		
Total		532	100.0		

Table 1.9: Learners who use drugs

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	**Yes**	19	3.6	3.6	3.6
	No	511	96.1	96.4	100.0
	Total	530	99.6	100.0	
Missing	**System**	2	.4		
Total		532	100.0		

The information in Tables 1.8 and 1.9 indicates learners are more likely to use alcohol than drugs. However, the findings in both these tables are worrying, as 104 learners (19.9%) indicated they use alcohol and 19 learners (3.6%) indicated they use drugs. Taking the age of the learners into account, it is disturbing to note that none of them are older than sixteen. This information may thus be an indication of 123 statutory criminal offences, emphasizing the seriousness of alcohol and drug abuse amongst these youth. In addition, the positive relationship between substance abuse and juvenile delinquency as mentioned by Booyens et al. (2008:30) also draws attention to the abuse of drugs by young people.

Besides strong family bonds, integrated learning and control theories that explain juvenile delinquency emphasize the importance of children's commitment and belief in conventional values, as this is vital for their socialization process (Joubert, 2008:114-115). The researcher subsequently identified the variable of 'monthly attendance at a place of worship', in order to explore learners' exposure to conventional morals and values.

Table 1.10: Learners' indication of monthly attendance at a place of worship

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Don't attend	93	17.5	17.7	17.7
	Attend 1-2 times	138	25.9	26.3	44.0
	Attend 3-4 times	98	18.4	18.7	62.7
	Attend > 5 times	196	36.8	37.3	100.0
	Total	525	98.7	100.0	
Missing	System	7	1.3		
Total		532	100.0		

According to the data in Table 1.10 almost a fifth (17.7%) of the respondents do not attend religious gatherings. It is however evident that the majority of learners attend a place of worship frequently in a month. The conclusion can be reached that the majority of learners in this research are exposed to values and norms commonly accepted by religious institutions, which may serve as guidelines for appropriate behaviour amongst these youth.

According to Bartollas (1997:71), and Siegel and Senna (2000:8-9) healthy interaction between family members decreases a child's risk of becoming involved with criminal activities or behavioural misconduct. Weis et al. (as cited in Joubert, 2008:115) reinforce the importance of strong family engagement and support: these authors highlight the importance of family bonds and parental involvement as the child matures. A lack of family interaction and integration can subsequently increase a child's likelihood of engaging in criminal and anti-social behaviour.

In order to establish whether learners interact with their families and parents, related questions were asked. The results thereof are displayed in Tables 1.11 and 1.12 below.

Table 1.11: Learners' indication of weekly engagement in mutual family activities

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Never	81	15.2	15.5	15.5
	1-2 Times	141	26.5	27.1	42.6
	3-4 Times	134	25.2	25.7	68.3
	> 5 times	165	31.0	31.7	100.0
	Total	521	97.9	100.0	
Missing	System	11	2.1		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 1.11 shows that even though a third (31.7%) of the learners indicated their family engage in mutual family activities five or more times a week, a notable percentage (15.5%) of learners experience no interaction or shared time with family members in a week. This, for grade 9 learners, is unconstructive, as they are in an important phase of moral development, which is to a large extent influenced by family relationships (Joubert, 2008:121). Moral development is of cardinal importance to juveniles, as this forms part of the basis of law-abiding behaviour.

Family relationships and bonds are also influenced by parents' daily involvement with their children. An example of this is parents' willingness to assist their children in homework.

Table 1.12: Learners indication of parents' willingness to help with homework

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	471	88.5	88.9	88.9
	No	59	11.1	11.1	100.0
	Total	530	99.6	100.0	
Missing	System	2	.4		
Total		532	100.0		

From the information in Table 1.12 it is clear that a satisfactory percentage of learners' parents (88.9%) are willing to, and most likely do, assist their children with homework and offer support for schoolwork. However, the question only probed parents' willingness to assist their children with assignments and is consequently not necessarily a prediction of family involvement. The researcher is nonetheless of the opinion that the majority of these children enjoy parental support, irrespective of one or both parents, as similar percentages of learners indicated in Table 1.6 that they experienced a 'loving' and 'happy' childhood.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics can be defined as "a set of moral principles put forward by an individual or group, and subsequently are widely accepted, offering rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents, employers, sponsors, other researchers, assistants and students" (Strydom, 2002:63). It is essential to apply ethics to this study, because human beings are its objects and the data collected during the study should never be to the detriment of these human beings.

Some of the ethical issues, identified by Strydom (2002:64-73), which were taken into regard in this study, included:

- No physical and/or emotional harm was caused to experimental subjects and/or respondents.

- Informed consent was gained, that is, all possible or adequate information on the goal of the research, the procedures that would be followed during the investigation, as well as the credibility of the

researcher, was provided to the potential subjects and/or adults involved in the chosen schools. The researcher introduced herself properly to the respondents and supplied them with all the relevant information, for example the time span for completing the questionnaire, thus not misleading the respondents. The researcher also had proof of identity with her during the data collection.

- Privacy/anonymity/confidentiality: since personal questionnaires were used to collect the data in this study, it was not possible to assure complete anonymity. The results of these questionnaires, as well as details of the specific persons who answered the questions, were however treated confidentially.

- Release or publication of the findings: the findings of the study will be introduced to the reading public in written form; hence the results of this research will be made known through a research report. This report will make the data and findings, collected from the questionnaires, available to the reader and the public, and will also include the comparisons made with previous school violence surveys and research. The dissemination of the results will be expressed in this report in such a way that the readers and scholars will be able to use this information, and apply it to their own lives, thus employing the information relating to school violence, to their own safety and advantage.

The above-mentioned ethical guidelines served as standards in this study, as well as the principles in terms of which the researcher evaluated her conduct during the investigation.

1.8 Division of Contents

In order to generate a logical train of thought, the chapters in this research are compiled in a chronological and systematic order. The reader will subsequently be exposed to the complex nature and extent of school violence, with the attitudes and behaviour of these specific learners that contribute to this phenomenon in mind. The research is assembled as follows:

1.8.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the research conducted in this study, outlining the background, rationale, methodological foundation, and characteristics of the respondents, ethical considerations, and the delimitation and scope of the research. The methodological foundation, in other words mechanisms used for the growth of this research study, include conceptualisation, aim and objectives, research design, data collection, sampling and data analysis. After reading Chapter 1, the reader will have gained a broad overview of this research study.

1.8.2 Chapter 2

Chapter 2 explores multiple theories on the attitude-behaviour relationship, in an attempt to establish the extent to which (antisocial) attitudes affect behaviour. Literature on the relationship between the attitudes of learners towards violence and their actual violent behaviour in the school environment is also presented to the reader in this chapter. It is important to understand the attitude-behaviour relationship, specifically the relationship between pro-violence attitudes and the manifestation of violent behaviour, as the researcher hopes to reach a conclusion on the possibility that the learners in

the current study behave violently at school as a result of their attitudes towards violence. The literature in this chapter will thus assist the reader to understand how attitude can predict behaviour.

1.8.3 Chapter 3

Chapter 3 provides the reader with an understanding of the (violent) behaviour of learners in the school environment. This is done by examining the nature and extent of school violence, as gathered via primary and secondary literature, as well as through empirical research in the current study. This empirical research includes the violent behaviour of learners, victims of school violence and the perceptions of learners regarding violence and safety in their school environment. Various studies on such violence were consulted in order to gather information on the prevalence and character of the phenomenon in question, which is subsequently discussed in Chapter 3. In this chapter the researcher addresses the first variable identified by her to assist in establishing whether a culture of violence exists amongst South African learners, namely their violent behaviour in the school environment.

1.8.4 Chapter 4

In this chapter the researcher investigates the reasons for the aforesaid phenomenon. Chapter 4 thus provides the reader with extensive information on the causes of school violence. This broad explanation has its roots in proven, secondary findings on the given causes, which are again tested in the current study, as well as fresh explanations of violent behaviour by the learners themselves in the current study. The researcher also probed criminogenic risk factors on both an individual and social level, as possible causes of school violence amongst the learners. The findings in this chapter

will assist the reader in understanding why learners behave violently at school.

1.8.5 Chapter 5

Chapter 5 encompasses the main research objective of this study, which was to explore the attitudes of learners towards school violence. Chapter 5 thus addresses the second variable identified by the researcher to assist in determining whether a culture of violence exists amongst South African learners, namely their attitudes in this respect. This chapter presents the findings of data gathered by a well-tested tool, namely *The Attitudes towards Violence Scale: A Measure for Adolescents.* In Chapter 5 conclusions are drawn on the possibility that learners in Gauteng display symptoms of a culture of violence, based on their actual violent behaviour (as depicted in Chapter 3), as well as their attitudes towards violence. The researcher will also reach a conclusion with respect to the possibility that Gauteng learners use violence in response to perceived or actual threat, in other words that these learners display attitudes of reactive violence. The findings in this chapter will also assist the reader, in addition to the established causes of school violence, to understand why learners behave violently at school.

1.8.6 Chapter 6

In Chapter 6 the results and key findings of the research are discussed and summarized in an integrated fashion, in order to merge the gathered data in such a way as to ensure comprehension of the complete study by the reader.

One of the objectives of this research study was to gather valid and reliable information pertaining to school violence. This was undertaken in order to

make recommendations and propose an intervention programme to help in changing delinquent attitudes of learners and behaviour towards violence and assist in curbing this highly prevalent phenomenon. Hence, Chapter 6 also provides the reader with these recommendations and proposed programme.

1.9 Summary

In this first chapter of the research the reader was introduced to the general research orientation and background of the study. The reader was given information relating to the research rationale, methodological foundation, characteristics of the respondents, ethical considerations, the delimitation and scope of the field of study, and the chapter layout.

In Chapter 2 the researcher provides the reader with literature on the link between attitude and behaviour in order to establish whether a causal relationship exists. The researcher also supplies the reader with research findings from previous studies gathered in the consulted literature that highlight the attitude-behaviour relationship, specifically related to pro-violence attitudes and subsequent violent behaviour. This is an important point of departure in this thesis, as attitude and behaviour are the two main variables that are being investigated by the researcher. It is consequently essential in understanding the connection between these two variables.

CHAPTER 2

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ATTITUDES LEARNERS HAVE TOWARDS VIOLENCE AND THE VIOLENT BEHAVIOUR THEY EXHIBIT

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relationship between attitude and behaviour. It is important to understand this relationship, since these two variables were identified by the researcher as the two variables most important in assessing the hypothesis that a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth. Chapter 2 thus provides the reader with theory on the relationship between attitude and behaviour, as well as findings from previous studies on the relationship specifically between pro-violence attitudes of learners and subsequent violent behaviour in the school environment. If the link between these two variables is understood, the researcher should also be able to reach a more accurate conclusion regarding the interchangeable roles which attitude and behaviour play in the culture of the learners.

Despite the fact that researchers, such as Armitage and Christian (2003:187), state "the assumption that attitudes can be predictive of behaviour is often held in the face of compelling evidence to the contrary", the researcher aimed to examine the circumstances under which attitudes can predict behaviour, because attitudes are continuous patterns of beliefs, which in turn may forecast behaviour.

Early literature on the history of attitude-behaviour research showed that human behaviour was guided by social attitudes (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:174). Researchers concerned with 'attitude' studies, for instance

Thomas and Zaniecki, and Watson (as cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:174) went as far as assuming that attitude was **the** key to understanding human behaviour. Numerous studies using tools to assess attitudes were subsequently conducted. The findings of these studies supported the positive relationship between attitude and behaviour. Examples of such early studies that investigated the attitude-behaviour relationship, as cited in Ajzen and Fishbein (2005:174), include:

- Thurstone and Chave in 1929 who found that divinity students held more favourable attitudes towards the church than other college students;

- Smith in 1932 who established that businessmen were more opposed to prohibition of alcohol than were the Methodists in the study sample; and

- Stagner in 1942 who found military training groups, veterans, and conservative political groups had more favourable attitudes towards war than labour groups and professional men (as cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:174).

In later years studies on the attitude-behaviour relationship increased extensively and by the late 1960's numerous researchers had conducted 45 studies on the topic. These studies assessed verbal attitudes and observed the actual behaviour expected to be related to attitudes. Disappointingly however, the results of these studies were discouraging in most cases as attitudes were found to be very poor predictors of actual behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:175). In other words, no significant relationship was established between the attitudes of respondents towards a given object or subject and their subsequent behaviour. The inconsistent findings on attitude-behaviour studies led to dedicated commitment by other researchers to developing reliable measures of the attitude construct, as well as explanatory models of the attitude-behaviour relationship. The most influential and important of these models will be discussed later in this chapter.

The main purpose of understanding the attitude-behaviour relationship is to gain greater insight into what influences or causes the actions of people. In this study, comprehending the connection between pro-violence attitudes and the actual violent behaviour of learners is valuable for being able to conclude whether violent attitudes can and must be changed to curb school violence.

For the purpose of this study, two sources were consulted in order to establish whether attitudes can and do predict behaviour. The researcher firstly provided the reader with theory pertaining to the attitude-behaviour relationship which indicates a positive relationship between these two variables. Secondly, she highlighted a number of empirical research findings on the positive relationship between pro-violence attitudes and aggressive/violent behaviour, as gathered in local research studies and studies from abroad.

2.2 Attitude-Behaviour Theory

Alan Magee (Magee, n.d.: Introduction, para.2) identifies two main concepts, which form the backbone of studies pertaining to attitude-behaviour relationship in academia. According to Magee these two concepts are 1) the Theory of Reasoned Action of Ajzen and Fishbein as put forward in 1967, and 2) Russell Fazio's Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model, issued in 1980. Ajzen and Fishbein (2005:182-204) included a third theory in the list of most influential attitude-behaviour explanations, namely the MODE Model of Russell Fazio, proposed in the 1990's. The researcher recognized the above three theories as the most suited to providing the reader with reliable and valuable theory on the attitude-behaviour relationship.

The Theory of Reasoned Action

The basis of Ajzen and Fischbein's reasoned action approach towards the attitude-behaviour relationship can be explained as follows:

> *The process described whereby people arrive at their intentions represents a 'reasoned action' approach to the explanation and prediction of social behaviour in the sense that people's behavioural intensions are assumed to follow reasonably from their beliefs about performing the behaviour* (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:193)*.*

The beliefs (mentioned above) which an individual forms with respect to certain behaviour may be, but are not necessarily, correct and could even be irrational or biased. Nonetheless, if a set of beliefs is formed, it provides the cognitive foundation from which attitudes, perceived norms, perceptions of control, and ultimately intentions are assumed to follow, in a reasonable and consistent manner (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:194). Ajzen and Fishbein (2005:194) also note that it is important to remember that background factors, such as age, gender, religion, personality etcetera play an important role in the behavioural, normative and control beliefs which influence an individual's performance of a given behaviour.

A graphical display of one way in which the antecedents of intentions and behaviour can be explained (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:194), is represented in Figure 2.1 below.
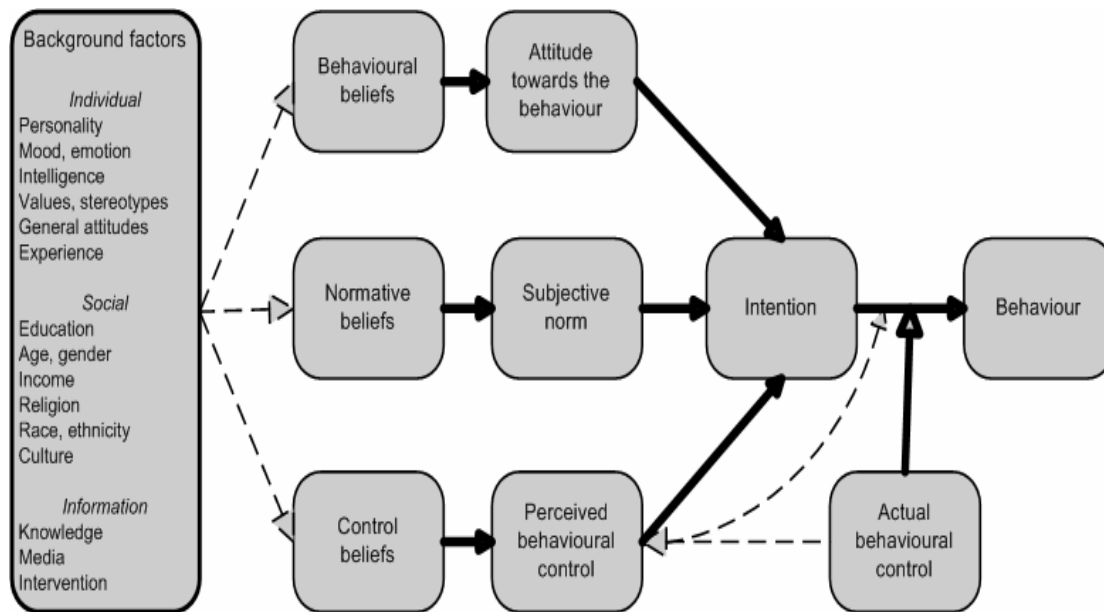
Figure 2.1: The theories of reasoned action and planned behaviour

Ajzen and Fishbein (2005:194) summarize the fundamental assumptions from the Theory of Reasoned Action, as derived from Figure 2.1, as follows:

1) Intention is the immediate antecedent of actual behaviour;
2) Intention, in turn, is determined by attitude towards the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control;
3) These determinants are themselves a function, respectively, of underlying behavioural, normative, and control beliefs;
4) Behavioural, normative, and control beliefs can vary as a function of a wide range of background factors.

The Theory of Reasoned Action, thus, suggests that behaviour stems from attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These are initially influenced by the formulation of a set of beliefs encompassing behavioural, normative and control beliefs. Once formed, attitudes, subjective norms, and perceptions of control are highly accessible and readily available, which means people do not necessarily have to review every step in the

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chain. Behaviour, consequently, rests on the relevant information which people possess regarding the behaviour, and as a result, is a reasoned action. In other words, attitudes about performing specific behaviours are guided by expectations concerning the future outcomes of the behaviour (Davidson in Petty & Krosnick, 1995:327). If a person expects a certain outcome from a performed action (i.e. perception of social control and norms) and the outcome is subsequently in line with that expectation, a positive attitude towards the behaviour will be formed and maintained.

As such it can be said that the behaviour of a person is influenced by his or her attitude in a series of steps, which is perceived as comprising a reasoned action. Intention is influenced by attitudes towards a particular behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. This intention subsequently leads to the individual behaving in a certain way. If a person holds a positive attitude towards a certain behaviour and expects the results of acting out that behaviour to be positive and rewarding, similar behaviour will follow. Hence, if the control beliefs and actual behavioural control measures are closely matched (i.e. similarities exist), this specific behaviour will be maintained and consistent.

Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model

The Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model argues that *"attitudes can guide a person's behaviour even when the person does not actively reflect and deliberate about the attitude"* (Fazio & Powell as cited in Magee, n.d.: Attitude-behaviour process model, para.1) The Attitude-Behaviour model is thus in contrast to the Theory of Reasoned Action, but even so, both suggest that attitude can predict behaviour. The attitude-to-behaviour model implies that the manner in which an individual views a certain event or situation is a strong indicator of that person's attitude. The attitude towards a situation or event will subsequently lead to a course of action.

In addition, Magee (n.d.: Attitude-behaviour process model, para:3) highlights the point that attitude is related to past memory and previous experiences, which ultimately results in the evaluation of the event or situation. The process of attitude to behaviour is greatly influenced by how much of the attitude is formed from memory. If the attitude of a person towards something is not derived from memory, other external influences, such as social norms, play a role in attitude formation and decision-making. Fazio and Powell (as cited in Magee, n.d.: Attitude-behaviour process model, para:3) point out: *"Overall the stronger the relationship between memory and perception of the object the stronger the attitude will be towards the resulting decision"*.
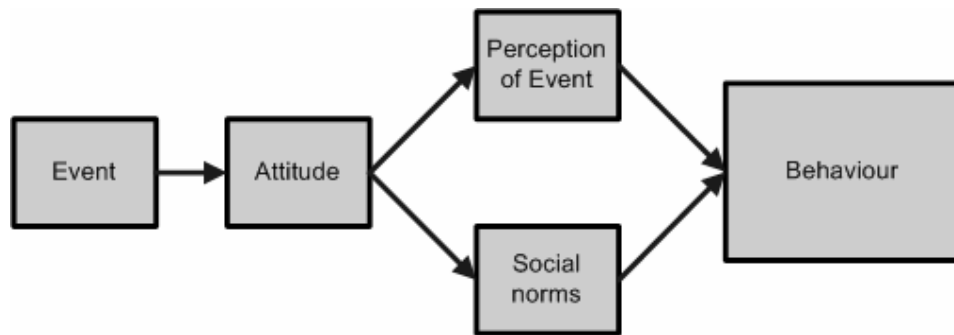
Figure 2.2: Attitude-to-Behaviour process model

The Attitude-Behaviour Process model thus suggests that attitudes of people are subjective as regards the situation or event surrounding the decision that will ultimately result in attitude formation about the subsequent decision-making and behaviour (Magee, n.d: Attitude-behaviour process model, para:4).

According to The Attitude-Behaviour Process model the attitude of a person towards a certain behaviour is reflected in the perception which that person believes to be true of an event or situation relevant to the given behaviour. This perception towards the event or situation is (most likely) formed from previous experiences and memory. The stronger the relationship between past memory and perception of an event or situation, the stronger the attitude towards behaviour. In addition, the strength of the relationship between past

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memory and perception of an event or situation also influences the decision a person will make to behave in a certain way.

The MODE Model

Ajzen and Fishbein (2005:184) identify Fazio's MODE Model as the most direct and sophisticated attempt to deal with the process whereby general attitudes can influence the performance of specific behaviours. The basis of this model lies in the assumption that general attitudes can influence or bias one's perception and judgments of information pertaining to the attitude object. This subsequently determines whether behaviour is consistent or inconsistent with the attitude. However, for this bias to occur, the attitude must first be activated (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:184), in one of two ways:

1) In a controlled or deliberative fashion; or
2) In an automatic or spontaneous fashion (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:184).

Fazio (as cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005:184-185) uses the acronym MODE to suggest that *"<u>mo</u>tivation and <u>o</u>pportunity act as <u>de</u>terminants of spontaneous versus deliberative attitude-to-behaviour processes".* In other words, people can construct or retrieve attitudes towards an object in an effortful manner, when they are sufficiently motivated, as well as have the cognitive capacity to do so. However, when motivation and cognitive capacity are low, attitudes can become available only through automatic activation by the individual. Nevertheless, the MODE Model suggests that automatic or spontaneous activation of an attitude is reserved for strong attitudes. For Fazio, "attitude is a learned association in memory between an object and a positive or negative evaluation of that object", and the strength of this association determines that of the attitude. Consequently, the stronger the strength of the attitude the more likely it will be automatically activated and hence influence behaviour.

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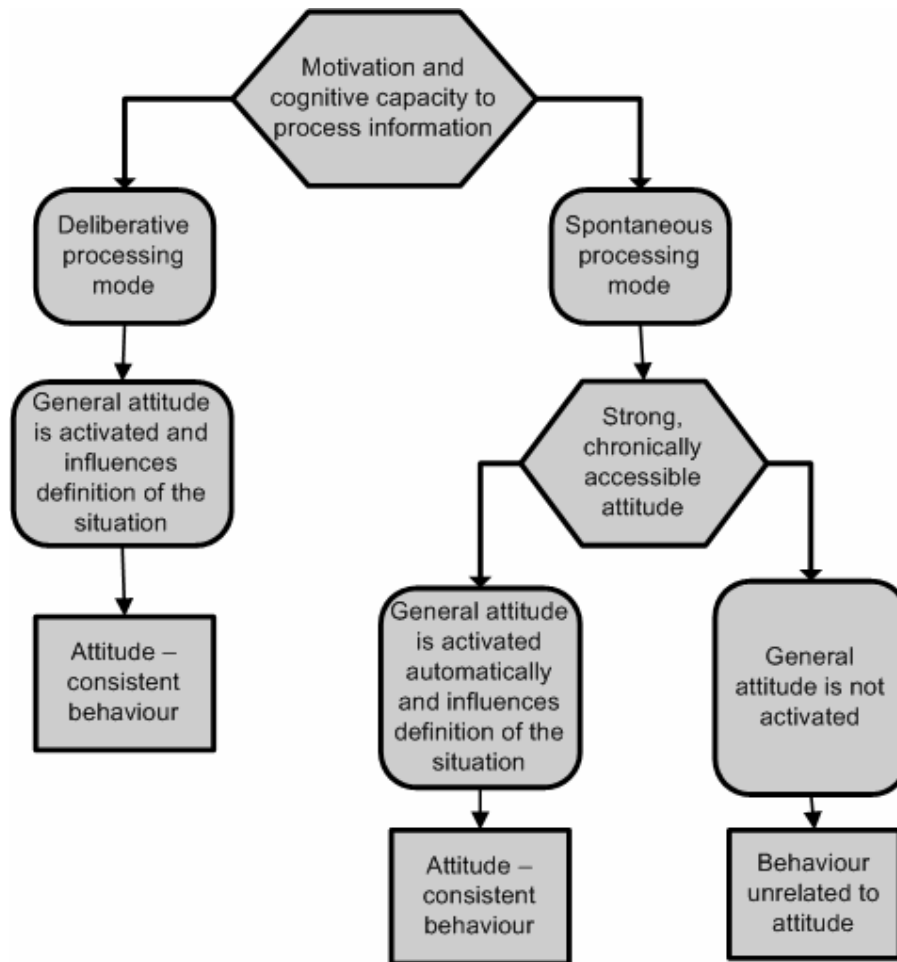
Figure 2.3: Fazio's MODE Model

Ajzen (2005:59) explains the MODE Model by observing that strong attitudes influence or skew perception and judgement of information relevant to the attitude object. This bias is subsequently congruent with the valence of the attitude. For example, people with positive attitudes towards high technology surgery used to rehabilitate offenders may evaluate new information pertaining to this surgery as favouring the technology. In contrast, people with negative attitudes towards this intervention may evaluate the same information as evidence against the technology. In Figure 2.3 it may be noted that whereas both weak and strong attitudes are activated in the deliberative processing mode, only strong attitudes are accessible when a person operates in the spontaneous mode. And whether in the deliberative or spontaneous processing mode, only strong attitudes – being chronically

accessible – are likely to skew the perception an individual has of a situation and subsequently influence behaviour (Ajzen, 2005:60).

In order for prejudice and bias to occur, the attitude towards the behaviour must be activated. Motivation, opportunity and cognitive capacity determine whether a person activates an attitude deliberatively or spontaneously. Both strong and weak attitudes are activated in the deliberative process, whereas only strong attitudes influence behaviour in the spontaneous process. The MODE Model suggests that attitude influences behaviour in all instances, except for cases where general attitudes towards certain behaviour are not activated and behaviour is consequently not related to attitude, but rather influenced by external factors such as social norms, values and pressure.

Theory with respect to the attitude-behaviour relationship suggests that attitudes can and do predict behaviour. In addition, findings in the literature consulted also depicted a positive relationship between attitude and behaviour. For the purpose of this study the researcher provides the reader with findings on the attitude-behaviour relationship pertaining to pro-violence attitudes and actual violent behaviour. The following section contains these findings.

2.3 Research Findings on Pro-violence Attitudes and Violent Behaviour

Numerous studies pertaining to the relationship between positive attitudes towards violence and/or aggression and the subsequent (violent or aggressive) behaviour of respondents have been conducted. The results of all these studies depicted a positive relationship between these variables.

Collings and Magojo (2003:135) conducted research on school violence by making use of the Attitude towards Violence Scale to test the attitudes of male students towards violence in 2002. The study sample consisted of 561 male students attending government schools in the Durban greater metropolitan area in South Africa. In their study, Collings and Magojo (2003:135) found a positive correlation between pro-violence attitudes and actual violent behaviour. This positive relationship corresponded with the results of previous studies and research findings, such as those of Cotten et al. (1994), Guerra and Slaby (1990), and Tolan et al. (1995). In addition, Collings and Magojo (2003:130) arrived at a unique finding pertaining to the relationship between pro-violence attitudes of learners and school violence. Violence committed in a group context was associated with more extreme attitudes towards violence (i.e. attitudes reflecting a culture of violence). In contrast to this, violence committed by an individual acting alone was associated with less extreme attitudes towards violence, in other words those reflecting reactive violence. Collings and Magojo (2003:130) concluded by stating that:

a) A positive correlation between pro-violence attitudes and violent behaviour was found in their study, as well as in the consulted literature;
b) Participation in group violence is likely to be associated with a greater desensitisation to violence; and therefore
c) More intensive/extensive intervention efforts are likely to be required for individuals who have a history of participating in group (as opposed to individual) violence.

Guerra and Slaby (1990:580-588) released research findings in 1988 on a study on the examining role of cognitive mediators in identifying differences in aggression in adolescent offenders. The study sample consisted of 144 adolescents, who were selected from three comparable groups of equal size, namely: antisocial-aggressive, high-aggressive and low-aggressive groups. In order to assess the beliefs of the respondents that support aggression,

subjects had to respond to 18 statements by indicating statements as being 'true' or 'false'. Five beliefs supporting aggression were measured, namely (Guerra & Slaby, 1988:582):

1) Legitimacy of aggression;
2) Aggression increases self-esteem;
3) Aggression helps to avoid a negative image;
4) Victims deserve aggression; and
5) Victims do not suffer.

A belief supporting aggression was indicated by a 'true' response on half of the items and a 'false' response on the other half of the items. Interestingly, significant differences between each of the three status groups were found for the five beliefs supporting aggression, such as (Guerra & Slaby, 1988: 584):

1) Antisocial-aggressive subjects were more likely than both high- and low-aggressive subjects to agree with beliefs supporting the legitimacy of aggression, as well as the belief that aggression helps to avoid a negative image;
2) Antisocial-aggressive subjects were more likely than both high- and low-aggressive subjects to agree with the belief that aggression increases self-esteem; and
3) Both antisocial-aggressive and high-aggressive subjects were more likely than low-aggressive subjects to agree with the belief that victims do not suffer.

In general, the findings suggested that high levels of aggression were associated with high endorsement of beliefs supporting aggression. In other words, antisocial-aggressive, high-aggressive, and low-aggressive groups represented increasing levels of aggression that were consistently related to an increasing endorsement of non-normative beliefs pertaining to aggression (Guerra & Slaby, 1988:586).

Tolan, Guerra and Kendall published on the progress and prospects for prediction and prevention of child and adolescent antisocial behaviour and highlighted six key advances in the specific field (Tolan et al., 1995:580). The first of these is the fact that "by the early elementary school years, childhood aggression is predictive of later aggressive and antisocial behaviour". Tolan et al. (1995:580) stress the importance of intervention amongst children with aggressive or pro-violence attitudes, as without this these youth are more likely to engage in more serious antisocial behavioural problems in adolescence and will most likely continue with violent behaviour chronically.

Cotten et al. (1994:620) researched aggression, pro-violence attitudes and fighting behaviour amongst African-American adolescents. The findings of their study established positive relationships between these variables. The study sample consisted of 436 students attending two middle schools in predominantly low-income African-American neighbourhoods in a small North Carolina city, United States of America. Cotten et al. (1994:620) reported significantly positive correlations between the reports of aggression by students and their attitudes towards violence. In addition, significant relationships were reported between the attitudes of students towards violence and their reported aggressive behaviour. Students who displayed pro-violence attitudes were also more likely to report fighting behaviour, thus suggesting that the attitudes of students towards violence are predictive of such behaviour. Cotten et al. (1994:620) concluded that individual characteristics of students, such as weapon-carrying behaviour and positive attitudes towards violence, were predictive of their reports of aggressive behaviour and fighting at school.

From the numerous abovementioned studies, it is evident that aggressive, pro-violence attitudes increase the likelihood that learners and youth will engage in aggressive and violent behaviour amongst each other in the school environment. In addition, these findings also support the positive correlation between attitude and behaviour.

2.4 Conclusion

The literature and theory in this chapter established a positive correlation between attitude and behaviour. It was important to explore the attitude-behaviour relationship, because these two variables were identified by the researcher as indicators of the culture of learners. Thus, in order to reach a conclusion regarding the possibility that a culture of violence exists amongst learners, the researchers firstly needed to understand the relationship between these two variables. Three major theories in this regard were explored. Even though these theories varied in content, they all concluded that attitude may be a predictor of behaviour. In other words, these theories underline that a positive correlation between attitude and attitude-related behaviour exists. The basis of these three theories respectively was as follows:

1) The Theory of Reasoned Action: The behaviour of a person is influenced by his or her attitude in a series of steps, which is perceived as a reasoned action. Intention to perform a deed is immediately before carrying out the specific act. Intention is influenced by attitudes towards certain behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. If a person has a positive attitude towards certain behaviour and expects the results of acting out that behaviour to be positive and rewarding, similar behaviour will follow. Thus, if the control beliefs and actual behavioural control measures are closely matched (i.e. similarities exist), specific behaviour will be maintained and consistent.

2) Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model: The attitude a person holds towards a particular behaviour is reflected in what that person believes to be true of an event or situation relevant to the given behaviour. This perception towards the event or situation is (most likely) formed from past experiences and past memory. The stronger the relationship between past memory and perception of an event or situation, the

stronger the attitude towards behaviour. In addition, the strength of the relationship between past memory and perception of an event or situation also influences the decision of a person to behave in a certain way.

3) The MODE Model: The behaviour of a person is biased by the attitude that person holds towards certain behaviour and information relating to the behaviour. However, in order for prejudice or bias to occur, the attitude towards the behaviour must be activated. Motivation, opportunity and cognitive capacity determine whether a person activates attitude deliberatively or spontaneously. Both strong and weak attitudes are activated in the deliberative process, whereas only strong attitudes influence behaviour in the spontaneous process. The MODE Model suggests that attitude influences behaviour in all instances, except for cases where general attitudes towards certain behaviour are not activated and behaviour is subsequently not related to attitude, but rather influenced by external factors such as social norms, values and pressure.

In addition to exploring the attitude-behaviour relationship, the researcher specifically examined literature pertaining to pro-violence attitudes and subsequent violent behaviour. Numerous researchers in the consulted literature found aggression in childhood to be a strong predictor of aggressive, violent and antisocial behaviour in adulthood (Guerra and Slaby, 1988:588 & Huesmann et al., 1984:1120-1134). If these levels of aggression and pro-violence attitudes amongst youth are thus left un-addressed, an escalation of violent criminal offences and antisocial behaviour will be unavoidable over time.

The destructive effects of beliefs supporting aggression and violence are even more widespread than the subsequent violent behaviour. According to Huesmann et al. (1987:240) aggressiveness also has a continuing effect on

intellectual achievement in childhood. Aggressive and violent learners may be so disruptive at school, that their teachers and fellow classmates avoid them. This may subsequently lead to serious limitations in the learning opportunities of these learners. In addition, if aggressive and violent children do perform adequately at school, that performance may not be reinforced sufficiently, because teachers already hold a generalized negative attitude towards them. Huesmann et al. (1987:240) furthermore suggest that "a child who is constantly involved in aggressive social interactions is probably attending to social cues much more than academic learning cues".

Further research needs to be conducted in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the nature and direction of influence involved in the relationship between pro-violence attitudes of learners and the school violence phenomenon. Theory and the literature, however, establish a positive correlation between these two variables.

This chapter depicted that attitudes may predict behaviour and pro-violence attitudes may cause school violence. Thus, school violence and the violent behaviour displayed by learners at school may be caused to some extent by the positive attitudes learners hold towards violence. In the dissertation thus far, it has been noted that a strong relationship exists between a person's attitude and his/her behaviour. The researcher is of the opinion that, similarly, a relationship exists between the attitude, behaviour and culture of the learners in this study. In order to investigate this notion, the researcher examined the behaviour and attitudes of learners towards violence respectively, as well as additional causes of school violence.

The next chapter, Chapter 3, discusses the findings pertaining to the behaviour of learners in the school environment. This is the first variable identified by the researcher as an indicator that a culture of violence exists in South African schools. In addition, the researcher will provide the reader with

data on the nature and extent of school violence established by gathering primary, quantitative data, and by consulting secondary data.

CHAPTER 3

THE BEHAVIOUR OF LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

3.1 Introduction

It was established in Chapter 1 that schools are becoming places of increasing harm for many learners; Burton (2008a:15) poses the question as to how harmful and unsafe the school environment might be. In other words, to what extent are learners in South African schools at risk of being victimized in this environment? In examining the nature and extent of school violence, the researcher also hopes to be able to establish the behaviour of the learners pertaining to violence in the said environment. This is important, because behaviour is an indicator of culture, as was clear from the definition of the term 'culture' in the introductory chapter.

In order to determine the above behaviour, both official and unofficial crime information sources were consulted, as mentioned. Official information regarding school violence in South Africa was obtained from the South African Police Service and the Department of Education. However, the validity and reliability of these figures is questionable because learners often do not report instances of school violence to authorities. Burton (2008a:3) argues that the Department of Education and the South African Police Service possess little or no complete data on the extent and levels of violence in South African schools. Learners are more likely to report school violence in anonymous, self-report questionnaires, since they do not always regard this violence as serious enough to report to the police, or they are afraid of the stigma regarding reporting school violence to an educator or principal, because victims fear the revenge of their perpetrators. Nonetheless, both sources (official and unofficial) are used in this research to provide the reader with an

extended picture of the current situation concerning school violence in the Gauteng Tshwane South District and, as far as possible, in South Africa as a whole.

Due to the lack of data it cannot be confirmed that school violence is on the increase in South Africa. However, Burton (2008a:3) states that the reporting of various violent incidents in South African schools between 2006 and 2008 has in fact led to many questions regarding whether the situation is indeed getting worse or not. Nevertheless, research (with non-representative and representative samples) conducted by governmental departments, individual researchers, non-governmental organizations, research institutes etcetera indicates a high prevalence of violence in South African schools. The current study furthermore serves as a contributory source of unofficial information with respect to the said phenomenon.

3.2 Prevalence of School Violence

In order to establish the nature and extent of school violence the researcher has investigated both learners who display violent acts, as well as learners who are victims of violent acts in their school environment.

3.2.1 Learners as Perpetrators

After consulting various sources containing information on the nature and extent of school violence in South Africa and abroad, the researcher identified a range of possible violent behaviours that may occur in the school environment. Learners were subsequently asked if, and how often, they have displayed any of these behaviours at school, in order to establish the nature

and extent of school violence amongst the participants. The findings are displayed in Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.1: Frequency table of various violent behaviours by learners

	Yes		No		Missing values		Total	
Type of violent behaviour	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Punch/hit another learner	265	50.0	262	49.2	5	.8	532	100
Kicked another learner	198	37.2	323	60.7	11	2.1	532	100
Tried to kill another learner	28	5.3	495	93.0	9	1.7	532	100
Verbally abused another learner	226	42.5	293	55.1	13	2.4	532	100
Threatened another learner with violence	123	23.1	391	73.5	18	3.4	532	100
Carry a weapon to school	60	11.3	464	87.2	8	1.5	532	100

N = 532

The data in Table 3.1 indicates a high prevalence of violence amongst the learners, as half (50.0%) of the learners have punched or hit another learner and more than a third (37.2%) have kicked a fellow learner. Similar findings were reached by Zulu et al. (2004:172), where as many as 76% of the respondents had witnessed a physical attack on a learner, which is considered to reflect a high prevalence of violence in their school.

Over forty percent (42.5%) of the learners indicated that they have verbally abused a classmate in the past. Zulu et al. (2004:172) found in their study that 74% of the respondents reported verbal conflicts between learners while 36% used racist names in schools, thus supporting the view that verbal abuse in schools is considerably widespread.

Research conducted by Steyn and Naicker (2007:15) reinforces the above conclusions. Steyn and Naicker (2007:15) found that 38.62% of the respondents reported having witnessed either their fellow learners or educators being physically or verbally attacked and assaulted.

Disturbingly, almost one in nine learners (11.3%) indicated that they carry a weapon to school. Reasons for this varied, but most learners indicated that it was to gain respect; for self-defence; and that it modelled behaviour learned from their parents. No matter what the reasons may be, the fact is that this behaviour may lead to fatalities on school grounds. Research carried out by Zulu et al. (2004:172) also shows that 64% of the respondents indicated that either they themselves or someone they know brought a weapon to school, which is a substantially high response for such a possibly deadly situation.

Research demonstrates that not only is school violence prevalent in South African schools, but it is also a phenomenon that appears too frequently on the grounds of these schools. An example of such research is that of Prinsloo and Neser (2007:50), where approximately 40% of the learners reported that they have been victimised and exposed to violence frequently, that is, 11% on a daily basis and 28% once or twice a week. The following table depicts the frequency of certain violent behaviours which learners in the current study have displayed at school.

Table 3.2: Recurrence of specific types of violence by learners

Type of violence:	Rate of recurrence in a week												
	Once		Daily		Twice a week		3-5 Times a week		Never		Missing values		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
a) Teasing, swearing, name calling	176	33.1	99	18.5	51	9.6	33	6.2	136	25.6	37	7.0	532	100
b) Verbal threats	79	14.7	19	3.6	10	1.9	11	2.1	336	63.2	77	14.5	532	100
c) Threats with weapons	33	6.2	9	1.7	6	1.1	3	.6	396	74.4	85	16.0	532	100
d) Punching, hitting, kicking	130	24.4	27	5.1	20	3.8	7	1.3	283	53.2	65	12.2	532	100
e) Bullying	47	8.8	11	2.1	10	1.9	7	1.3	379	71.2	78	14.7	532	100
f) Fighting	134	25.2	11	2.1	8	1.5	7	1.3	307	57.7	65	12.2	532	100
g) Sexual harassment	18	3.4	8	1.5	7	1.3	5	1.0	412	77.4	82	15.4	532	100
h) Ethnic conflict, racism	39	7.2	8	1.5	7	1.3	8	1.5	377	71.0	93	17.5	532	100

N = 532

The data in Table 3.2 identifies verbal abuse (i.e. teasing, swearing and name calling), verbal threats and physical abuse (punching, hitting, kicking and fights) as the specific acts of violence most frequently performed by the learners; this is also evident in Table 3.1. In addition, noteworthy in the findings of Table 3.2 is the fact that in all given types of violent behaviour a percentage of the learners have indicated that they carry out these behaviours on a daily basis.

The conclusion can thus be reached that every day in a school a learner engages in one or all of the following:

- Teasing, swearing, name calling (18.5% in the current study);
- Verbal threats (3.6% in the current study);
- Threats with weapons (1.7% in the current study);
- Punching, hitting, kicking (5.1% in the current study);
- Bullying (2.1% in the current study);
- Fights (2.1% in the current study);
- Sexual harassment (1.5% in the current study); and
- Ethnic conflict, racism (1.5% in the current study).

In considering statistics regarding school violence from 2001 to 2004, an article in the *Beeld* newspaper, 7 October 2004 (as cited in Neser, 2005:65) indicated that crimes such as assault, sexual violence and offences related to firearms had showed a definite increase in schools. This finding is supported by the fact that South African police figures (as cited in Anonymous, 2004: para.8) for school violence in 2003 indicated that 97 cases of assault were reported, which in the following year, 2004, increased to 115 reported cases of assault, 11 acts of sexual violence and 4 acts of "violence with a firearm (Naledi Pandor as cited in Anonymous, 2004: para.1). Violent sexual offences in schools represent a frequently occurring trend. According to Smith (1999:41) it is alleged that one in four school-going children under the age of

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16 has been sexually violated, indicating an increase from the year 2000 up until and including the year 2004.

Curcio and First (1993) undertook research on school violence, and in their findings named the following instances of serious learner-on-learner violence:

- Rape;
- Murder;
- Drive-by shootings;
- Firing guns in school buildings or on the grounds;
- Carrying firearms on the school terrain;
- Wounding or stabbing a fellow learner, and killing the person in the process (Curcio & First, 1993:8-9).

Sewsunker (1999:6) also lists a number of incidents of violent actions that took place in KwaZulu-Natal schools. These include murder, armed robbery, damage to, and destruction of school property, brawling, stone throwing, name calling, knife attacks and stabbings, beating-up of educators and learners, hostage taking, sexual harassment, arson, physical assault, caching of weapons, drug abuse, and stolen cellular phones.

Both the primary and secondary data sources referred to above indicate the seriousness and high prevalence of violence in South African schools. Learners act out violently; it seems, with no inhibitions. It is evident from these statistics that schools have become highly volatile and unpredictable places. Zulu et al. (2004:170) concur: "Violence has become a part of every-day life in [some] schools".

3.2.2 Learners as Victims

In order to establish the prevalence of violence in the school environment, the frequencies of violent acts committed by learners are explored, as well as the frequencies of reports by victims of school violence. This draws attention to the nature and extent of this phenomenon. The respondents were subsequently asked if and how often they have been a victim of various violent acts. The resulting findings are recorded in the following table.

Table 3.3: Frequencies and recurrence of learners as victims of specific types of violent acts

Type of violence:	Rate of recurrence in a week														Total	
	Once		Daily		Twice a week		3-5 Times a week		Never		Missing values			
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%
a) Teasing, swearing, name calling	173	32.5	78	14.%	55	10.	29	5.5	144	27.1	53	10.0	532	100
b) Verbal threats	93	17.4	20	3.8	25	4.7	17	3.2	291	54.7	86	16.2	532	100
c) Threats with weapons	56	10.4	12	2.3	10	1.9	11	2.1	349	65.6	94	17.7	532	100
d) Punching, hitting, kicking	106	20.0	23	4.3	23	4.3	16	3.0	280	52.6	84	15.8	532	100
e) Bullying	81	15.4	21	3.9	15	2.8	6	1.1	316	59.3	93	17.5	532	100
f) Fights	118	22.2	14	2.6	8	1.5	8	1.5	303	57.0	81	15.2	532	100
g) Sexual harassment	34	6.4	9	1.7	9	1.7	6	1.1	383	72.0	91	17.1	532	100
h) Ethnic conflict, racism	39	7.3	16	3.0	8	1.5	9	1.7	361	67.9	99	18.6	532	100

N = 532

From the data in Table 3.3 it is evident that a large percentage (62.9%) of the learners have indicated that they have been a victim of teasing, swearing or name calling at least once in their school career to date. Just under a third (29.1%) of the learners have been verbally threatened while 16.7% were threatened with weapons, adding up to just under half of the learners being threatened at school in some form at least once to date. Table 3.3 also indicates that just fewer than thirty percent (27.8%) of the learners have been

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a victim of a fight at school. The data in Table 3.3 clearly indicates that large numbers of learners are victimized in their school environment.

A deplorable finding reached after analyzing the data in Table 3.3 is that, besides being sexually harassed and being a victim of ethnic conflict/racism, noteworthy percentages of learners indicated they have fallen victim to one or all of the other possible violent acts at least once in their school career to date. These include the following:

- Teasing, swearing, name calling (62.9%);
- Verbal threats (29.1%);
- Threats with weapons (16.7%);
- Punching, hitting, and kicking (31.6%);
- Bullying (23.2%);
- Fights (27.8%);
- Sexual harassment (10.9%); and
- Ethnic conflict, racism (13.5%).

However, it can also be said that the 10.9% of learners who reported being sexually harassed at school might not necessarily represent a true reflection of sexual victimization amongst these learners. As Burton (2008a:18) also emphasizes, the very nature of sexual assault and the destructive emotions associated with this phenomenon can result in under-reporting to the police as well as in anonymous surveys.

Neser (2005:74) found the following statistics pertaining to victims of school violence in his research:

- 54.3% of the respondents were teased in an unpleasant way;
- 62.5% of the respondents were called hurtful names;
- 33.8% were threatened with harm; and
- 43.4% of the respondents were hit, kicked or pushed at school.

When comparing the statistics concerning victims of school violence which have been gathered in the current study with those of Neser (2005:74), it is clear that the percentage of victims of school violence is on the rise, pertaining to three of the four abovementioned types of behaviour. With regard to the fourth type of behaviour, Table 3.3 depicts that 31.6% of the learners in the current study have indicated they have been punched, hit or kicked at least once to date. However, the findings pertaining to these types of school violence as reported in 2005 by Neser (2005:74) show 43.4% of the respondents have been punched, kicked or pushed at school. This subsequently may indicate some decrease in these types violent behaviour at schools. The difference may however also be due to underreporting by learners, as they may not consider punching, kicking and pushing as serious instances of school violence. Instead, these learners may rather report more serious cases of violence, such as stabbings and physical attacks with more aggravating circumstances. Nevertheless, the data in both Table 3.3 and that of Neser illustrate the great extent to which learners are being victimized in [some] South African schools.

The researcher also consulted the following two recent and comprehensive surveys on school violence in South Africa, namely those of Lezanne Leoschut and Patrick Burton (*How Rich the Rewards?: Results of the 2005 National Youth Victimisation Study*, 2006), and Patrick Burton (*Merchants, Skollies and Stones: Experiences of School Violence in South Africa,* 2008a).

Leoschut and Burton (2006:67) state that "victimisation at school was found to be a common occurrence, with many reporting being victimised more than once". Key findings by Leoschut and Burton regarding the nature and extent of school violence include the following:

- 20.9% of the learners had been threatened or hurt by someone at their school, of which 7.8% had experienced this more than ten times;
- Nearly a third (32.8%) of the learners have been verbally abused, including being teased and insulted at school;
- In describing their most recent violent experience at school, 55.2% of the learners were threatened with physical violence and 38.3% had actually been physically attacked during this incident; and
- The most common locations for victimisation of the respondents were their communities and school environment (Leoschut & Burton, 2008:69-72).

Key findings of research carried out by Burton (2008a:16) into the experiences of school violence include the following:

- More than one tenth (12.8%) of the learners reported being threatened, which was found in this research to be the most common violent incident experienced;
- One in twenty learners (5.8%) reported being assaulted at school;
- 4.6% of the learners indicated they have been robbed at school; and
- 2.3% of the learners reported having directly experienced some form of sexual violence while in the school environment.

It is evident that learners in South African schools are at risk of falling victim to some form of school violence, because statistics and research indicate frequent incidents of violence in schools, as well as large numbers of victims of violence in the school environment. This conclusion is supported by the

concluding findings published by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention (CJCP) (Burton, 2008a:1). According to the National Schools Violence Study conducted by the CJCP (Burton, 2008a:1) learners in both primary and secondary South African schools are highly likely to become a victim of school violence. In that study a total of 15.3% in the study sample had experienced some form of violence at school.

School violence is not limited to learner-on-learner violence, but also encompasses violence directed at personnel and educators. This was not explored in the current study. However, to emphasize the nature and extent of school violence in South African schools, key findings from literature concerning learner-on-educator violence are highlighted.

Research conducted by De Wet (2003:105), investigating school violence in terms of the perspectives of 250 educators in the Eastern Cape,, reveals the following statistics regarding educators as victims of violent crimes at school or during school functions, on tours, etcetera (De Wet, 2003:105):

- 4.19% of the respondents were victims of attempted rape;
- 2.33% of the respondents were victims of rape;
- 5.58% of the respondents were sexually harassed;
- 3.72% of the respondents had been hurt so badly during an incident of violence at the school, that they had to see a doctor; and
- 11.63% of the respondents had been hurt during an incident of violence at the school, but not so badly that they had to see a doctor.

These findings are supported by research conducted by Zulu et al. (2004:172), who found that 38% of the respondents in the study had witnessed physical attacks on educators.

Research conducted into educators in the United States of America, shows that school violence is inflicted on personnel at schools there too. Respondents in a study conducted by Petersen, Pietrzak and Speaker (1998:338) were asked to indicate the frequency and types of violence they had experienced in the past two years. Overall, a majority of the respondents in the study had experienced some form of violence at least one or more times in the past two years.

Reinforcing this finding, Zulu et al. refers to findings of the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation at the University of the Witwatersrand (as cited in Zulu et al., 2004:170), who lists numerous incidents where educators in the Gauteng Province of South Africa were murdered between January and July 1999. Research conducted by Burton (2008a:26) also discovers high levels of learner-on-educator violence in South African schools.

Research findings pertaining to school violence, where the victims are educators, show that educators are most likely to be verbally abused, as a form of this violence. Educators are also highly likely to be physically attacked by learners during learner-on-educator violence, because this has been identified in the literature as a frequent form of such violence.

The data pertaining to the prevalence of school violence furnished thus far provides evidence that schools are unsafe, frightening places where "anyone prepared not to engage in violence is likely to fall victim to others who are prepared to inflict harm" (Burton, 2008a:33). The evidence also shows that learners behave violently in the school environment on a daily basis, which indicates that violent behaviour is an accepted and common part of these learners' lives.

The current study not only explored the actual experiences of violence of learners, but also investigated the perceptions which learners have of violence and safety in their school. This enables the researcher to arrive at additional conclusions on the nature and extent of violence in South African schools, because the perceptions of learners about the phenomenon also reflect a noteworthy representation of the problem.

3.3 Learners' Perceptions of School Violence and Safety in Schools

Research on the said perceptions is important in the exploration of the nature and extent of the phenomenon. Neser (2005:61) adds that the school plays an indispensable role in the continuing character development of youth. In other words, what learners perceive as the truth and acceptable behaviour can ultimately influence their attitudes and behaviour.

Schools should create a safe environment for their learners, as the need for safety is an important requirement for juveniles. Morrison (2003:79-82) supports this statement by emphasizing that next to the most basic need for survival (which includes being fed and sheltered) is the basic need for personal safety and freedom from fear.

Learners were subsequently asked about their perceptions of violence, feelings of safety, drug and alcohol abuse, and prevalence of weapons and foul language in their school environment. The researcher thus explored how learners feel about these factors to some extent. The findings in this respect are displayed in Tables 3.4 to 3.8.

A person's beliefs that a certain phenomenon is a problem may contribute to his/her assumptions pertaining to that phenomenon. For the purpose of this

study it is argued that learners' perceptions on violence in their school environment provide additional information in this regard. The data in the following table supports the above statement.

Table 3.4: Violence is a problem in my school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	214	40.2	41.4	41.4
	Agree	144	27.1	27.9	69.2
	Don't know	115	21.6	22.2	91.5
	Disagree	29	5.5	5.6	97.1
	Strongly disagree	15	2.8	2.9	100.0
	Total	517	97.2	100.0	
Missing	System	15	2.8		
Total		532	100.0		

From Table 3.4 it can be observed that more than two thirds (69.3%) of the learners indicated that violence is indeed a problem in their school, as they either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. This high frequency of perceived violence in the school environment subsequently corresponds with the high statistics of school violence, as seen in Table 3.1 and 3.2, as well as with the literature consulted. On the other hand, high levels of fear in schools are not necessarily a reflection of the actual levels of violence in schools, but rather an indication of feelings of danger in the school environment. This could lead to serious effects (similar to or even worse than actual violence) on these fearful learners, such as anxiety, withdrawal from school, and learners feeling the need to carry a weapon to school.

Table 3.5: Feel safe at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	79	14.8	15.1	15.1
	Agree	130	24.4	24.8	39.9
	Don't know	98	18.4	18.7	58.6
	Disagree	118	22.2	22.5	81.1
	Strongly disagree	99	18.6	18.9	100.0
	Total	524	98.5	100.0	
Missing	System	8	1.5		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 3.5 indicate that four in ten learners (41.4%) responded that they do not feel safe at school, as they have either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This is a notably high percentage, especially because (as indicated earlier) schools must be a safe haven for their learners, since safety and security are some of their most basic needs. Fear of the school environment was also found to be prevalent by Leoschut and Burton (2006:38), where 11.5% of the respondents reported that they were fearful at their school or place of employment. Neser (2006:128) published similar findings, as more than ten percent of the learners hardly ever (4.2%) or never (8.7%) felt safe at school.

Burton (2008a:33) also reported similar findings with regard to learners' fear and feelings of safety at school, which included the following:

- 9.4% of the learners reported that they felt unsafe at school;
- 5.6% of the learners indicated that something had happened at school that made them fear going to school; and
- 10.7% of the learners indicated that there was a specific place at school of which they were scared.

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The reasons for fearing the school environment vary from learner to learner. Learners are afraid of being hurt by fellow classmates or educators (as in the case of corporal punishment and discipline), and fear criminals/gang members at school. Nonetheless, the high frequencies of fear at school may also afford a rough indication of levels of violence within the school, as the learners fear what they themselves, or their fellow classmates, have experienced and witnessed in their school careers to date.

School violence not only leads to learners fearing the school environment, but research conducted by De Wet (2003:102) also indicates that large percentages of educators also fear certain areas of the school grounds. De Wet's findings included (De Wet, 2003:102):

- 32.16% of educators fear their classroom while teaching, while 32.56% feel empty classrooms are unsafe;
- 23.72% feel that hallways and stairs on school grounds are unsafe places;
- 24.19% fear they might be victimised at the school's tuck shop;
- 21.8% feel unsafe in the bathrooms used by learners and 17.68% feel unsafe in the educators' bathrooms;
- 25.12% indicated they fear being victimised in the staff room; and
- 32.56% are of the opinion that the parking lot is an unsafe area on the school grounds.

In all the above-mentioned places, at least a fifth of the respondents in that study indicated that they perceive these areas as dangerous. This once again emphasizes the seriousness of school violence in South Africa, since most (if not all) of these localities are generally not supposed to pose a threat to an individual entering them.

De Wet (2006:20) includes the use of drugs and alcohol, as well as the carrying of weapons to school, in a range of possible violence-related behaviours. De Wet subsequently concluded, by interpreting learners' perceptions of the above delinquent behaviours in their school environment, that the use of and trading in drugs, as well as the carrying of weapons to school, seem to be the most wide-spread violence-related behaviours amongst learners (De Wet, 2006:20).

The learners in the current study also responded similarly as regards statements pertaining to the prevalence of drug and alcohol usage amongst fellow classmates, as well as the prevalence of weapons in their school. The resulting findings are displayed in Tables 3.6 and 3.7.

Table 3.6: Learners bring alcohol and drugs to school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	178	33.5	33.8	33.8
	Agree	181	34.0	34.3	68.1
	Don't know	122	22.9	23.1	91.3
	Disagree	26	4.9	4.9	96.2
	Strongly disagree	20	3.8	3.8	100.0
	Total	527	99.1	100.0	
Missing	System	5	.9		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 3.6 indicates that more than two thirds (68.1%) of the learners are of the opinion that their fellow classmates bring drugs or alcohol to school. However, if Chapter 1 is revisited, Tables 1.8 and 1.9 show that (combined) only 23.5% of the learners indicated that they use alcohol or drugs. The discrepancy between the reported and perceived cases of drug and alcohol usage may be due to under-reporting of learners who consume alcohol or drugs, as they are possibly fearful that they might be caught and subsequently land in trouble. Either way, based on both the abovementioned figures the conclusion can be reached that alcohol and drug usage are problems in South African schools and that the relationship between the

prevalence of alcohol and drugs, and school violence, definitely warrants exploration and discussion. In support of this notion Burton (2008a:46) writes that often both alcohol and drugs spawn the courage to commit a crime and the excessive use of these two substances may increase the level of violence used when committing the crime.

Table 3.7: Learners take weapons to school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	178	33.5	33.7	33.7
	Agree	155	29.1	29.4	63.1
	Don't know	133	25.0	25.2	88.3
	Disagree	39	7.3	7.4	95.6
	Strongly disagree	23	4.3	4.4	100.0
	Total	528	99.2	100.0	
Missing	System	4	.8		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 3.7 also depicts a discrepancy between learners' perceptions of whether their fellow classmates carry weapons to school and the actual indication of learners who have reported that they do carry a weapon to school. Table 3.7 indicates that 63.1% of the learners reported that they agree or strongly agree that learners take weapons to school, whereas only 11.5% of the learners reported that they bring weapons to school (as is clear from Table 3.1). Again, this might be due to under-reporting by learners, as they fear being caught. The perception of learners, regarding the prevalence of weapons in the school environment, might be more accurate than the actual reporting thereof but is nonetheless a serious indication that schools have become dangerous places for all those involved.

Zulu et al. (2004:172) reported similar findings with regard to what learners indicated about the prevalence of drugs, alcohol and weapons at schools. Substantial percentages of respondents indicated that learners brought drugs (48%), weapons (64%), and alcohol (64%) to school. 52.60% of participating

learners in a study conducted by Steyn and Naicker (2007:15) indicated that they agree that there is a high prevalence of drugs, alcohol and weapons in the school environment.

Another variable explored from the point of view of the learners, was that of foul language used by fellow classmates. The rationale for this was the assumption that foul language might be a contributing and causal factor when probing the school violence phenomenon, as foul language not only indicates verbal abuse, but might also provoke violent occurrences.

Table 3.8: Learners use foul language at school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly agree	274	51.5	51.8	51.8
	Agree	161	30.3	30.4	82.2
	Don't know	63	11.8	11.9	94.1
	Disagree	18	3.4	3.4	97.5
	Strongly disagree	13	2.4	2.5	100.0
	Total	529	99.4	100.0	
Missing	System	3	.6		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 3.8 depicts a high percentage (82.2%) of learners who agree or strongly agree that learners use foul language at school. This corresponds with the findings recorded in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 where verbal abuse (i.e. teasing, swearing and name calling) was identified as one of the most prevalent forms of school violence in the study. Over forty percent (43.5%) of the learners reported that they have verbally abused a fellow classmate, thus coinciding to a great extent with the high prevalence of foul language in the study sample.

3.4 Conclusion

From the research in this chapter it is evident that all forms of school violence (physical, emotional, and verbal) are extremely prevalent in South African schools. In both instances where learners were perpetrators and/or victims, substantially high occurrences of violence in schools were reported. This is supported by the fact that large numbers of learners reported that they have punched or hit (50.0%), kicked (37.2%), and verbally abused (42.5%) a fellow learner, while 23.1% indicated that they have threatened another learner with violence.

Similarly, large percentages of learners reported that they have been victims of a range of possible violent behaviours in the school environment at least once to date. This includes 62.9% reportedly being teased, sworn at and called names; 29.1% reportedly being threatened verbally; 16.7% threatened with weapons; 31.6% being punched, hit or kicked; 23.2% being victims of bullying; and 27.8% reportedly being a victim in a fight at school.

Key findings with regard to the nature and extent of school violence include:

1) Most instances of school violence in South African schools encompass verbal abuse (e.g. teasing, swearing, hurtful comments and name calling), verbal threats, and physical abuse and attacks (e.g. punching, hitting, kicking and fights).
2) Ethnic conflict and racism, and sexual harassment are forms of school violence that are least prevalent. Sexual harassment however might be identified as least prevalent, due to under-reporting.
3) Levels of fear experienced in the school environment by learners and educators, as well as unofficial reported cases of school violence in the

current study and the literature consulted, suggest an increase in violence in South African schools.

4) The perceptions of learners regarding violence in their schools closely reflect actual statistics of victimization at school.

5) The perceptions of learners on the prevalence of drugs, alcohol and weapons on school grounds indicate higher levels than the actual reported cases of these violence-related behaviours.

The main purpose of this study is to reach a conclusion on the possibility that a culture of violence is developing amongst South African school-going youth. The researcher identified two variables related to the learners, namely violent behaviour and pro-violence attitudes. In this chapter, the first of these two variables was examined.

The definition of the term 'culture' provided in the introductory chapter supports the influential relationship between a person's culture and his or her behaviour. Haviland's definition of culture (1993:29) included the following:

> *"Culture consists of the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that lie behind people's behaviour, and which are reflected in their behaviour".*

The data in this chapter have demonstrated that the violent behaviour of the learners was frequent, severe and of a serious nature. The above definition of 'culture' depicts behaviour as a symptom of culture. As such, the researcher concludes that the learners do show certain signs of a violent culture.

In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the researcher examines why these high levels of violent behaviour are prevalent amongst the learners. The researcher investigated numerous causes of school violence as identified in previous

studies, as well as possible causes of school violence identified by the learners in the current study. This was done in order to illustrate a broad and holistic picture on what factors may contribute to this serious situation facing schools in South Africa.

CHAPTER 4

CAUSES OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE

4.1 Introduction

The data in Chapter 3 indicated that learners frequently behave violently at school and that the nature of this violence is becoming more brutal and cruel. The researcher's hypothesis is that this violent behaviour is due to a violent culture that exists amongst South African school-going youth. However, before investigating the attitudes of learners towards violence, as a means to test this notion, the researcher examined traditional causes of school violence, such as substance abuse, poverty and racial conflict. The findings are discussed in this chapter.

Binder et al. (2001:69-70) state that the meaning of the concept "cause" is complicated, but it can broadly be defined as "something that brings about an effect or a result". For example, an individual's being in a specific situation (such as poverty) may bring about an action (such as stealing, i.e. criminal behaviour). This section on the causes of school violence will highlight the reasons for and factors that play a role in the violent behaviour of learners in the school environment. While establishing the causes of school violence, the researcher also examined the probability or likelihood that these causal variables will eventually lead to school violence. Probability, according to DiCristina (1995:18-19), refers to the likelihood that two or more phenomena will occur together in future. An example hereof is the use of alcohol and drugs and 'train surfing' amongst youth. Research conducted by Hesselink (2008:124) shows that substance abuse plays a major role in facilitating the necessary "bravery" for youth to surf trains. DiCristina consequently states

that the focus should be placed on the association of these phenomena when researching the causes of an occurrence.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines suggested and proven causes of school violence, as gathered through a review of the relevant literature. The researcher integrated the most common causes suggested in the literature into the questionnaire, in order to examine whether these causes are valid and reliable. Secondly, the results of learners' indications of what they identified as the reasons for their violent behaviour at school are displayed. Lastly, the third section deals with static- and criminogenic (individual and social) risk factors as causes of school violence.

4.2 Examination of the Literature on Possible Causes of School Violence

Causes of school violence, that relate to the attitudes and behaviour of learners, identified in previous research studies will be investigated and tested in order to establish whether these causes still prevail. The rationale is that this aspect needs to be thoroughly explored and integrated, as these factors may contribute to pro-violence attitudes and behaviour of learners.

The following general and relevant causes of violence in South African (and international) schools, were identified:

- Decline and collapse of student organisations and leadership (Stevens et al., 2001:146);
- Inadequate involvement on the part of learners in the formulation of school rules (Curcio & First, 1993:7; Van den Aardweg, 1987:228; White, 1995:52; Goldstein et al., 1984:9; and Bybee & Gee, 1982:113-115);

- Gangs and gang activities (Curcio & First, 1993:7; Van den Aardweg, 1987:228; White, 1995:52; Goldstein et al., 1984:9; and Bybee & Gee, 1982:113-115);

- Learners who carry guns and other weapons to school (Senosi, 2003:40);

- Negative perceptions and stereotyping, especially regarding racial issues, which result in name-calling, fighting, and violence in schools;

- Intolerance towards people of other races, religions, gender, and sexual orientation (Maree, 2000:4);

- Pupils who smoke dagga and other substances/drug abuse (Senosi, 2003:40);

- Boys try to emulate the feats of their heroes, who often turn out to be criminals and gang leaders (Maree, 2000:4);

- Lack of positive role models (Senosi, 2003:40);

- Lack of trust/credibility in authority figures (Peterson et al., 1998:331);

- Pervasiveness of violence as a form of problem-solving (Senosi, 2003:40); and

- Inability to handle conflict situations and frustration (Curcio & First, 1993:7; Van den Aardweg, 1987:228; White, 1995:52; Goldstein et al., 1984:9; and Bybee & Gee, 1982:113-115).

In order to examine the abovementioned possible causes of school violence, relevant questions were posed in the questionnaire. The findings are discussed in the sections below.

4.2.1 Student Organisations, Leadership and Regulations

Various researchers identify the decline and collapse of student organisations and leadership, as well as the inadequate involvement on the part of learners in the formulation of school rules, as factors contributing to the school violence phenomenon (Stevens et al., 2001:146; Curcio & First, 1993:7; Van

den Aardweg, 1987:228; White, 1995:52; Goldstein et al., 1984:9; and Bybee & Gee, 1982:113-115). Maree (2008:67) supports the above by emphasizing the importance of a fully functional school system, in order for a school to be effective in training and education, which consequently includes proper discipline and learner integration in the school system.

Learners were consequently asked their opinion on the student organisations and leadership at their schools, as well as on learners' involvement in the formulation of school rules and policies. The findings are displayed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1: Learners' indication whether their school has effective student organisations/leadership

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	210	39.5	40.5	40.5
	No	62	11.7	12.0	52.5
	Don't know	246	46.2	47.5	100.0
	Total	518	97.4	100.0	
Missing	System	14	2.6		
Total		532	100.0		

From the data in Table 4.1 it is evident that even though somewhat more than a third (40.5%) of the learners indicated that their schools have effective student organisations and/or leaderships, the majority expressed ignorance when asked the relevant question. The conclusion can subsequently be drawn that (some) schools in South Africa are short of structured establishments consisting of fellow classmates who serve as leaders in the school environment.

The question however arises whether this lack of effective student organisations and leadership can cause or contribute to school violence.

Stevens (as cited in Stevens et al., 2001:146), and Stevens and Lockhat (1997:250-255) state that the complex interplay between various factors pertaining to education in South Africa, amongst which is a lack of structural and organisational control by and for learners, have all contributed to an environment that is affected by a range of potentially negative and violent influences.

The empirical data supports the above statement since, statistically, a highly significant relationship was found between learners' violent behaviour and their indication whether their school does or does not have an effective student organisation or leader system. The findings are recorded in the table below.

Table 4.2: Violent behaviour and learners' indication of effective student organisation/leaderships at school

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL	SCHOOL HAS EFFECTIVE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS/LEADERSHIPS			
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	Don't know	TOTAL
Yes	178 34.6 48.0 84.8	39 7.6 10.5 62.9	154 30.0 41.5 63.6	371 72.2
No	32 6.2 22.4 15.2	23 4.5 16.1 37.1	88 17.1 61.5 36.4	143 27.8
TOTAL	210 40.9	62 12.1	242 47.1	514 100.0

X^2 = 28.009; df = 2; p = .000

The analysis of the data pertaining to the violent behaviour of learners and learners' indication of effective student organisation/leaderships at school depicted the following findings concerning to the two variables in question:

- Of the 12.1% learners who have indicated that their school does not have an effective student organisation or leader system, 62.9% reported having acted violently at school on some occasions; and
- Of the 47.1% of learners who were uncertain when asked whether their school had an effective student organisation or leader system, 63.6% reported having acted violently at school on occasion.

However, a disturbing finding displayed in Table 4.2 shows that of the 40.9% of learners who indicated their schools have effective student organisations/leaderships, 84.8% acted violently at school. Thus the perception that a school has an effective student organisation/leadership does not necessarily mean that the majority of learners will act less violently. Conversely one needs to question the effectiveness of student organisations/leaderships. Learners may be of the opinion that their school has an effective student organisation/leadership, but what they perceive as 'effective' might not be effective in reality to deal with issues such as school violence and discipline in the school environment.

Nevertheless, by envisaging the positive impact which an effective student organisation and leadership may have on the discipline levels in a school, the establishment, maintenance and consistent improvement of such entities in schools can only contribute to minimizing school violence. Elliot et al. (1998:10) highlight the importance of rules and regulations in curbing school violence by regarding a too lenient legal system as an important cause of school violence.

Table 4.3: Learners' indication of involvement in the formulation of school rules/policies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	182	34.2	34.9	34.9
	No	110	20.7	21.1	55.9
	Don't know	230	43.2	44.0	100.0
	Total	522	98.1	100.0	
Missing	System	10	1.9		
Total		532	100.0		

The data in Table 4.3 depicts some involvement by learners in the formulation of school rules and policies, because slightly more than a third (34.9%) of them indicated this to be true. The answers given by the learners indicated that they were either not involved (21.1%) or were uncertain (44.1%) about the involvement of learners in the formulation of school rules/policies. This points to little involvement by most learners in these processes. Once again it can be asked to what extent this lack of involvement in the disciplinary structure of a school contributes to or causes school violence.

According to various researchers, including Curcio & First (1993:7), Van den Aardweg (1987:228), White (1995:52), Goldstein et al. (1984:9), and Bybee & Gee (1982:113-115) learners' inadequate involvement in the formulation of school rules and policies is a variable related to violent behaviour at school. When considering the large percentage (72.2%) of learners in the current study who have answered affirmatively when asked whether they have ever acted violently at school as well as the large percentage in Table 4.3 (65.1%) of learners who have indicated that to a great extent learners are not involved in the formulation of school rules/policies, it seems these two factors might be related.

In the empirical data a statistically significant relationship, on the 5 % level, was found between learners who have acted violently at school and learners

who have indicated they themselves, or their fellow classmates, are not involved in the formulation of school rules and policies. The resulting findings are displayed in the table below.

Table 4.4: Violent behaviour and learners' indication of involvement in the formulation of school rules/policies

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL	LEARNERS ARE INVOLVED IN FORMULATION OF SCHOOL RULES/POLICIES			
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	Don't know	TOTAL
Yes	123 23.7 33.0 68.0	88 17.0 23.6 80.7	162 31.3 43.4 71.1	373 72.0
No	58 11.2 40.0 32.0	21 4.1 14.5 19.3	66 12.7 45.5 28.9	145 28.0
TOTAL	181 34.9	109 21.0	228 44.0	518 100.0

X^2 = 5.695; df = 2; p = .058

The analysis of the data pertaining to the two variables in question in Table 4.4 depicted the following findings:

- Of the 21.0% learners who have indicated learners are not involved in the formulation of school rules and policies, 80.7% reported having acted violently at school on some occasion; and
- Of the 44.0% of learners who were uncertain when asked whether they are involved in the formulation of school rules and policies, 71.1% reported having acted violently at school on occasion.

In addition, the data in Table 4.4 shows that of those (34.9%) learners who were involved in the formulation of school rules/policies, 68.0% acted violently. This again leads to questions and concern regarding the rules and policies of these schools. More specifically, the effectiveness of these rules and policies are in question.

Nevertheless, the research findings suggest that not only is it important to ensure schools have effective and structured rules, regulations, and leadership and discipline systems in place, but also that learners are actively involved in these systems. Additionally, those involved in the student organisations/leaderships, as well as school rules/policies need to ensure these systems effectively and sufficiently deal with issues such as violence in the school environment.

4.2.2 Gangs and Gang Activities

Researchers have identified involvement with gangs and gang activities as possible causes of school violence. Leggett (2004:24) argues youth become involved in a kind of a surrogate family with a different set of norms from their primary family, when a great deal of time is being spent on the streets. Booyens et al. (2008:43) write that the forming of groups is a natural occurrence, which generally has a positive influence on the socialisation of juveniles. However, when the values and norms of the group become more important than that of the household, the setting for gang formation is created and the alternative group with specific norms and values becomes a subculture (Leggett, 2004:24). In addition, some children may grow up in a household with no norms and values, which means that the formation of a gang is not necessarily an alternative group to that of the household. Yet, such children can become involved in gang formation for numerous other reasons, such as the fact that a gang will provide some norms, values and

structure in the child's life. This will be something this child yearns for as it has never been a part of his or her childhood.

The term 'gang' is defined by writers in various ways and remains controversial, especially in deciding to what extent the term 'gang' implies criminal behaviour (Roper, 2004: What is a Gang, para.1). Joan Moore's (as cited in Hagedorn, 1998: para.3) definition of 'gang' omits the criminal connotation of the term by defining it as:

> *Unsupervised peer groups who are socialized by the streets rather than by conventional institutions. They define themselves as a gang or 'set' or some such term, and have the capacity to reproduce themselves, usually within a specific neighbourhood.*

But not all researchers agree that a gang exists without antisocial behaviour. Klein (1971) adds to Moore's definition by stating that a gang is a group of youngsters who "*also have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies*".   Hence, the mainstream literature that was consulted supported the fact that involvement in a gang causes juvenile delinquency. Haskell (1960–1961:228) maintains this assumption by stating that participation in a street group leads to anti-social acts because:

1) Either the street group has a delinquent sub-culture which defines such acts as appropriate; or
2) The street group is by definition non-normative, thus comprised of young people on the streets with no defined objectives. Such a group engages in a great deal of experimental behaviour, some of which is likely to violate the legal norms of the larger society.

The following section therefore examines the involvement of learners in gangs and gang activities and learners' delinquent behaviour in the school environment, in order to establish whether a causal relationship exists.

The data in the current study indicates that a considerable percentage (13.7%) of learners currently belong to a gang or are involved in gang activities. Even though this might seem like a low percentage, the variable in question is serious in nature. The phenomenon of juveniles who have a sense of belonging in a criminal gang is a severe problem in the school environment. This statement, as well as findings from literature, is supported by the fact that, statistically, significant relationships emerged between a range of violence-related behaviours and learners' involvement in gangs and/or gang activities. The findings are reported in the following table.

Table 4.5: Current involvement in gang/gang activities and Violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	CURRENTLY PART OF A GANG/INVOLVED IN GANG ACTIVITIES			CHI-SQUARED TEST		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
PUNCHED/HIT A LEARNER						
Yes	50	216	266			
Total %	9.5	41.2	50.8			
Row %	18.8	81.2				
Column %	69.4	47.8				
No	22	236	258			
Total %	4.2	45.0	49.2			
Row %	8.5	91.5				
Column %	30.6	52.2				
Total	72	452	524			
	13.7	86.3	100.0	11.654	1	.001
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	12	16	28			
Total %	2.3	3.1	5.4			
Row %	42.9	57.1				
Column %	16.9	3.6				
No	59	430	489			
Total %	11.4	83.2	94.6			
Row %	12.1	87.9				
Column %	83.1	96.4				
Total	71	446	517			
	13.7	86.3	100.0	21.195	1	.000
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	44	182	226			
Total %	8.6	35.4	44.0			
Row %	19.5	80.5				
Column %	92.9	41.0				
No	26	262	288			
Total %	5.1	51.0	56.0			
Row %	9.0	91.0				
Column%	37.1	59.0				
Total	70	444	514			
	13.6	86.4	100.0	11.735	1	.001
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	41	82	123			
Total %	8.1	16.1	24.2			
Row %	33.3	66.7				
Column %	60.3	18.6				
No	27	331	358			
Total %	5.3	65.2	70.5			
Row %	7.5	92.5				
Column%	39.7	75.2				
Total	68	440	508			
	13.4	86.6	100.0	55.699	1	.000

The data in Table 4.5 depicts statistically significant relationships on the 0.1% level between learners who are involved in gangs and punched/hit and verbally abused another learner. In addition, statistically highly significant relationships were found between learners who are currently part of a gang or involved in gang activities and those who have tried to kill another learner or have threatened another learner with violence. These findings show that learners who are currently part of a gang or involved in gang activities are highly likely to: punch/hit another learner; try to kill another learner; verbally abuse another learner; and threaten another learner with violence.

The data in Table 4.6 below also depicts a statistically highly significant (p = .000) relationship between learners who have committed a violent act at school and learners who are involved in a gang or gang activities.

Table 4.6: Violent behaviour and current involvement in gangs and gang activities

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL	CURRENTLY PART OF A GANG/INVOLVED IN GANG ACTIVITIES		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	65 12.4% 17.2 91.5	314 60.0% 82.8 69.5	379 72.5%
No	6 1.1% 4.2 8.5	138 26.4% 95.8 30.5	144 27.5%
TOTAL	71 13.6%	452 86.4%	523 100.0%

X^2 = 14.994; df = 1; p = .000

According to the data in Table 4.6, in relation to being part of a gang or involved in gang activities, more learners commit acts of violence at school. Similar findings pertaining to the relationship between gang activity and school violence were recorded by Peterson et al. (1998:349), where 80.5% of the respondents identified 'gang activities' as a perceived cause of school violence. While researching school violence in 12 states located across the United States of America, Peterson et al. (1998:349) identified 'gang activities' as one of the top ten perceived causes of school violence, which highlights the strong relationship between these two variables.

De Wet (2003:92) examined the influence of gangs on the school environment in schools located in black townships and villages in the Eastern Cape. More than half (55.35%) of the respondents reported that involvement in gangs and gang activities could be a possible cause of school violence. From both the literature and empirical data it may be noted that the involvement in gangs and gang activities contributes to the levels of violence in schools, nationally and abroad.

In the section that follows (section 5.2.3), the relationship between learners who carry weapons to school and their actual violent behaviour will be discussed. Interestingly, a statistically highly significant ($p = .000$) relationship was found between learners who are currently involved in a gang or gang activities and learners who carry a weapon to school.

Table 4.7: Learners who carry a weapon to school and current involvement in gangs and gang activities

CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL	CURRENTLY PART OF A GANG/INVOLVED IN GANG ACTIVITIES		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	19 3.7 31.7 27.1	41 7.9 68.3 9.1	60 11.6
No	51 9.8 11.1 72.9	408 78.6 88.9 90.9	459 88.4
TOTAL	70 13.5	449 86.5	519 100.0

X^2 = 19.215; df = 1; p = .000

From the data in Table 4.7 one may note that gangs in the school environment not only directly increase the levels of violence in schools, but also affect learners' choices when considering taking weapons to school. If taking weapons to school leads to higher levels of violence in schools, gangs also play a secondary role in contributing to school violence. In addition, the following section will offer a conclusion as to whether the prevalence of weapons in schools does cause school violence.

4.2.3 Weapons and Guns

The prevalence of weapons and guns at schools is the next possible cause of school violence, as identified in the literature. When learners do carry a weapon to school, it can be assumed that this weapon may at some time be used in a violent act, whether for acting violently or reacting in defence to a violent situation.

Burton (2008a:48) supports this statement by noting:

> *The availability of weapons at school exacerbates an already violent environment. This is made even worse by the fact that it is not just 'formal' weapons that are available but also everyday utensils and stationery that can, and regularly are, turned into weapons.*

Maree (2000:4) affirms this by identifying pupils who carry guns and other weapons to school as one of the main causes of crime in South African schools. Various other researchers (as cited in De Wet, 2003:93) established the relative availability of firearms as an important contributing factor to violence in schools. Due to the increasing occurrence of violent crimes in South African schools in the period leading up to 1999, the then Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, declared schools as arms-free zones (as cited in De Wet, 2003:93). In practice this implies that any person with a firearm in his/her possession in the school environment, commits a criminal offence, as stipulated by the South African Firearms Control Act 34 of 2000, sections 1 to 3 (De Wet, 2003:93).

It seems however that learners are reluctant to adhere to interventions that aim to reduce the prevalence of weapons and guns in schools. This view is reinforced by findings published by Willert (2002:8). In a focus group with 11 American high school learners, Willert found that only four of these learners believed they would report a fellow learner who brought a large knife to school. In addition, learners are not only evasive in reporting weapons on school grounds, but they also do not see the need to refrain from carrying weapons to school. Both the literature and empirical data depict considerable frequencies of learners who themselves carry weapons to school, as well as significant relationships between the latter and violence-related behaviour.

60 learners (11.5%) in the current study indicated that they carry a weapon to school. This may seem like a low percentage, but it can in fact have fatal consequences, compared to other instances of school violence where weapons are not involved. The learners in the current study gave various reasons as to why they carry a weapon to school. These included, amongst others, the need to protect themselves; the need to gain respect; and their modelling of behaviour by parents. Similar findings were recorded by De Wet (2003:20) where 13.01% of the respondents in that study indicated that learners go to school armed every day. Research done by Burton (2008a:47), where 30.7% of secondary school learners reported they know someone who brings guns, knives etcetera to school, supports the notion that there is a high prevalence of weapons in South African schools. According to Shafii and Shafii (2003:156), in the United States of America 90,000 students take guns to schools on a daily basis. This indicates a large quantity of weapons in American schools. It can thus be assumed that weapon carrying behaviour amongst learners is a global problem.

The literature indicates not only do learners take weapons to school, but that educators also feel the need to arm themselves when going to school. In a study undertaken on 215 educators in the Eastern Cape, 3.72% indicated that they go to school armed 'most of the time' while 11.16% indicated 'sometimes'. All of these educators identified 'self-protection' as the reason for carrying a weapon to school (De Wet, 2003:96).

No matter what the frequencies and reasons for weapons on school grounds might be, the question arises: to what extent does the prevalence of weapons and guns affect the levels of violence in the school environment? According to the data in Table 4.8 the answer may be clear; learners who carry a weapon to school will most likely become engaged in an incident of school violence.

Table 4.8: Violent behaviour and carry a weapon to school

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	60 11.5 15.9 100.0	318 61.2 84.1 69.1	378 72.7
No	0 0 0 0	142 27.3 100.0 30.9	142 27.3
TOTAL	60 11.5	460 88.5	520 100.0

X^2 = 25.480; df = 1; p = .000

The data in Table 4.8 depicts that all the learners who indicated they carry a weapon to school have also indicated that they have at some occasion behaved violently in the school environment. The relationship between these two variables is statistically highly significant (p = .000). Consequently it may be concluded that carrying a weapon to school may lead to school violence. Research by De Wet (2003:96) reinforces this result, as more than half (58.14%) of the respondents reported the noteworthy strong, causal relationship between weapons and firearms on school premises and incidents of school violence.

Table 4.8 examined the relationship between learners who carry weapons to school and their indication of having acted violently at school. In order to establish whether weapons are used at schools for specific acts of violence, the relationships between weapons and a range of violence-related behaviours were examined. The findings are recorded in Table 4.9.

Table 4.9: Learners who carry a weapon to school and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	Df	p
PUNCHED/HIT A LEARNER						
Yes	42	223	265			
Total %	8.1	42.8	50.9			
Row %	15.8	84.2				
Column %	72.4	48.2				
No	16	240	256			
Total %	3.1	46.1	49.1			
Row %	6.3	93.7				
Column %	27.6	51.8				
Total	58	463	521			
	11.1	88.9	100.0	12.128	1	.000
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	31	166	197			
Total %	6.0	32.4	38.4			
Row %	15.7	84.3				
Column %	55.4	36.3				
No	25	291	316			
Total %	4.9	56.7	61.6			
Row %	7.9	92.1				
Column %	44.6	63.7				
Total	56	457	513			
	10.9	89.1	100.0	7.640	1	.006
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	9	19	28			
Total %	1.7	3.7	5.4			
Row %	32.1	67.9				
Column %	16.4	4.1				
No	46	442	488			
Total %	8.9	85.7	94.6			
Row %	9.4	90.6				
Column %	83.6	95.9				
Total	55	461	516			
	10.7	89.3	100.0	14.350	1	.000
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	35	191	226			
Total %	6.8	37.4	44.2			
Row %	15.5	84.5				
Column%	61.4	42.1				
No	22	263	285			
Total %	4.3	51.5	55.8			
Row %	7.7	92.3				
Column %	38.6	57.9				
Total	57	454	511			
	11.2	88.8	100.0	7.674	1	.006

Table 4.9 (cont.): Learners who carry a weapon to school and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	Df	p
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE	27	95	122			
Yes	5.3	18.7	24.0			
Total %	22.1	77.9				
Row %	47.4	21.1				
Column%						
	30	356	386			
No	5.9	70.1	76.0			
Total %	7.8	92.2				
Row %	52.6	78.9				
Column %						
	57	451	508			
Total	11.2	88.8	100.0	19.187	1	.000

The data in Table 4.9 illustrates statistically highly significant relationships between learners who carry a gun to school and learners who have punched/hit, tried to kill or threatened another learner with violence. Furthermore, statistically significant relationships on the 1% level were found between learners who carry weapons to school and learners who have kicked and verbally abused another learner. There is consequently no doubt that learners who are given the opportunity to bring a weapon onto the school premises may use it to act violently toward fellow classmates.

The relationship between weapons, guns and violence on school grounds is proven to be statistically significant and revealing. In addition, the readily availability of these weapons and guns is just as much a cause for concern. Burton (2008a:48) found that 31.2% of learners in secondary schools reported it to be easy to obtain a knife at school while 7.5% reported it was easy to acquire a gun at school.

The prevalence and impact of weapons in the school environment not only contributes to violence in South African schools since these two variables were also found to be related to each other in school violence surveys abroad.

Petersen et al. (1998:349) established the availability of weapons at school to be on the list of top ten perceived causes of school violence. A 2002 survey on school violence carried out in Brazil revealed that as much as 70% of the learners who have, or have had, a firearm said they have used it at school (as cited in Burton, 2008a:48). Senator John McCain (as cited in Shafii & Shafii, 2003:156) reports that more than 1,000,000 children and adolescents in the United States of America daily have access to unlocked guns in their homes.

In conclusion, both literature and empirical data confirm the relationship between weapons, guns and violent behaviour in the school environment. Weapons and guns are considerably prevalent in South African schools, as well as in schools abroad. In addition, it is demonstrated that these occurrences may most likely lead to instances of school violence.

4.2.4 Intolerance towards Diversity

Diversity is the understanding and acceptance that people are different from one another in numerous ways (Anonymous, n.d.(a): para.1). These differences amongst others include the following:

- Race;
- Ethnicity;
- Gender;
- Sexual orientation;
- Socio-economic status;
- Age;
- Physical abilities;
- Religious beliefs; and
- Political beliefs or other ideologies.

Diversity also includes moving beyond understanding and accepting these differences by embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions contained within individuals (Anonymous, n.d.(a): para.1).

In addition, the term 'intolerant' refers to the stance of people who are unwilling to endure, accept or respect differences in opinions, practices, beliefs, race, ethnicity or social background, to name a few. These people are thus opposed to the inclusion or participation of those different from themselves (The Free Dictionary, n.d.: para.1).

For the purpose of this study the intolerance of learners towards diversity therefore included any indication of a lack of acceptance which they may display towards people of other race, religion and sexual orientation. Even though learners were only probed in terms of these three variables, the findings have been used to provide the reader with a generalized idea of the intolerance learners demonstrate towards people who are different from them.

Based on literature and his own analysis, Maree (2000:4) identified the intolerance of learners towards people of other races, religions, cultures and sexual orientation as some of the main causes of crime in South African schools. The inclusion of this variable is valuable and contemporary. Racism, homophobia, sectarianism, and religious intolerance are frequent phenomena in the rainbow nation, which subsequently spills over from households and neighbourhoods to the school environment. These variables are often mentioned in the explanation of crime in the South African context and are thus important in the explanation of violence in such schools.

Learners in this study reported a reasonably high tolerance towards people of other races, religions, and sexual orientation. There were however many

learners who have indicated that they only accept people of **some** races and religions, or **some** people with different sexual orientation. This could indicate certain levels of intolerance toward diversity. The learners' answers on the related questions to diversity are displayed in Table 4.10.

Table 4.10: Percentages of learners' indications of tolerance toward certain diversity variables

DO YOU ACCEPT PEOPLE OF OTHER ....?	Yes		No		Some of them		Missing values		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	F	%
Race	326	61.3	31	5.8	169	31.8	6	1.1	532	100
Religion	380	71.5	23	4.3	123	23.1	6	1.1	532	100
Sexual orientation	257	48.3	123	23.1	137	25.8	15	2.8	532	100

N=532

According to the data in Table 4.10 the majority of learners accept people of another race (61.3%) and religion (71.5%). Just less than half of the learners (48.3%) answered affirmatively when asked whether they accept people of other sexual orientation. Even though substantial percentages of learners indicated they only accept some people whose race (31.8%), religion (23.1%) or sexual orientation (25.8%) differs from their own, the data in Table 4.10 indicates high levels of tolerance towards diversity amongst learners. These levels of tolerance are most likely due to current interventions whereby South African youth are motivated and encouraged to accept all people in the rainbow nation. Owing to the given history of South Africa, tolerance and acceptance of diversity is almost forced on citizens.

In terms of the learners' indications of high levels of tolerance towards diversity it might seem that this variable is not contributing to school violence to such a large extent. However, the empirical research uncovers a different finding. The findings pertaining to the variables in question are recorded in Tables 4.11 to 4.13.

Table 4.11: Learners who accept people of other races and violent behaviour

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	ACCEPT PEOPLE OF OTHER RACES			
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	Some of them	TOTAL
Yes	235 45.0 62.2 72.1	20 3.8 5.3 64.5	123 23.6 32.5 74.5	378 72.4
No	91 17.4 63.2 27.9	11 2.1 7.6 35.5	42 8.0 29.2 25.5	144 27.6
TOTAL	326 62.5	31 5.9	165 31.6	522 100.0

X^2 = 11.568; df = 2; p = .003

Table 4.12: Learners who accept people of other religion and violent behaviour

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	ACCEPT PEOPLE OF OTHER RELIGIONS			
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	Some of them	TOTAL
Yes	280 53.6 74.5 73.7	9 1.7 2.4 39.1	87 16.7 23.1 73.1	376 72.0
No	100 19.2 68.5 26.3	14 2.7 9.6 60.9	32 6.1 21.9 26.9	146 28.0
TOTAL	380 72.8	23 4.4	119 22.8	522 100.0

X^2 = 12.942; df = 2; p = .002

Table 4.13: Learners who accept people of other sexual orientation and violent behaviour

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	ACCEPT PEOPLE OF OTHER SEXUAL ORIENTATION			
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	Some of them	TOTAL
Yes	203 39.5 54.9 79.3	74 14.4 20.0 60.7	93 18.1 25.1 68.4	370 72.0
No	53 10.3 36.8 20.7	48 9.3 33.3 39.3	43 8.4 29.9 31.6	144 28.0
TOTAL	256 49.8	122 23.7	136 26.5	514 100.0

X^2 = 15.427; df = 2; p = .000

In examining the variables in question in Tables 4.11 to 4.13 and the relationship between violent behaviour at school and intolerance towards diversity, the following findings were reached:

- Of the 5.9 % of learners who indicated they do not accept people of other race, 64.5% have acted violently at school; and of the 31.6% of learners who have indicated they accept people of only some races, 74.5% have acted violently there;

- Of the 4.4 % of learners who indicated they do not accept people of other religion, 39.1% have acted violently at school; and of the 22.8% of learners who have indicated they accept people of only some religions, 73.1% have acted violently at school; and

- Of the 23.7 % of learners who indicated they do not accept people of other sexual orientation, 60.7% have acted violently at school; and of the 26.5% of learners who have indicated they accept only some

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people of other sexual orientation, 68.4% have acted violently at school.

Even though the majority of learners have indicated that they accept living amongst people who are different in numerous ways, some learners are intolerant of diversity. The research findings depicts that for these learners, intolerance towards diversity might play a noteworthy role in their violent behaviour at school. This finding is supported by the statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners' indication of acceptance towards people of other races and religions respectively and violent behaviour at school. In addition, a statistically highly significant relationship was found between learners' indication of their acceptance towards people of other sexual orientation and violent behaviour in the school environment.

4.2.5 Alcohol and Drug Abuse

The selling of alcohol to persons under the age of 18 years, as well as the use of alcohol by minors, are criminal offences in South Africa. In addition, not only in South Africa, but worldwide laws, prohibiting the possession, trade and use of certain drugs, exist. Thus, whether using alcohol or drugs, learners commit criminal offences when engaging in any of these behaviours. In addition, a learner from a school in Lesotho (as cited in De Wet, 2003:20) furnished an example of the problems which the use of drugs and alcohol can cause in the school environment:

> *The intoxicated learner tried to attack the teacher with a knife. There are students who are dagga sellers. They disobey any school rules.*

Maree (2000:4) and Petersen et al. (1998:349) emphasize the problem caused by alcohol and drug abuse in the school environment, by listing this variable as one of the top ten causes of violence in schools.

Both the literature and empirical data suggest that alcohol and drug abuse is prevalent amongst learners in South African schools. Daniels (2007) reinforces this statement by affirming that youth in South Africa experiment with drugs more than ever and that this appears to be a common occurrence throughout the various races, cultures and economic sectors in our society. Barlow & Ferdinand (1992:99) state that children tend to become involved with alcohol and drugs at an early age, maintaining these habits in their late teens and early twenties. This adds to the literature which indicates that the use of alcohol and drugs amongst school-going youth is prevalent and of concern.

Substantial percentages of learners in the current survey indicated that they use alcohol (19.8%) and drugs (3.6%). In the literature the prevalence of learners' alcohol and drug abuse also seems notably high. In one of the most recent studies undertaken into violence in South African schools, more than one in three (34.5%) of the learners in secondary schools indicated that they knew fellow classmates who came to school drunk while 32.4% of these learners reported knowing learners who come to school high on drugs (Burton, 2008a:46). Similar findings were revealed by Steyn and Naicker (2007:15), where more than half (52.60%) of the respondents pointed out that they agree to fellow classmates bringing drugs, alcohol and weapons to school. More than a fifth (22.68%) of learners in schools in Lesotho reported that their fellow classmates use drugs on a daily basis (De Wet, 2006:20).

It should also be said that, in examining the variable of drug and alcohol abuse in the school environment, the researcher does not necessarily refer to substance abuse on the school premises, but rather to the prevalence of this

variable amongst learners who are attending school. Thus, whether learners use substances on the school grounds or whether they arrive at school already intoxicated, the variable is present, which might increase the levels of violence in schools. In addition, Burton (2008a:47) found alcohol and drugs to be readily available at schools, as more than one in ten (respectively 10.5% and 10.1%) of learners indicated that it was easy to obtain alcohol and drugs at school. This may be due to learners who bring these substances to school themselves, but according to Burton (2008a:46) learners obtain substances from subjects known as 'Merchants', who sit in close proximity to the school grounds, preying on vulnerable school children, hawking drugs and alcohol to these victims during and after school hours.

As the causes of school violence are examined in this study, it is appropriate to look at the relationship between alcohol and drug abuse, and school violence. The resulting findings are contained in Tables 4.14 and 4.15.

Table 4.14: Violent behaviour and alcohol consumption

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	CONSUME ALCOHOL		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	92 17.7 24.5 89.3	283 54.5 75.5 68.0	375 72.3
No	11 2.1 7.6 10.7	133 25.6 92.4 32.0	144 27.7
TOTAL	103 19.8	416 80.2	519 100.0

X^2 = 18.669; df = 1; p = .000

The data in Table 4.14 depicts a statistically highly significant (p = .000) relationship between learners who have acted violently at school on some occasion and those who consume alcohol. The above table shows that of those learners (19.8%) who indicated they consume alcohol 89.3% acted violently at school. In addition, of those (80.2%) who do not consume alcohol 68.0% also indicated they have acted violently at school. There is however a noteworthy difference in these two percentages (89.3% and 68.0%) and it can be assumed alcohol consumption plays some role in violent behaviour amongst learners.

Booyens et al. (2008:30) state that drug users are particularly crime prone. In other words, the increasing use of drugs leads to greater levels of crime.

Table 4.15: Violent behaviour and drug usage

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	USE DRUGS		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	17 3.2 4.5 89.5	362 68.8 95.5 71.4	379 72.1
No	2 .4 1.4 10.5	145 27.6 98.6 28.6	147 27.9
TOTAL	19 3.6	507 96.4	526 100.0

X^2 = 2.971; df = 1; p = .085

The data in Table 4.15 does not reflect a statistically significant relationship between learners' violent behaviour and drug abuse. However, the chi-square reading might be misleading, owing to the low figures in some of the cells. By

conducting probability estimation on the figures in the above table, it can be seen that there is an important relationship between the two variables in question. The following calculation (probability estimation) supports the above statement:

17/2 = 8.5   and   362/145 = 2.49

Probability: 8.5/2.49 = 3.41.

Thus, in relation to using drugs, more learners commit acts of violence at school. The researcher is subsequently of the opinion that these two variables tend to be related and warrant discussion. In addition, statistically significant relationships were found between the variables of drug usage and a range of violence-related behaviours at school. The findings in this respect are displayed in Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16: Drug usage and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	USE DRUGS			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	15	183	198			
Total %	2.9	35.3	38.2			
Row %	7.6	92.4				
Column %	88.2	36.5				
No	2	319	321			
Total %	.4	61.5	61.8			
Row %	.6	99.4				
Column %	11.8	63.5				
Total	17	502	519			
	3.3	96.7	100.0	18.685	1	.000
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	7	21	28			
Total %	1.3	4.0	5.4			
Row %	25.0	75.0				
Column%	43.8	4.2				
No	9	484	493			
Total %	1.7	92.9	94.6			
Row %	1.8	98.2				
Column %	56.2	95.8				
Total	16	505	521			
	3.1	96.9	100.0	47.802	1	.000
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	12	213	225			
Total %	2.3	41.2	43.5			
Row %	5.3	94.7				
Column %	70.6	42.6				
No	5	287	292			
Total %	1.0	55.5	56.5			
Row %	1.7	98.3				
Column %	29.4	57.4				
Total	17	500	517			
	3.3	96.7	100.0	5.240	1	.002
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	9	114	123			
Total %	1.8	22.2	24.0			
Row %	7.3	92.7				
Column %	60.0	22.9				
No	6	384	390			
Total %	1.2	74.9	76.0			
Row %	1.5	98.5				
Column %	40.0	77.1				
Total	15	498	513			
	2.9	97.1	100.0	11.001	1	.001

Table 4.16 (cont.): Drug usage and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	USE DRUGS			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	10	49	59			
Total %	1.9	9.4	11.3			
Row %	16.9	83.1				
Column %	55.6	9.7				
No	8	455	463			
Total %	1.5	87.2	88.7			
Row %	1.7	98.3				
Column %	44.4	90.3				
Total	18	504	522			
	3.4	96.6	100.0	36.417	1	.000

The data in the abovementioned table depicts statistically highly significant relationships between learners who use drugs and learners who have kicked and tried to kill another learner, as well as those learners who carry a weapon to school. Additionally, a statistically significant relationship on the 1% was found between learners who use drugs and have verbally abused another learners and a statistically significant relationship on the 0.1% levels between learners who use drugs and those who have threatened another learner with violence.

The data in Table 4.16 depicts noteworthy findings pertaining to drug usage and types of violent behaviour in the school environment. These findings include, of the 3.6% learners who reported they use drugs 88.2% have kicked another learner, 43.8% have tried to kill another learner, 70.6% verbally abused another learner, 60.0% have threatened another learner with violence, and 55.6% have indicated they carry a weapon to school. These findings indicate that learners who use drugs are likely to: kick other learners; try to kill other learners; verbally abuse other learners; threaten other learners with violence; and carry a weapon to school.

In examining the relationship between learners who consume alcohol and a range of violence-related behaviours at school, statistically significant

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relationships were found. The ensuing findings are displayed in the following table.

Table 4.17: Alcohol consumption and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	CONSUME ALCOHOL			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	63	202	265			
Total %	12.1	39.9	51.1			
Row %	23.8	76.2				
Column %	61.2	48.6				
No	40	214	254			
Total %	7.7	41.2	48.9			
Row %	15.7	84.5				
Column %	38.8	51.4				
Total	103	416	519			
	19.8	80.2	100.0	5.251	1	.002
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	50	144	194			
Total %	9.8	28.2	38.0			
Row %	25.8	74.2				
Column %	49.5	35.1				
No	51	266	317			
Total %	10.0	52.1	62.0			
Row %	16.1	83.9				
Column %	50.5	64.9				
Total	101	410	511			
	19.8	80.2	100.0	7.188	1	.008
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	65	160	225			
Total %	12.7	31.3	44.0			
Row %	28.9	71.1				
Column %	64.4	39.0				
No	36	250	286			
Total %	7.0	48.9	56.0			
Row %	12.6	87.4				
Column %	35.6	61.0				
Total	101	410	511			
	19.8	80.2	100.0	21.102	1	.000
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	40	81	121			
Total %	7.9	16.0	24.0			
Row %	33.1	66.9				
Column %	40.0	20.0				
No	60	324	384			
Total %	11.9	64.2	76.0			
Row %	15.6	84.4				
Column %	60.0	80.0				
Total	100	405	505			
	19.8	80.2	100.0	17.607	1	.000

Table 4.17 (cont.): Alcohol consumption and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	CONSUME ALCOHOL			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	29	30	59			
Total %	5.6	5.8	11.5			
Row %	49.2	50.8				
Column %	28.4	7.3				
No	73	382	455			
Total %	14.2	74.3	88.5			
Row %	16.0	84.0				
Column %	71.6	92.7				
Total	102	412	514			
	19.8	80.2	100.0	35.992	1	.000

The data in the abovementioned table depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who consume alcohol and those who have punched/hit and kicked another learner. Statistically highly significant relationships were found between learners who consume alcohol and learners who have verbally abused or threatened another learner with violence, as well as those who carry a weapon to school.

Important findings depicted in Table 4.17 include, of those learners (19.8%) who consumes alcohol 61.2% punched/hit another learner, 49.5% kicked another learner, 64.4% verbally abused another learner, 40.0% threatened another learner with violence, and 28.4% carry a weapon to school. From the data in Table 4.17 it seems learners who consume alcohol are likely to: punch/hit another learner; kick another learner; verbally abuse another learner; threaten another learner with violence; and carry a weapon to school.

From the above it can be concluded that drug and alcohol consumption do cause and contribute to school violence. In both instances, drug and alcohol abuse, relationships were proven between all types of violence, whether aggressive (e.g. punching and kicking) or passive (e.g. verbal abuse). These findings correspond with conclusions arrived at by De Wet (2003:96), who identified the abuse of drugs and alcohol as the most important cause of

learner violence. Of the respondents, 68.73% either agreed or fully agreed that the abuse of drugs and alcohol is a cause of school violence (De Wet, 2003:96). In a study carried out in the United States of America, 89.7% of respondents identified drug and alcohol abuse by learners as one of the main causes of school violence (Petersen et al., 1998:349).

In examining the prevalence of drug and alcohol abuse in the school environment, all data depicts widespread occurrences of substance abuse amongst school-going youth worldwide. The literature and empirical data pertaining to the impact of drug and alcohol abuse on the school environment proved that this variable may cause school violence. Violent behaviour amongst intoxicated youth is widespread. A causal relationship between substance abuse and school violence has been identified in surveys all over the world, though it should also be noted that not all substances cause violent behaviour. The researcher did however not probe the learners on the specific drugs they use, as this was not the focus of this study. For the purpose of this study it was only important to establish the relationship between alcohol and drug abuse amongst the respondents and violent behaviour at school, which proved to be statistically significant.

4.2.6 Role Models and Heroes

Reber and Reber (2001:441) define a 'role model' as "*An ideal, a standard, an example set up as worthy of imitation or copying*". Reber and Reber (2001:441) add that the concept of a role model plays an important role in the socialization of youth, as this process takes place through the imitation of the behaviour of a role model. In history 'heroes' were seen as men with great courage and strength, or individuals with special talent in scarce skills. Heroes are admired by their followers, who express to these heroes only devotion and respect. If role models and heroes no longer reflect the values and norms of society, but instead portray those of criminals and villains, how are the lives

and behaviour of our youth influenced? As a father and as part of the primary source of socialization (i.e. the family), Brian Moylan (Moylan, 2008) writes "*Violent superhero movies do young children no favours*".

Researchers, such as Maree (2000) and Burton (2008a), agree with the fact that the lack of positive role models and the phenomenon of heroes characterised by aggressiveness, danger and criminality, contribute to the levels of violence in schools. Maree (2000:4) supports this statement by identifying "boys who try to emulate the feats of their heroes, who often turn out to be criminals or gang leaders" as one of the main causes of violence in South African schools. Burton (2008a:65) supports the importance of positive role models in the lives of the youth in stating that the presence of adequate role models is a key variable in predicting antisocial behaviour.

By examining the characteristics of learners' heroes and role models, as identified by these respondents, large percentages of learners characterised their heroes as positive (66.2%), loving (78.5%) and caring (66.5%). Nonetheless, considerable percentages of the learners reported their heroes as everything but positive and "good". The characteristics of learners' role models and heroes are displayed in Table 4.18.

Table 4.18: Characteristics of learners/ role models and heroes

	Yes		No		Missing values		Total	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
Do you have a role model/hero?	445	83.7	82	15.4	5	.9	532	100.0
Is your hero aggressive?	72	13.5	459	86.3	1	.2	532	100.0
Is your hero dangerous?	40	7.5	489	91.9	3	.6	532	100.0
Is your hero a gang leader?	40	7.5	491	92.3	1	.2	532	100.0
Is your hero a criminal?	20	3.8	511	96.0	1	.2	532	100.0
Is your hero positive?	352	66.2	179	33.6	1	.2	532	100.0
Is your hero loving?	418	78.5	112	21.1	2	.4	532	100.0
Is your hero caring?	354	66.5	177	33.3	1	.2	532	100.0
Is your hero a law-abiding citizen?	148	27.8	383	72.0	1	.2	532	100.0

N = 532

Table 4.18 depicts that even though the majority of learners identified good qualities in their heroes, not even a third of the learners (27.8%) classified their role models as law-abiding citizens. This means that 72.0% of the learners' role models and heroes do not conduct their behaviour according to South African laws. If learners subsequently imitate and model the behaviour of their heroes, the data in Table 4.18 points to a great deal of illegal behaviour amongst learners.

As earlier noted, 13.7% of the learners reported currently being involved in a gang and gang activities. The data in Table 4.18 corresponds with this finding, because a considerable percentage of learners reported their role model or hero to be a gang leader. This emphasizes the role gangs play in some of these learners' lives. Does this however influence the levels of violence in the school environment? In examining the relationship between learners' role models and heroes (with anti-social traits), statistically significant relationships were found. The findings hereof are displayed in Tables 4.19 to 22.

Table 4.19: Aggressive role models/heroes and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HERO/ROLE MODEL IS AGGRESSIVE			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	35	163	198			
Total %	6.7	31.3	38.1			
Row %	17.7	82.3				
Column %	48.6	36.4				
No	37	285	322			
Total %	7.1	54.8	61.0			
Row %	14.5	88.5				
Column %	51.4	63.6				
Total	72	448	520			
	13.8	86.2	100.0	3.933	1	.047
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	8	20	28			
Total %	1.5	3.8	5.4			
Row %	28.6	71.4				
Column %	11.1	4.4				
No	64	430	494			
Total %	12.3	82.4	94.6			
Row %	13.0	87.0				
Column %	88.9	95.6				
Total	72	450	522			
	13.8	86.2	100.0	5.434	1	.020
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	17	42	59			
Total %	3.3	8.0	11.3			
Row %	28.8	71.2				
Column %	23.9	9.3				
No	54	410	464			
Total %	10.3	78.4	88.7			
Row %	11.6	88.4				
Column %	76.1	90.7				
Total	71	452	523			
	13.6	86.4	100.0	13.161	1	.000

The data in Table 4.19 depicts, statistically, a highly significant relationship between learners who indicated their role models and heroes to be **aggressive** and learners who carry a weapon to school. In addition, statistically significant relationships on the 5% level are depicted between learners who indicated their role models to be **aggressive** and learners who have kicked or tried to kill another learner.

The impact of aggressive role models on learners' behaviour can be seen in the findings showed in Table 4.19. For example, of the 13.8% of learners who

indicated their role model/hero is aggressive, 11.1% have tried to kill another learner and 23.9% carry a weapon to school. When these percentages are compared by the 4.4% and 9.3% of learners who have tried to kill another learner or carry a weapon to school (respectively), but did not characterise their role model/hero as aggressive, it seems an aggressive role model/hero play some role in the increased levels of violence amongst school-going youth.

Table 4.20: Dangerous role models/heroes and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HERO/ROLE MODEL IS DANGEROUS			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	6	22	28			
Total %	1.2	4.2	5.4			
Row %	21.4	78.6				
Column %	15.8	4.6				
No	32	460	492			
Total %	6.2	88.5	94.6			
Row %	6.5	93.5				
Column %	84.2	95.4				
Total	38	482	520			
	7.3	92.7	100.0	8.712	1	.003
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	16	106	122			
Total %	3.1	20.7	23.8			
Row %	13.1	86.9				
Column %	42.1	22.4				
No	22	368	390			
Total %	4.3	71.9	76.2			
Row %	5.6	94.4				
Column %	57.9	77.6				
Total	38	474	512			
	7.4	92.6	100.0	7.555	1	.006
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	12	47	59			
Total %	2.3	9.8	11.3			
Row %	20.3	79.7				
Column %	30.8	9.8				
No	27	435	462			
Total %	5.2	83.5	88.7			
Row %	5.8	94.2				
Column %	69.2	90.2				
Total	39	482	521			
	7.5	92.5	100.0	15.873	1	.000

The data in Table 4.20 depicts a statistically highly significant relationship between learners who indicated their role models and heroes to be **dangerous** and learners who carry a weapon to school. Table 4.20 also depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who indicated their role models/heroes to be **dangerous** and learners who have tried to kill or threatened another learner with violence. The analysis of the variables in question indicated learners who have role models and heroes who are dangerous may likely engage in violent behaviour at school, such as trying to kill another learner, threaten another learner with violence and carry a weapon to school.

The data in table 4.20 also shows that learners who idolise people, who are dangerous, may engage in risky behaviour that may also threaten others. This assumption is supported by the finding that noteworthy percentages of those learners (7.5%) who characterised their role models/heroes as dangerous threatens other learners with violence (42.1%) or carry a weapon to school (30.8%). The assumption can be made that these learners may want to act in a similar manner than their role models or heroes, who are dangerous and causes fear.

Table 4.21: Gang leaders as role models/heroes and learners who tried to kill another learner

TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER	HERO/ROLE MODEL IS A GANG LEADER		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	5 1.0 17.9 12.8	23 4.4 82.1 4.8	28 5.4
No	34 6.5 6.9 87.2	460 88.1 93.1 95.2	494 94.6
TOTAL	39 7.5	483 92.5	522 100.0

X^2 = 4.617; df = 1; p = .032

The data in Table 4.21 depict a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between learners who indicated their role models and heroes as **gang leaders** and learners who have tried to kill another learner.

Table 4.22: Criminals as role models/heroes and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HERO/ROLE MODEL IS A CRIMINAL			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	13	185	198			
Total %	2.5	35.6	38.1			
Row %	6.6	93.4				
Column %	65.0	37.0				
No	7	315	322			
Total %	1.3	60.6	61.9			
Row %	2.2	97.8				
Column %	35.0	63.0				
Total	20	500	520			
	3.8	96.2	100.0	6.394	1	.011
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	3	25	28			
Total %	.6	4.8	5.4			
Row %	10.7	89.3				
Column %	15.0	5.0				
No	17	477	494			
Total %	3.3	91.4	94.6			
Row %	3.4	96.6				
Column %	85.0	95.0				
Total	20	502	522			
	3.8	96.2	100.0	3.804	1	.051
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	9	114	123			
Total %	1.8	22.2	23.9			
Row %	7.3	92.7				
Column %	56.3	22.9				
No	7	384	391			
Total %	1.4	74.7	76.1			
Row %	1.8	98.2				
Column %	43.8	77.1				
Total	16	498	514			
	3.1	96.9	100.0	9.476	1	.002
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	7	52	59			
Total %	1.3	9.9	11.3			
Row %	11.9	88.1				
Column %	35.0	10.3				
No	13	451	464			
Total %	2.5	86.2	88.7			
Row %	2.8	97.2				
Column %	65.0	89.7				
Total	20	503	523			
	3.8	96.2	100.0	11.689	1	.001

The data in Table 4.22 depict the following statistically significant relationships between learners who indicated their role models and heroes as **criminals**

and learners who have displayed a range of violence-related behaviours at school:

- A statistically significant relationship on the 0.1% level was found between learners who indicated their role models/heroes as criminals and those who carry a weapon to school;

- A statistically significant relationship on the 1% level was found between learners who indicated their role models/heroes as criminals and those who have threatened another learner with violence; and

- Statistically significant relationships on the 5% level were found between learners who indicated their role models/heroes as criminals and those who have kicked and tried to kill another learner.

Additional important findings showed in Table 4.22 include that of those learners (3.8%) who reported their role model/hero is a criminal 65.0% have kicked another learner, 56.5% have threatened another learner with violence, and 35.0% carry a weapon to school.

It is thus evident that the attitudes and behaviour of role models and heroes who do not share the norms and values of society fuel the learners' violent behaviour.

A prime real life South African example where the values and illustrations of a "hero" or "role model" had fatal consequences for the behaviour of a learner's behaviour is that of the infamous "samurai sword killer" (Anonymous, 2008a). In this incident an 18-year-old male learner went to school with a Halloween mask on, similar to that of a member of the heavy-metal band called *Slipknot*. The learner was a fan of the band and therefore listened to their music. His wearing this mask and (at the time of the murder) having in his possession three other masks similar to that of the *Slipknot* band members, means that

one cannot help concluding that the learner was imitating the behaviour and values of his heroes. The title of the band's debut album was *Mate. Feed. Kill. Repeat.* Themes of their songs include anger, hate, aggression and darkness. Examples of the titles of their songs include *Wait and bleed* and *Killers are quiet.*

An example of the disturbing lyrics from one of their songs named *Disaster-piece* (as cited in Anonymous 2008b), include:

> *I wanna slit your throat and f**k the wound; I wanna push my face in and feel the swoon; I wanna dig inside, find a little bit of me; Cuz the line gets crossed when you don't come clean. Hate ain't enough to describe me; Somewhere between screaming and crying; I'm not supposed to be here… All I have is dead, so I'll take you with me; Feel like I'm erased – so kill me just in case…*

Slipknot cannot be directly blamed for the incident, but the resemblances between the behaviour of this learner, and the message sent out by this band, are extremely close. The suggestion that the violent and aggressive norms of "heroes" and "role models" cause and contribute to violent behaviour of youth is supported by another example in the United States of America. Two friends, a 25-year-old male and a 21-year-old female, admitted listening to the song Disaster-piece by *Slipknot*, as well as watching a movie titled *Satan's school for girls*, before stabbing another friend 20 times with a knife and killing him by slicing his throat (as cited in Anonymous, 2008b).

Both literature and empirical research depict a definite relationship between learners' violent behaviour and heroes and role models portraying anti-social, criminal norms and values. In addition, one does not entirely blame learners for imitating heroes and role models who display anti-social behaviour. Our

society has come to "glamorise" violence in the media: for example, heroes on television who commit crime are rewarded for their violence, and few real life consequences follow. This is subsequently not an ideal situation to prevent violent behaviour, but rather motivation to engage in anti-social behaviour.

4.2.7 Conflict Resolution Skills

Various researchers, amongst others Curcio & First (1993:7), Van den Aardweg (1987:228), White (1995:52), Goldstein et al. (1984:9), and Bybee & Gee (1982:113-115) include learners' inability to handle conflict situations and frustrations in the list of learner-related causes of school violence. Johnson and Johnson (1995) also highlight the importance of teaching learners the necessary skills to handle conflict situations, by stating that in including classroom lessons on improving (amongst others) learners' communication skills, ways to control anger, appropriate assertiveness, and problem-solving skills, possible violent situations in the school environment can be minimized. Learners were probed regarding how they handle conflict situations and frustrations. The findings are reported in Table 4.23.

Table 4.23: Learners' indication of how they handle conflict situations and frustration

DO YOU HANDLE CONFLICT SITUATIONS AND FRUSTRATION BY....?	Yes		No		Missing values		Total	
	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_
Regarding violence as a way to resolve conflict	87	16.4	442	83.0	3	.6	532	100.0
Make others pay for your pain	51	9.6	477	89.6	4	.8	532	100.0
Confiding in authority figures	172	32.3	360	67.7	-	-	532	100.0
Sharing issues with friends	400	75.2	130	24.4	2	.4	532	100.0

N = 532

The data in Table 4.23 indicates that the majority of learners do not confide in their authority figures, as only 32.3% of them answered in the affirmative when asked whether they handle conflict situations by confiding in such figures. Similar findings were arrived at by Burton (2008a:63) where only half (49.4%) of the secondary school learners indicated that a parent would be the first person they would call in a problem situation. The table further suggests that learners instead rely on their friends, when needing assistance in difficult situations, as three quarters (75.2%) of them responded as such.

What is worrying, however, with respect to how learners have indicated they handle conflict and frustration, is that almost one in six (16.4%) learners regarded violence as a way to resolve conflict and frustration, while 9.6% of learners reported making others pay for one's pain as a way of handling conflict and frustration. This is a definite indication of a lack of effective conflict resolution skills amongst learners. Hence, if lacking these skills contributes to the levels of violence in South African schools, programmes aiming to combat school violence should also provide learners with adequate problem solving skills.

In examining the relationship between learners' inability to resolve conflict and frustration, and actual violent behaviour at school, statistically significant relationships were found between these two variables. The ensuing findings are displayed in Table 4.24 and 4.25.

Table 4.24: Learners who regard violence as a way to resolve conflict and violence related behaviours

VARIABLE	VIOLENCE SOMETIMES SOLVES CONFLICT			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	61	204	265			
Total %	11.6	38.8	50.4			
Row %	23.0	77.0				
Column %	70.1	46.5				
No	26	235	261			
Total %	4.9	44.7	49.6			
Row %	10.0	90.0				
Column %	29.9	53.5				
Total	87	439	526			
	16.5	83.5	100.0	16.240	1	.000
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	51	146	197			
Total %	9.8	28.2	38.0			
Row %	25.9	74.1				
Column %	59.3	33.8				
No	35	286	321			
Total %	6.8	55.2	62.0			
Row %	10.9	89.1				
Column %	40.7	66.2				
Total	86	432	518			
	16.6	83.4	100.0	19.798	1	.000
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	51	174	225			
Total %	9.9	33.7	43.6			
Row %	22.7	77.3				
Column %	58.6	40.6				
No	36	255	291			
Total %	7.0	49.4	56.4			
Row %	12.4	87.6				
Column %	41.4	59.4				
Total	87	429	516			
	16.9	83.1	100.0	9.595	1	.002
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	35	86	121			
Total %	6.8	16.8	23.7			
Row %	28.9	71.1				
Column %	41.7	20.1				
No	49	341	390			
Total %	9.6	66.7	76.3			
Row %	12.6	87.4				
Column %	58.3	79.9				
Total	84	427	511			
	16.4	83.6	100.0	17.997	1	.000

The data in Table 4.24 depicts statistically highly significant relationships between learners who indicated that they regard **violence as a way to**

resolve conflict situations and frustration, and learners who have punched/hit, kicked or threatened other learners with violence. In addition, a statistically significant relationship on the 1% level was found between learners who regard **violence as a way to resolve conflict** situations and frustration, and learners who verbally abuse other learners. The analysis of the relationship between the variables discussed in Table 4.24 thus indicate that learners who regard violence as a way to resolve conflict may likely punch, hit, verbally abuse and/or threaten another learner with violence.

Important findings that support the above mentioned conclusions, include that of those learners (16.4%) who regard violence as a way to resolve conflict 70.1% have punched/hit another learner, 59.3% have kicked another learner, 58.6% have verbally abused another learner, and 41.7% have threatened another learner with violence. Thus, it seems substantial percentages of these learners who regard violence as a way to resolve conflict, do behave aggressive when they are faced with arguments or disagreements.

Similar findings were reported by MacDonald and Da Costa (1996:13), where a grade 9 female learner who was asked to explain how she deals effectively with conflict, gave the following answer:

> *People shouldn't fight for no reason, but fighting does solve problems for us, so adults should just stay out of it, we can handle it ourselves.*

Learners were also asked whether they handle conflict and frustration by making others pay for their pain. The findings were displayed in Table 4.23. Correlations between the variable in question and a range of violence-related behaviours were performed. These findings are displayed in the following table.

Table 4.25: Learners who handle conflict and frustration by making others pay for their pain and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HANDLING CONFLICT/FRUSTRATIONS BY MAKING OTHERS PAY FOR MY PAIN			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	8	20	28			
Total %	1.5	3.9	5.4			
Row %	28.6	71.4				
Column %	16.0	4.3				
No	42	449	491			
Total %	8.1	86.5	94.6			
Row %	8.6	91.4				
Column %	84.0	95.7				
Total	50	469	519			
	9.6	90.4	100.0	12.192	1	.000
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	16	105	121			
Total %	3.1	20.6	23.7			
Row %	13.2	86.8				
Column %	36.4	22.5				
No	28	361	389			
Total %	5.5	70.8	76.3			
Row %	7.2	92.8				
Column %	63.6	77.5				
Total	44	466	510			
	8.6	91.4	100.0	4.250	1	.039
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	15	43	58			
Total %	2.9	8.3	11.2			
Row %	25.9	74.1				
Column %	29.4	9.2				
No	36	426	462			
Total %	6.9	81.9	88.8			
Row %	7.8	92.2				
Column %	70.6	90.8				
Total	51	469	520			
	9.8	90.2	100.0	19.021	1	.000

The data in Table 4.25 depicts statistically highly significant relationships between learners who indicated they handle conflict and frustration by **making others pay for their pain** and learners who have tried to kill another learner or those who carry a weapon to school. Furthermore, statistically, a significant relationship on the 5% level was found between learners who indicated they handle conflict and frustration by **making others pay for their pain** and learners who have threatened another learner with violence.

From the above data it may be observed that learners' lack of skills to solve conflict and frustration in their lives, in a manner that is based on the values and norms of society, contributes to actual violent behaviour. By interpreting the relationships between learners who resolve conflict violently and violent behaviour at school, it becomes evident that learners who want others to pay for their pain, act out on more serious levels of violence. Statistically highly significant relationships were found between these learners and learners who have tried to kill another learner, as well as with learners who carry a weapon to school. Learners, who have reported that violence does sometimes solve conflict, are, statistically speaking, significantly related to those who punch, kick and verbally abuse other learners. Hence, it seems that these learners acted violently at school in instances where they perceived violence to be the solution in a dispute, etcetera.

The inability of learners to handle conflict situations was also reflected in research done in Canada, by MacDonald and Da Costa (1996). Students were asked to indicate their ability to deal with specified conflict situations: almost a third (28.0%) of them reported not being able to deal with some conflict situations and issues at school. In the majority of the cases the male learners indicated considerably higher confidence in their ability to deal effectively with conflict. This may be due, amongst other reasons, to the difference in the physiques of male and female learners, as male learners might perceive themselves to be physically stronger than their fellow classmates, and therefore more able to protect themselves when they need to.

4.3 Causes of School Violence established from Current Study

In addition to examining the findings of previous research done on the causes of school violence, learners in the current study were also asked to provide the reasons for behaving violently at school. Based on the reasons given by

the respondents, the researcher and reader may draw additional conclusions on the causes of school violence. Table 4.26 contains the frequencies of learners' indications of the reasons why *they themselves* have acted violently at school in some instances.

Table 4.26: Reasons of learners for violence-related behaviours

	PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER		KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER		TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER		VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER		THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE	
REASON:	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
TOOK ALCOHOL OR DRUGS										
Yes	18	3.4	13	2.5	12	2.3	17	3.2	18	3.4
No	514	96.6	514	96.6	514	96.6	505	94.9	511	96.0
Missing	-	-	5	.9	6	1.1	10	1.9	3	.6
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
HOW YOU RESOLVE CONFLICT										
Yes	89	**16.7**	54	**10.2**	25	4.7	53	**10.0**	52	**9.8**
No	442	83.1	474	89.0	501	94.2	470	88.3	476	89.4
Missing	1	.2	4	.8	6	1.1	9	1.7	4	.8
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
LEARNT IT FROM PARENTS										
Yes	47	8.8	44	8.3	37	7.0	45	8.5	43	8.1
No	485	91.2	484	90.9	488	91.7	478	89.8	484	91.0
Missing	-	-	4	.8	7	1.3	9	1.7	5	.9
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
NO ONE COULD HELP ME										
Yes	90	**16.9**	52	9.8	26	4.9	48	9.0	44	8.3
No	442	83.1	477	89.6	500	94.0	476	89.5	483	90.8
Missing	-	-	3	.6	6	1.1	8	1.5	5	.9
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
DID IT WITH MY GANG										
Yes	29	5.5	27	5.1	18	3.4	51	9.6	32	6.1
No	503	94.5	501	94.1	506	95.1	472	88.7	495	93.0
Missing	-	-	4	.8	8	1.5	9	1.7	5	.9
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
HAD TO DEFEND MYSELF										
Yes	216	**40.6**	169	**31.8**	51	9.6	111	**21.0**	84	**15.8**
No	316	59.4	359	67.4	475	89.3	412	77.3	443	83.3
Missing	-	-	4	.8	6	1.1	9	1.7	5	.9
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
HOW I GAIN RESPECT										
Yes	81	**15.2**	70	**13.2**	44	8.3	63	**11.9**	60	**11.3**
No	451	84.8	460	86.4	481	90.4	460	86.4	466	87.6
Missing	-	-	2	.4	7	1.3	9	1.7	6	1.1
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
ETHNIC CONFLICT/RACISM										
Yes	26	4.9	21	3.9	18	3.4	42	7.9	23	4.3
No	506	95.1	508	95.5	506	95.1	479	90.0	502	94.4
Missing	-	-	3	.6	8	1.5	11	2.1	7	1.3
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
DIFFERENT RELIGIONS										
Yes	49	9.2	37	7.0	37	**7.0**	47	8.8	39	7.4
No	483	90.8	491	92.2	487	91.5	475	89.3	487	91.5
Missing	-	-	4	.8	8	1.5	10	1.9	6	1.1
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0
DIFFERENT SEXUAL ORIENTATION										
Yes	23	4.3	21	4.0	20	3.8	26	4.9	21	3.9
No	509	95.7	506	95.1	504	94.7	495	93.0	504	94.7
Missing	-	-	5	.9	8	1.5	11	2.1	7	1.4
Total	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0	532	100.0

N = 532

The data in Table 4.26 indicates learners behave violently at school for numerous reasons, including that they must react with violence on actual or perceived threat (e.g. when they have to defend themselves), as well as to deal with everyday issues in life, such as resolving conflict and gaining respect. The most prominent reasons for behaving violently, given by the learners, included the following:

- Of those learners (50.0%) who have punched/hit another learner, 40.6% indicated they had to defend themselves and 16.7% indicated they did it to resolve conflict;

- Of those learners (37.2%) who have kicked another learner, 31.8% indicated they had to defend themselves and 13.2% said that is how they gain respect;

- Of those learners (5.3%) who have tried to kill another learner, 9.6% indicated they had to defend themselves and 8.3% indicated that is how they gain respect. Interestingly, 7.0% learners indicated they have tried to kill another learner as a result of different religions. This may show what measures people are willing to go to for what they believe in. However, learners need to understand differences in religion (or any other personal characteristics) do not justify violent behaviour;

- Of those learners (42.5%) who have verbally abused another learner, 21.0% indicated they had to defend themselves, 11.9% indicated that is how they gain respect, and 10.0% indicated that is how they resolved a conflict situation; and

- Of those learners (23.1%) who have threatened another learner with violence, 15.7% indicated they had to defend themselves, 11.3% indicated that is how they gain respect, and 9.8% indicated they had to resolve a situation of conflict/frustration.

From the data in Table 4.26 it is evident that the learners in the current study react with violence when faced with actual or perceived threat, because in all

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cases self-defence was reported as the learners' main reason for behaving violently. Shocking, however, is the finding that the reason indicated second most frequently for displaying violent behaviour at school is the belief that this behaviour warrants respect, and additionally is an acceptable means to resolve conflict. Both these reasons for acting violently at school show that the learners hold favourable attitudes towards violence, supporting the notion that a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth.

4.4 Risk Factors as Causes of School Violence

Maree (2008:56) highlights two broad definitions of the term 'risk factor' as set out by Walsh and Ellis (as cited in Maree, 2008:56), and Andrews et al. (as cited in Maree, 2008:56). These definitions include the fact that a risk factor is a personal characteristic of an individual's personality or background that enhances the likelihood of engagement in violent misbehaviour, thus identifying conditions which increase the probability of juvenile delinquency. Maree (2008:56-57) further classifies risk factors into five categories:

1) Criminogenic risk factors: These are risk factors specifically associated with criminal activities (e.g. initiation or continuation of serious or violent criminal acts);

2) Static risk factors: These include variables not amenable to change (e.g. age and ethnicity);

3) Dynamic risk factors or criminogenic needs: These are the factors specifically associated with anti-social behaviour (e.g. being impulsive, lack of employment and substance abuse);

4) Responsivity principles: These refer to the way an individual responds to intervention efforts; and

5) Protective factors: These represent the characteristics of the individual or his or her circumstances that mediate or buffer the effects of risk factors. In other words, these factors explain why some children who are exposed to multiple risk factors do not engage in criminal or delinquent behaviour.

For the purpose of this study, only biographical static risk factors (individual level) and criminogenic risk factors (on a social level) that contribute to learners' violent behaviour will be discussed. The researcher subsequently wishes to draw conclusions as to the causal relationships between the factors specifically associated with criminal activities and learners' violent behaviour at school.

4.4.1 Static Risk Factors

Andrews et al. (1990:49) define static risk factors as those variables that usually cannot change, but which, if they do, alter only in one direction. Examples of such variables include age, gender, a history of conduct disorder, and family size (Andrews et al., 1990:49). Various researchers (as cited in Maree, 2008:56) concur that (amongst other factors) youthfulness, being male, and age at first arrest, are some of the most robust static predictors of engagement in criminal activity.

For the purpose of this study biographical factors of learners included their gender, age and race. These were examined as possible static risk factors that contribute to the levels of violence in the school environment.

Gender

Newburn (2002:547-548) states that according to official statistics of arrests, victimization data and self-report surveys, adolescent males are more frequently involved in more serious misbehaviour than adolescent females. Maree (2008:73) supports this statement by highlighting that male criminals completely outnumber female criminals not only in South Africa, but also worldwide. In addition, Maree (2008:73) mentions that the patterns of female youth misbehaviour are altering globally, as increasing numbers of female juvenile misbehaviour are reported, which may be due to, amongst others, the changes in social roles in society. No matter what the case may be, gender does influence an individual's likelihood to engage in anti-social behaviour. The following section therefore deals with the relationship between learners' gender and their violent behaviour at school.

No significant relationship, based on the findings of a Chi-square test, was found between learners' indication of whether they have acted violently at school at some occasion and their gender. Of the 72.1% of learners who answered affirmatively when asked whether they have acted violently at school, just more than half were male (53.7%) and just less than half were female (46.3%). In relation to the distribution of learners' gender in the study sample, these findings indicated an equal distribution of violent behaviour amongst the learners pertaining to their gender. However, statistically significant relationships were found between learners' gender and a range of violence-related behaviours. The findings are contained in the following table.

Table 4.27: Learners' gender and violence related behaviours

VARIABLE	GENDER			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Male	Female	Total	Value	df	p
PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	159	107	266			
Total %	30.1	20.3	50.4			
Row %	59.8	40.2				
Column %	60.0	40.7				
No	106	156	262			
Total %	20.1	29.3	49.6			
Row %	40.5	59.5				
Column %	40.0	59.3				
Total	265	263	528			
	50.2	49.8	100.0	19.700	1	.000
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	120	78	198			
Total %	23.1	15.0	38.1			
Row %	60.6	39.4				
Column %	45.6	30.4				
No	143	179	322			
Total %	27.5	34.4	61.9			
Row %	44.4	55.6				
Column %	54.4	69.6				
Total	263	257	520			
	50.6	49.4	100.0	12.866	1	.039
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	39	21	60			
Total %	7.5	4.0	11.5			
Row %	65.0	35.0				
Column %	14.8	8.1				
No	225	238	463			
Total %	43.0	45.5	88.5			
Row %	48.6	51.4				
Column %	85.2	91.9				
Total	264	259	523			
	50.5	49.5	100.0	5.718	1	.017

The data in Table 4.27 depicts a statistically highly significant relationship between the gender of the learners and those learners who have punched/hit another learner. In addition, statistically significant relationships on the 5% level were found between the gender of the learners and those learners who have kicked another learner or carry a weapon to school. The analysis of the findings relating to the gender of learners and the abovementioned violence-related behaviours depicted the following findings:

- Of the 50.4% of learners who have punched/hit another learner, 59.8% were male and 40.2% were female;

- Of the 38.1% of learners who have kicked another learner, 60.6% were male and 39.4% were female; and
- Of the 11.5% of learners who carry a weapon to school, 65.0% were male and 35.0% were female.

The above shows that the male learners in the current study are more likely to display physical violence in the school environment than their female classmates. This may be due to the difference in physical strength between boys and girls.

Buss (as cited in Bartol & Bartol, 2008:144) distinguishes between active and passive; direct and indirect; and physical and verbal aggression in explaining various forms of human aggression. In applying Buss' forms of aggressive behaviour, the above data indicates, in relation to the equal distribution of male (50.3%) and female (49.7%) learners, that male learners engage more frequently in physical violent behaviour at school, compared to their female counterparts. Statistically significant relationships were found between the male learners and the physical forms of school violence, such as punching and kicking other learners. It can subsequently be assumed that female learners rather engage in verbal forms of school violence, such as violent threats and verbal abuse.

While researching the link between gender and school violence, Mills (as cited in De Wet, 2003:91) and Hamburg (1998:35) found that boys commit most acts of aggression and their aggression is generally directed at other boys. Mills and Hamburg further state that even though this is true, it has to be noted that girls are becoming increasingly more aggressive and some of them even go to school armed.

De Wet (2003:105) notes similar findings regarding gender and school violence. De Wet found that the perpetrators of violence in the schools included in the research were 50.78% boys and 4.66% girls. The perpetrators further included educators and personnel in the school environment.

Abroad, research regarding gender and school violence depicts similar trends to those in South Africa. In a study done by Petersen et al. (1998:342) in the United States of America, 82% of the respondents indicated that perpetrators of violence were primarily male, whereas 6% indicated that females were primarily the perpetrators.

In explaining the higher frequencies of violence amongst male learners than female learners, Mills (as cited in De Wet, 2003:92), and Hawkins, Farrington and Catalano (1998:189) blame aggressive team sports (such as boxing and rugby), men's power over woman and other men, and competitive labour, as factors that fuel violent behaviour amongst boys. Some boys subsequently perceive violent acts as being synonymous with manliness (De Wet, 2003:92).

Leoschut and Burton (2006:67-71) compared the gender of learners and their experiences of victimization in the school environment. In their summary they report higher rates of male victimization than female victimization at school, which corresponds to victimization data locally and abroad. When asked how often they have been threatened at school, 64.9% of male learners and (about half of this percentage) 35.1% of female learners indicated being threatened at least once.

Burton (2008a:20) further differentiates not only between the likelihood of victimization by gender, but also the nature of the different types of violent victimization by gender. Only instances of sexual violence were reported more frequently by secondary female learners (4.8%) than male learners (1.4%).

The findings in Burton's study (2008a:20) indicated that male learners reported more instances of threats at school (16.6%, compared to the females' 12.4%), assault (5.9%, compared to the females' 2.7%) and being robbed at school (8%, compared to the females' 3.8%).

Age

Due to the limitation of only grade 9 learners participating in the research, few (or no) age categories could be identified. However, three different ages were evident amongst learners in the study, i.e. 14 year olds (32.8% of study sample), 15 year olds (46.5% of study sample) and 16 year olds (20.7% of study sample).

No significant relationship, based on the results of a Chi-square test, was found between learners' age and their indication of having acted violently at school on some occasion. Of the 72.7% of learners who have reported violent behaviour at school, 34.2% were 14, 47.7% were 15, and 18.2% were 16 years of age. In relation to the distribution of learners' age in the study sample, these findings indicated an equal distribution of violent behaviour amongst the learners pertaining to their age groups.

However, an interesting finding was identified when comparing learners' ages with a range of violence-related behaviours. A statistically highly significant relationship was found between learners' age and verbal abuse of fellow classmates, and a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level was found between learners' age and learners who carry a weapon to school. These findings are displayed below in Table 4.28.

Table 4.28: Learners' age and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	AGE				CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	14 Years	15 Years	16 Years	Total	Value	df	p
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER							
Yes	86	109	21	216			
Total %	17.4	22.1	4.3	43.8			
Row %	39.8	50.5	9.7				
Column %	52.4	47.4	21.2				
No	78	121	78	277			
Total %	15.8	24.5	15.8	56.2			
Row %	28.2	43.7	28.2				
Column %	47.6	52.6	78.8				
Total	164	230	99	493			
	33.1	46.7	20.2	100.0	26.696	2	.000
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL							
Yes	13	25	18	56			
Total %	2.6	5.1	3.6	11.3			
Row %	23.2	44.6	32.2				
Column %	7.9	10.8	18.0				
No	151	206	82	439			
Total %	30.5	41.6	16.6	88.7			
Row %	34.4	46.9	18.7				
Column %	92.1	89.2	82.0				
Total	164	231	100	495			
	33.1	46.7	20.2	100.0	6.386	2	.041

The data in Table 4.28 depicts statistically significant relationships between the age of learners and verbal abuse, and weapon carrying behaviour in the school environment. Of those learners (33.1%) who are 14 years of age, 52.4% have verbally abused another learner and 7.9% carry a weapon to school. Of those learners (46.7%) who are 15 years of age, 47.4% have verbally abused another learner and 10.8% carry a weapon to school. Lastly, of those learners (20.2%) who are 16 years of age, 21.2% have verbally abused another learner and 18.0% carry a weapon to school.

It can therefore be argued that, in relation to the distribution of learners' ages in the study sample, the younger learners (14 and 15 year olds) are more likely to engage in verbal aggression, i.e. verbal abuse, whereas the older learners (16 year olds) are more likely to engage in physical violence, i.e. carry a weapon to school.

In researching the changes in violent behaviour during a two-year period at each of the various school levels, the researchers Petersen et al. (1998:340) came to the following conclusions:

- Of the respondents, 26% saw violence increasing or greatly increasing at the preschool level;
- 53% saw violence increasing or greatly increasing at the elementary level;
- Whereas 69% saw the same increase at the middle school/junior high level; and
- 63% saw violence increasing or greatly increasing at the senior high level.

From Petersen et al.'s findings it can be concluded that violent behaviour amongst learners increases as learners age, indicating greater volumes of violence in higher school grades.

MacDonald and Da Costa (1996:22), who investigated school violence in Canada, looked at the victims of violence and the grades in which these victims were. The findings of this study indicated that certain violent behaviours like fights, verbal threats, punching, kicking and non-verbal abuse are relatively equally prevalent in the individual grades. More serious violent behaviours like threats with weapons and sexual harassment were however more prevalent amongst learners in higher grades. This indicates that older learners are often involved in more intense forms of school violence.

Race

In explaining criminal behaviour in relation to race, various opinions are expressed by researchers. Maree (2008:73), for example, states that official statistics have indicated African Americans to be overrepresented in arrest,

conviction and incarceration rates in relation to other races. Bartollas (2000:84) on the other hand states that there are not quite substantial and consistent differences between the various racial groups and involvement in delinquent behaviour. Instead, the differences in reported criminal acts may rather be an indication of the differences in arrest, conviction and incarceration rates, as well as the differences in socio-economic status of individuals (Bartollas, 2000:84). Maree (2008:74) further writes that a difference in socio-economic status between the various cultural groups exists especially in South Africa. South Africa consists of groups with mixed racial backgrounds and as a result of the political policy before 1994 some of these groups now live in substandard socio-economic areas. This could increase the need to commit crime, in order to survive and overcome feelings of relative deprivation.

The relationship between the race of learners and their violent behaviour in the school environment was examined, in order to establish whether a causal relationship exists between these two variables. The distribution of race in the study sample was as follows: Black = 63.0%; Coloured = 17.9%; White = 12.5%; Indian = 6.0%; and learners who indicated 'Other' = .6%.

No statistically significant relationship, based on the findings of a Chi-square test, was found between learners' race and their indication of violent behaviour at school. Of the 72.7% of learners that answered affirmatively when asked whether they have acted violently at school on some occasion, 59.6% were Black, 18.9% were Coloured, 14.7% were White, 6.3% were Indian, and .5% were 'Other'. The distribution of violent behaviour amongst the study sample according to race thus corresponds to the distribution of race amongst learners in the study sample. This indicates that race did not contribute to learners' violent behaviour in the school environment. Burton (2008a:16) examined school violence experienced (victimization) by race and subsequently found no significant relationship between these two variables. The minimal difference between violent experiences at school and race

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indicated that Coloured children were most likely and Black children were second most likely to be victimized at school. The Indian, Asian and White learners however also reported fairly high frequencies of victimization.

A lack of a statistically significant relationship between race and a range of violence-related behaviours was also found in the current study, except for two behaviours. Statistically significant relationships were found between learners' race and learners who have verbally abused another learner, as well as learners who carry a weapon to school. These findings are displayed in Table 4.29.

Table 4.29: Learners' race and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	RACE						CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Black	White	Coloured	Indian	Other	Total	Value	df	p
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER									
Yes	111	50	43	20	2	226			
Total %	21.5	9.7	8.3	3.9	.4	43.8			
Row %	49.1	22.1	19.0	8.9	.9				
Column %	34.5	75.8	45.3	64.5	66.7				
No	211	16	52	11	1	291			
Total %	40.8	3.1	10.1	2.1	.2	56.3			
Row %	72.5	5.5	17.9	3.8	.3				
Column %	65.5	24.2	54.7	35.5	33.3				
Total	322	66	95	31	3	517			
	63.0	12.5	17.9	6.0	.6	100.0	44.908	4	.000
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL									
Yes	41	3	9	5	2	60			
Total %	7.9	.6	1.7	1.0	.4	11.6			
Row %	68.3	5.0	15.0	8.3	3.4				
Column %	12.5	4.6	9.5	16.1	66.7				
No	287	62	86	26	1	462			
Total %	55.0	11.9	16.5	5.0	.2	88.6			
Row %	62.2	13.4	18.6	5.6	.2				
Column %	87.5	95.4	90.5	83.9	33.3				
Total	328	65	95	31	3	522	13.362	4	.010
	63.0	12.5	17.9	6.0	.6	100.0			

The data in Table 4.29 depicts a statistically highly significant relationship between the race of learners and their verbal abuse of others. Table 4.29 also depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 1% level between the race

of learners and their weapon carrying behaviour. Of the 63.0% black learners, 34.5% have verbally abused another learner and 12.5% carry a weapon to school. Of the 12.5% white learners, 75.8 have verbally abused another learner and 4.6% carry a weapon to school. Of the 17.9% coloured learners, 45.3% have verbally abused another learner and 9.5% carry a weapon to school. Lastly, of the 64.5% Indian learners, 64.5% have verbally abused another learner and 16.1% carry a weapon to school.

In interpreting the above relationships, it seems that white learners are more likely to engage in verbal abuse than learners of other races, as the percentage of white learners in this respect is out of proportion to the race distribution in the study sample. It can also be said that White learners are least likely to carry a weapon to school whereas Indian learners reported the highest frequencies of doing so, in relation to the distribution of race in the study sample.

4.4.2 Criminogenic Risk Factors on a Social Level

Maree (2008:57) explains that criminogenic risk factors on a social level can transpire in the community, family, school and peer groups. Maree is also of the opinion that these variables do not emerge independently, but are interrelated. In other words, families with weakened bonds, situated in frail communities, are likely to produce a school environment with weakened norms and values (Maree, 2008:57).

Leoschut and Burton (2006:20) write that the experiences of violence and anti-social behaviour in social environments, such as learners' homes and neighbourhoods, violate young people's personal sense of security because these spaces are typically thought of as places of safety for them. In addition, violence and crime in the social context also increase young children's risk of

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engaging in this kind of behaviour, which is common and even considered as acceptable by residents of the area. In order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of learners' social environment, as well as its impact on their lives, learners were asked about their neighbourhoods, their lives as children, the involvement of their families and parents, and their own involvement in socially up-building activities.

Parents and Family Involvement

To comprehend what occurs within the school environment, one needs to gain a clear picture of what happens within the other spheres making up the lives of our youth (Burton, 2008a:55). Burton (2008a:55) identifies the family as the first point of departure for such an analysis.

As was remarked in Chapter 1, more than a third (36.9%) of the learners in the current study indicated they are raised mainly by one of their parents. Over twelve million families with children in America are maintained by a single parent (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2001, as cited in Bartol & Bartol, 2008:45). The debate on whether a single-parent home or a 'broken home' can be blamed for juvenile delinquency is ongoing. Early studies done by researchers such as Eaton and Polk; Glueck and Glueck; Monahan; and Rodman and Grams (as cited in Bartol & Bartol, 2008:46) found that youth originating from homes where parents were divorced or separated, are more likely to engage in delinquent behaviour than those coming from a household maintained by both parents. Researchers today, however, do not interpret juvenile delinquency solely by examining the family structure, but rather by also incorporating related variables into the discussion. These include parenting styles, the quality of the parent-child relationship, and the degree of support provided by and to the family, including that of extended family members and community agents.

Another important factor that needs to be considered when explaining juvenile delinquency by referring to family structure is the changing face of the composition of homes. A 'family' is no longer defined according to the traditional definition of a married man and woman with children. Instead, families may consist of individuals living together in a long-term committed relationship, bound by blood, legal or verbal arrangements, etcetera (Bartol & Bartol, 2008:46).

In examining the relationship between learners' violent behaviour at school and learners who live in single-parented homes, only one statistically significant relationship on the 5% level emerged from a range of violence-related behaviours. This finding is contained in Table 4.30.

Table 4.30: Single-parented home and learners who have tried to kill another learner

TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER	SINGLE-PARENT HOME		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	15 2.9 55.6 7.9	12 2.3 44.4 3.7	27 5.2
No	175 33.8 35.6 92.1	316 61.0 64.4 96.3	491 94.8
TOTAL	190 36.9	328 63.1	518 100.0

X^2 = 4.370; df = 1; p = .037

Table 4.30 indicates that a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level exists between learners who have indicated they live in a **single-parented home** and learners who have tried to kill another learner. Of those learners

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(5.2%) who have tried to kill another learner, 55.6% indicated they live in a single-parented home. Thus, it can be assumed that this type of family structure may contribute to this form of school violence.

The lack of a statistically significant link between learners' violent behaviour at school and learners who live in a single-parented home, indicates that the single-parent home might be a risk factor for school violence, but the latter may also be influenced by other variables. Burton (2008a:55) supports this statement by highlighting the common (mis)perception that it is the absence of a parent, specifically the father, that causes juvenile delinquency. Burton (2008a:55) suggests that it is rather better to be lacking a parent or father figure, than being exposed to a caregiver who sets a bad example.

Bartol and Bartol (2008:46) argue that instead of focussing on the structure of the family, the focal point should be the family *process*. Learners were subsequently probed regarding the frequency of mutual family activities, such as having dinner together and parents' willingness to assist learners with their homework. This was done to obtain some understanding of the family *process* which learners experience in their households.

Almost a third (31.7%) of the learners indicated their family engage in mutual family activities five or more times a week. On the other hand, a noteworthy 15.5% of learners report no interaction or shared time with family members in a week. Of these 15.5% of learners, 76.5% reported behaving violently at school on some occasion.

A satisfactory percentage of learners' (88.9%) parents are willing and most likely do assist their children with homework and give support for schoolwork, since learners have indicated this much. Of the 11.1% of learners who

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reported their parents do not support them with schoolwork, 76.3% reported violent behaviour at school on occasion.

The above findings suggest that even though relative percentages of learners indicated satisfactory engagement in mutual family and parent involvement, those learners whose families lack this important integration, tend to display more violent behaviour. Research conducted by Flynn (as cited in Bartol & Bartol, 2008:46) supports the above statement. In studying the family as a potential cause of school violence, Flynn states that,

> *One point is indisputably clear in the literature: A stable, secure, and mutually supportive family is exceedingly important in delinquency prevention.*

Childhood

Learners were asked to identify the characteristics that describe their childhood. The information in Chapter 1 identified that the vast majority of learners in the currents study indicated they felt loved (84.9%) and happy (83.3%) as children. On the other hand, considerable percentages of learners chose unconstructive characteristics when describing their childhood, such as 'violent/abusive' (5.8%), 'isolated' (8.1%), 'prevalence of substance abuse' (3.8%), 'lonely' (14.1%) and 'sad' (10.2%).

In their integrated control theory, termed 'the social development theory', Weis, Hawkins, Catalano and their associates (as cited in Joubert, 2008:115) emphasize the importance of the socialization of children in order to prevent delinquent behaviour. This socialization process is carried out primarily through the family. If learners indicate their childhoods were violent, abusive

and with high frequencies of alcohol and substance abuse, the question arises: in what way are these children socialized? In order to establish the relationship between learners who experienced destructive childhoods and who display violent behaviour at school, the variables in question were compared. The resulting findings are displayed in Tables 4.31 and 4.32.

Table 4.31: Violent and abusive childhood and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	VIOLENT/ABUSIVE CHILDHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	19	207	226			
Total %	3.7	39.9	43.5			
Row %	8.4	91.6				
Column %	61.3	42.4				
No	12	281	293			
Total %	2.3	54.1	56.5			
Row %	4.1	95.9				
Column %	38.7	57.6				
Total	31	488	519			
	5.8	94.2	100.0	4.223	1	.040
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	13	110	123			
Total %	2.5	21.4	23.9			
Row %	10.6	89.4				
Column %	43.3	22.7				
No	17	374	391			
Total %	3.3	72.8	76.1			
Row %	4.3	95.7				
Column %	56.7	77.3				
Total	30	484	514			
	5.8	94.2	100.0	6.589	1	.010

The data in Table 4.31 depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between learners who have indicated their childhood as **violent and abusive** and learners who have verbally abused another learner. Additionally, the table also depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 1% level between learners who have indicated their childhood as **violent and abusive** and learners who have threatened another learner with violence. Of the 5.8% of learners who have experiences violent and abusive childhoods, 61.3% have verbally abused another learner and 43.3% have threatened another learner with violence.

Table 4.32: Sad childhood and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	SAD CHILDHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	P
PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	34	232	266			
Total %	6.4	43.9	50.4			
Row %	12.8	87.2				
Column %	63.0	48.9				
No	20	242	262			
Total %	3.8	45.8	49.6			
Row %	7.6	92.4				
Column %	37.0	51.1				
Total	54	474	528			
	10.2	89.8	100.0	3.811	1	.051
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	30	168	198			
Total %	5.8	32.3	38.1			
Row %	15.2	84.9				
Column %	55.6	36.1				
No	24	298	322			
Total %	4.6	57.3	61.9			
Row %	7.5	92.5				
Column %	44.4	63.9				
Total	54	466	520			
	10.2	89.8	100.0	7.807	1	.005
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	32	194	226			
Total %	6.2	37.5	43.6			
Row %	14.2	85.8				
Column %	61.5	41.6				
No	20	272	292			
Total %	3.9	52.5	56.4			
Row %	6.8	93.2				
Column %	38.5	58.4				
Total	52	466	518			
	10.2	89.8	100.0	7.538	1	.006

The data in Table 4.32 depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between learners who have described their childhood as **sad** and learners who have punched/hit another learner. Table 4.32 also depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who have described their childhood as **sad** and learners who have kicked or verbally abused another learner. Of the 10.2% of learners who experienced a sad childhood, 63.0% have punched/hit another learner, 55.6% have kicked another learner and 61.5% have verbally abused another learner.

The causal relationship between learners who have grown up in a violent and abusive household and the modelling of that behaviour at school is confirmed by the above data. Learners who are abused at home will as a result most likely abuse their fellow classmates. And learners, who are surrounded by violence in their childhood, consequently display violent behaviour in the school environment. Maree (2008:66) reinforces this finding by stating that child victims of violence are highly likely to perpetuate violence against others and themselves in their adolescent years.

Table 4.23 indicated that 16.4% of the learners regard violence as a way to resolve conflict. According to Thio (2007:123) this behaviour is learnt from parents. Thio argues that parents perceive violence as the only way to solve child-rearing issues, because they themselves as children have been exposed to abuse, by their parents, as well as by other important adults, who use violence to express anger, react to stress, or deal with marital problems.

In Table 4.23 almost one in ten (9.7%) learners reported that they make others pay for their pain. From the above data where learners have described their childhood as 'sad' and 'lonely', it can be concluded that learners deal with these unwanted feelings, experienced while growing up, by acting out violently towards their fellow classmates. This may almost be interpreted as an attitude of 'if I have to suffer, you will suffer too'.

Maree (2008:65) similarly supports the fact that a child reared in a childhood characterised by deconstructive traits, may display antisocial and aggressive behaviour, or mental and physical disabilities.

Socio-economic Status of Household

The debate pertaining to the true relationship between social class and youth misbehaviour has been ongoing for decades already, with no consensus being reached. The commonly accepted assumption is that children living in a poverty-stricken household, where parents are unable to provide for basic needs, will be most unlikely to stay away from antisocial misbehaviour as a means to meet their needs (Maree, 2008:63). One must not generalize this to contend that the majority of poor people will commit crime, but it is possible that those who feel deprived will be more likely to turn to crime, in order to deal with feelings of relative deprivation.

The socio-economic status of a family might not only directly contribute to youth misbehaviour, but also in some cases the striving for sufficient money may have a negative impact on a parent-child relationship. In other words, increasing materialism and rising costs force parents to work longer hours to meet the family's needs, as well as place immense pressure on these parents. The quality of an effective parent-child relationship, as a result, deteriorates, which could lead to weakened family bonds, which could in turn lead to children engaging in antisocial behaviour.

When asked to identify the financial status of their household, the vast majority (72.1%) of learners were of the opinion that they live in a home with a medium income. Of the rest of the sample 16.6% indicated their household income to be low while 11.4% indicated a high household income. In addition, as noted, the areas where two of the participating schools are located are poorer while the other two schools are located in more developed areas. This subsequently leads to the expectation that more of the learners should have indicated their families as having a low income. However, the researcher assumed that the learners reported the financial status of their household according to what they perceive as low-, medium- and high income, which

might be based on how they compare themselves to their friends, peer and the people with whom they have contact.

Nonetheless, no statistically significant relationship, based on the findings of a Chi-square test, was found between learners' indication of the financial status of their homes and their violent behaviour at school. This may be, amongst other factors, due to the abovementioned perceptions of learners as low-, medium- and high income in a household. Another possibility is that economic inequalities amongst youth may rather correlate with crimes such as shoplifting and robbery, where the motive is survival. Pillay (as cited in Kempen, 2008: para.3) supports the above argument by highlighting research findings depicting that violence occurred in both poor and affluent schools. Pillay writes that the difference in school violence amongst different social classes is that children fight for different reasons. In more affluent areas school violence appears to be a result of (amongst others) technology. Those learners who want these items target learners who take iPods, PsPs and expensive cellphones to school. On the other hand, in poorer areas learners behave violently as a result of the need for money and food.

Conversely, literature pertaining to social status and school violence reports different findings. Guerra et al. (1995:524) found poorer children to be more likely to adopt beliefs accepting aggression, as these children (amongst other reasons) are more likely to experience greater life events stress and neighbourhood violence stress. Guerra et al. (1995:524) further state that these beliefs and stressors predict early aggression and violence, which in turn predicts violent, aggressive behaviour in subsequent years.

Neighbourhood

In discussing school violence, Gottfredson (as cited by Burton, 2008a:55) highlights the relevance of the neighbourhood and community where learners grow up, by identifying the characteristics of the school population and community context as the largest correlate of school disorders. Booyens et al. (2008:30) furthermore identify 'neighbourhood' as one of the various factors pertaining to a child's background that could increase the likelihood of involvement in delinquent behaviour. Bartollas (1997:71), Siegel and Senna (2000:8-9), and Leggett (2004:23) agree with these findings in stating that unconstructive neighbourhood traits such as poverty, unemployment and population density also indicate a relationship with juvenile misbehaviour. The neighbourhood and community where a child grows up, is one of the most noteworthy risk factors in juvenile delinquency, as socialization takes place here. However, if this neighbourhood has reached a state of social disorganisation, where the loss of social control, antisocial behaviour, and the lack of socially acceptable values and norms are prevalent, how is a child in such a neighbourhood socialized? Burton (2008a:54) buttresses this point by commenting that youth are not only socialized in their communities, but that the schools they attend are also in most cases located in these neighbourhoods, which can contribute to delinquent behaviour.

> *A school located in a neighbourhood that is characterised by high rates of crime, a neglected physical environment and a transient population is likely to be characterised by many of the same factors, and will constantly be fighting the encroachment of these characteristics* (Burton, 2008a:54).

Learners were consequently asked to describe their neighbourhoods. Almost a fifth (19.2%) of the respondents indicated they live in a neighbourhood where substance abuse is common and substances are as a result easily

accessible. Approximately the same percentage of learners (17.7%) indicated that their neighbourhood is characterized by violence and violent behaviour. About 71% of learners perceive their neighbourhood as safe and friendly. Leoschut and Burton (2006:19) arrived at similar findings because the majority of respondents reported they liked the neighbourhoods where they live. However, one in three of the respondents also indicated they would like to move from their residential areas; specifically, the black youth expressed a dislike for the communities where they live.

Leoschut and Burton (2006:21) highlight the detrimental consequences of learners living in close proximity to areas prone to antisocial behaviour, by observing that this notably increases learners' likelihood of being victimised. Another consequence is the likelihood of becoming involved in the vicious cycles of violence and crime, where learners become the perpetrators. This statement proved to be true in the current study, as statistically significant relationships were found between learners who have indicated violence to be highly prevalent in their neighbourhood and learners who have behaved violently at school on occasion. The findings are discussed below.

Table 4.33: Violent behaviour and violent neighbourhood

HAVE YOU EVER ACTED VIOLENTLY AT SCHOOL?	VIOLENT NEIGHBOURHOOD		
Frequency Total % Row % Column %	Yes	No	TOTAL
Yes	73 14.0 19.4 80.2	303 58.0 80.6 70.3	376 72.0
No	18 3.4 12.3 19.8	128 24.5 87.7 29.7	146 28.0
TOTAL	91 17.7	431 82.3	522 100.0

X^2 = 3.669; df = 1; p = .055

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Table 4.33 depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between learners indicated they live in a violent neighbourhood and those learners who have displayed violent behaviour at school. From the data in Table 4.33, it is evident that it is statistically likely that learners who are exposed to violence in their neighbourhood will display violent behaviour in the school environment. Research done by Burton (2008a:53) adds to the literature explaining the destructive effects a violent neighbourhood can have on youth. Burton (2008a:53) highlights the statistically significant relationship between violence in the neighbourhood and learners who reported being victimized at school, as well as at home.

In comparing learners who live in a neighbourhood with antisocial characteristics and learners who have displayed a range of violence-related behaviours, statistically significant relationships were found. The findings in this respect are to be found in Tables 4.34 to 4.36.

Table 4.34: Violent neighbourhood and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	VIOLENT NEIGHBOURHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	47	146	193			
Total %	9.1	28.3	37.5			
Row %	24.4	75.6				
Column %	51.1	34.5				
No	45	277	322			
Total %	8.7	53.8	62.5			
Row %	14.0	86.0				
Column%	48.9	65.5				
Total	92	423	515			
	17.7	82.3	100.0	8.856	1	.003
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	49	172	221			
Total %	9.6	33.5	43.1			
Row %	22.2	77.8				
Column %	54.4	40.7				
No	41	251	292			
Total %	8.0	48.9	56.9			
Row %	14.0	86.0				
Column %	45.6	59.3				
Total	90	423	513			
	17.7	82.3	100.0	5.749	1	.016
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	31	87	118			
Total %	6.1	17.1	23.2			
Row %	26.3	73.7				
Column %	35.2	20.7				
No	57	333	390			
Total %	11.2	65.6	76.8			
Row %	14.6	85.4				
Column %	64.8	79.3				
Total	88	420	508			
	17.7	82.3	100.0	8.593	1	.003

The data in the above table depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who have indicated they live in a **violent** neighbourhood and learners who have kicked another learner or threatened another learner with violence. In addition, a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level was found between learners who have indicated they live in a **violent** neighbourhood and learners who have verbally abused another learner. Of the 17.7% of learners who live in a violent neighbourhood, 51.1% have kicked another learner and 54.4% have verbally abused another learner. The analysis of the variables discussed in Table 4.34 thus indicates learners

who live in violent neighbourhoods may likely (amongst others) kick, verbally abuse and/or threaten another learner with violence.

Table 4.35: Unsafe neighbourhood and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	UNSAFE NEIGHBOURHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
PUNCHED/HIT ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	61	203	264			
Total %	11.6	38.7	50.4			
Row %	23.1	76.9				
Column %	60.4	48.0				
No	40	220	260			
Total %	7.6	42.0	49.6			
Row %	15.4	84.6				
Column %	39.6	52.0				
Total	101	423	524			
	19.6	80.4	100.0	5.019	1	.025
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	50	145	195			
Total %	9.7	28.1	37.8			
Row %	25.6	74.4				
Column %	49.5	34.9				
No	51	270	321			
Total %	9.9	52.3	62.2			
Row %	15.9	84.1				
Column %	50.5	65.1				
Total	101	415	516			
	19.6	80.4	100.0	7.330	1	.007
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	56	167	223			
Total %	10.9	32.5	43.4			
Row %	25.1	74.9				
Column %	56.6	40.2				
No	43	248	291			
Total %	8.4	48.2	56.6			
Row %	14.8	85.2				
Column %	43.4	59.8				
Total	99	415	514			
	19.6	80.4	100.0	8.672	1	.003
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	39	81	120			
Total %	7.7	15.9	23.6			
Row %	32.5	67.5				
Column %	39.0	19.8				
No	61	328	389			
Total %	12.0	64.4	76.4			
Row %	15.7	84.3				
Column %	61.0	80.2				
Total	100	409	509			
	19.6	80.4	100.0	16.433	1	.000

The data in the above table depicts a statistically significant relationship on the 5% level between learners who have indicated they live in an **unsafe** neighbourhood and learners who have punched/hit another learner. Table 4.35 also depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who have indicated they live in an **unsafe** neighbourhood and learners who have kicked or verbally abused another learner. Furthermore, statistically, a highly significant relationship was found between learners who have indicated they live in an **unsafe** neighbourhood and learners who have threatened another learner with violence. Of those learners (19.6%) who lives in unsafe neighbourhoods, 60.4% have punched/hit another learner and 56.6% have verbally abused another learner. From these findings, it seems learners who experience a lack of safety in the neighbourhoods where they live, may be more likely to engage in some forms of violent behaviour at school.

Table 4.36 Neighbourhood with high prevalence of substance abuse and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HIGH SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
KICKED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	28	165	193			
Total %	5.4	32.1	37.5			
Row %	14.5	85.5				
Column %	51.9	35.9				
No	26	295	321			
Total %	5.1	57.4	62.5			
Row %	8.1	91.9				
Column %	48.1	64.1				
Total	54	460	514			
	10.5	89.5	100.0	5.264	1	.022
TRIED TO KILL ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	7	21	28			
Total %	1.4	4.1	5.4			
Row %	25.0	75.0				
Column %	13.0	4.5				
No	47	442	489			
Total %	9.1	85.5	94.6			
Row %	9.6	90.4				
Column %	87.0	95.5				
Total	54	463	517			
	10.4	89.6	100.0	6.705	1	.010

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Table 4.36 (cont.): Neighbourhood with high prevalence of substance abuse and violence-related behaviours

VARIABLE	HIGH SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN NEIGHBOURHOOD			CHI-SQUARED TESTS		
	Yes	No	Total	Value	df	p
VERBALLY ABUSED ANOTHER LEARNER						
Yes	32	191	223			
Total %	6.2	37.3	43.6			
Row %	14.3	85.6				
Column %	62.7	41.4				
No	19	270	289			
Total	3.7	52.7	56.4			
Row %	6.6	93.4				
Column %	37.3	58.6				
Total	51	461	512			
	10.0	90.0	100.0	8.485	1	.004
THREATENED ANOTHER LEARNER WITH VIOLENCE						
Yes	22	98	120			
Total %	4.3	19.3	23.7			
Row %	18.3	81.7				
Column %	43.1	21.5				
No	29	358	387			
Total %	5.7	70.6	76.3			
Row %	7.5	92.5				
Column %	56.9	78.5				
Total	51	456	507			
	10.1	89.9	100.0	11.896	1	.001
CARRY A WEAPON TO SCHOOL						
Yes	11	47	58			
Total %	2.1	9.1	11.2			
Row %	19.0	81.0				
Column %	20.4	10.2				
No	43	416	459			
Total %	8.3	80.5	88.8			
Row %	9.4	90.6				
Column %	79.6	89.8				
Total	54	463	517			
	10.4	89.6	100.0	5.071	1	.024

The data in Table 4.36 depicts statistically significant relationships on the 5% level between learners who have indicated they live in a neighbourhood with **high substance abuse** and learners who have kicked another learner or carry a weapon to school. Table 4.36 also depicts statistically significant relationships on the 1% level between learners who have indicated they live in a neighbourhood with **high substance abuse** and learners who have tried to kill or verbally abused another learner. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship on the 0.1% level was found between learners who have indicated they live in a neighbourhood with **high substance abuse** and

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learners who have threatened another learner with violence. These findings indicate learners who live in a neighbourhood with high substance abuse may likely engage in violent behaviour at school, such as to kick, try to kill, verbally abused other learners, threaten fellow classmates with violence, as well as to carry a weapon to school.

More than a fifth (27.0%) of the learners reported feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood. Leoschut and Burton (2006:19) published similar findings, as one-fifth of the respondents reported feeling unsafe in their communities. Feeling unsafe in the neighbourhood where one lives was found to be most prevalent amongst youth in Gauteng, Western Cape and North West. These feelings of not being safe are perceived to affect learners' behaviour at school, as the relationships above have indicated. The reason given by learners for using violence at school as a result of feeling unsafe in their neighbourhood may also be due to their modelling the behaviour of adults. This violent behaviour displayed by parents and adults that supports the idea that violence solves conflict and distress, may thus cause the violent behaviour of school-going youth.

Almost a fifth (19.2%) of the learners reported living in neighbourhoods where the abuse of alcohol and drugs is highly prevalent. Leoschut and Burton (2006:23) also found alcohol and drugs to be prevalent in a fifth of the respondents' neighbourhoods, since respectively 21% and 28% of the respondents reported being familiar with individuals in the community selling or buying drugs. The data above depicts a statistically highly significant relationship between the prevalence of substance abuse in a neighbourhood and a range of violence-related behaviours in the school environment.

It can thus be concluded that the neighbourhood where youth live does influence their behaviour at school. Neighbourhoods characterised by traits

such as violence, high frequencies of substance abuse and criminal activities cause and contribute to juvenile delinquency and school violence.

Involvement in External Activities

It is important for youth to be involved in constructive, external activities, as this involvement ensures that they are busy with activities that positively add to their development and also restricts opportunities for youth to engage in delinquent behaviour. Travis Hirschi (as cited in Vold et al., 2002: 183-184), an exponent of criminology who wrote on the causes of delinquency, included 'involvement' as one of the key elements in social control that prevents youth from engaging in delinquent behaviour. Hirschi argued that individuals, who are tightly bonded to social groups such as the family and school, would be less likely to commit delinquent acts. Hirschi identified 4 elements of this social bond, namely Attachment, Commitment, Involvement and Belief (as cited in Vold et al., 2002:183-184). The researcher therefore probed the learners as regards their involvement in external activities, in order to determine the influence of this variable on their violent behaviour at school.

Almost a fifth (17.7%) of the respondents indicated that they do not attend religious gatherings. It can thus be concluded that the majority of learners attend a place of worship frequently in a month. Of the 17.9% of learners who indicated they never attend a place of worship, 83.9% reported having acted violently at school.

More than a third (37.7%) of the learners indicated they do not participate in after-school activities on a weekly basis. Of those learners who reported such participation, 23.3% indicated they participate daily, 20.1% participate 3-4 times a week, while 18.9% participate 1-2 times a week. Learners' indications of involvement in other extra-curricular activities were equally distributed, as

44.0% of the learners answered affirmative and 56.0% replied 'no' when asked the relevant question.

Of the 37.6% of learners who indicated they do not participate in weekly after-school activities, 72.1% reported acting violently at school, compared to the 27.9% who have not done so. Of the 55.9% of learners who indicated they are not involved with any other extra-curricular activities, 67.4% reported acting violently at school compared to the 32.6% who have not engaged in school violence.

The data pertaining to the involvement of learners in external activities depicts that substantial percentages of learners are not involved in activities other than attending school. It was also seen that of those learners who do not participate in external activities, considerable percentages behave violently at school. This supports the notion that the lack of involvement in constructive, external activities contributes to the school violence phenomenon.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter was divided into three sections. The first examined the suggested and proven causes of school violence, as gathered through a review of the relevant literature. The researcher integrated the most common causes suggested in the literature into the questionnaire, in order to examine whether these causes are valid and reliable in the present situation. Secondly, the results of learners' indications of what they identified as the reasons for their violent behaviour at school were reported. Lastly, the third section dealt with static- and criminogenic (individual and social) risk factors as causes of school violence.

This chapter established that learners become involved with delinquent and violent behaviour for various reasons, such as:

- The inability to fulfil certain needs, as a result of (amongst others) the areas they grow up in or a lack of basic resources;
- Peer pressure and unsuitable examples set by parents, authorities and the media; and
- Substance abuse and gang-related behaviour.

According to Burbach (2000:1) the roots of violence appear to be a combination of the following:

- Prenatal substance abuse, assault, neglect, low birth weight, head injury and undetected disease;
- Bonding trust deficits, media violence, violent role models, lack of alternative activities and dim educational/job prospects; and
- Inadequate housing/income, machismo/saving face, discrimination, lack of social skills, allure of money, deviance, gangs and guns.

With regard to the suggested causes of school violence which the researcher gathered through a review of the relevant literature, certain conclusions were reached. The following variables are highly likely to cause school violence and thus exert key influences on the environment at a school:

1) Gangs and gang activities;
2) Weapon- and gun-carrying behaviour;
3) Alcohol- and drug abuse;
4) Violent and criminal role models and heroes;

5) Lack of conflict resolution skills (and accepting violence as a means to resolve conflict);

6) Lack of student organisations, effective leadership, and rules and regulations in the school environment; and

7) Intolerance towards diversity.

The researcher found the first five of these variables to be the most prominent in the school violence phenomenon. Gangs, weapons, substance abuse, violent role models and the use of violence to resolve conflict, recorded statistically highly significant relationships with violent behaviour of learners.

In addition to the above, the researcher also asked the learners to give reasons for their violent behaviour at school. The following reasons given by the learners were the most prominent:

1) Self-defence;
2) A means to gain respect;
3) A means to resolve conflict;
4) No one could help them, so they resorted to violence; and
5) Differences in religion.

Maree (2000:10) summarized the main causes of crime and violence in South African schools by identifying the following factors:

- Gang-related violence and killings;
- Lack of transformation in school;
- Lack of discipline;
- Learners copy what they see on television; and

- Learners try to emulate the "feats" of "heroes", such as thugs, criminals and others making easy money.

Based on the empirical data and literature pertaining to the causes of school violence discussed thus far, the researcher concludes that the variables which play the most important role add to the notion that a culture of violence exists amongst learners. She is of the opinion that these important (traditional) causes of school violence reflect symptoms of a violent culture. An example supporting this statement includes the fact that learners are of the opinion that violence will earn them respect. Another instance is the fact that learners admire and aspire to be like their role models and heroes, whom they have indicated are violent, delinquent and display behaviour that is against the law. Both these examples indicate that these learners accept violence, exhibit an ingrained identification with violence, and value violent behaviour. The above findings support the notion advanced by the researcher that a culture of violence exists in South African schools.

Lastly, the researcher examined certain risk factors regarding the learners that could possibly contribute to their violent behaviour at school. These were as follows:

1) Childhood characterised by violence, abuse, loneliness, and sadness;
2) Neighbourhood characterised by violence, a lack of safety, and substance abuse; and
3) The lack of involvement of learners in external, constructive activities.

In examining the background of the learners, including their childhood, households and communities, it can be concluded that schools reflect what is happening within the home and neighbourhoods of South Africans. The causes of school violence are almost identical to the causes of violence in South Africa. According to Duncan (as cited in Booyens, Beukman &

Bezuidenhout, 2008:30) the factors causing school violence and risk factors in learners' lives that ultimately lead to violent behaviour are so rife that they almost guarantee that one in two children will at some stage commit a criminal offence. Dunlap (as cited in Booyens, Beukman & Bezuidenhout, 2008:30) writes that in view of the characteristics of youth and their lives the South African Police Service estimates that 43% of South Africa's youth are at risk of becoming offenders.

The data in this chapter contributes to the ongoing search for effective measures to curb school violence, as important causes were identified. The findings in this chapter also support the hypothesis advanced by the researcher that a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth.

In the next chapter, Chapter 5, the attitudes of learners towards violence will be discussed. The findings pertaining to the attitudes learners have towards violence may also provide answers as to why learners behave violently at school and serve as a contemporary cause of school violence. The attitudes of learners constitute the second variable the researcher has identified in order to reach a conclusion on the notion that a culture of violence may exist amongst South African school-going youth.

CHAPTER 5

THE ATTITUDES OF LEARNERS TOWARDS VIOLENCE

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to establish whether the possibility of a culture of violence exists amongst South African learners today. As previously mentioned, the researcher aimed to examine the behaviour and attitudes of learners towards violence in order to further investigate this possibility. As such, the researcher has identified the *attitudes* of learners towards violence as the main area of investigation in this study.

By investigating these, the researcher aims to draw conclusions on how these attitudes affect their behaviour in the school environment. Thus, the possibility may exist that learners have a pervasive, ingrained identification with violence, leading to their acceptance and value of this behaviour, implying that a culture of violence is developing amongst learners. The other likelihood that the researcher aims to investigate in this regard is whether or not learners use violence in response to perceived or actual threat, in other words, display attitudes of reactive violence.

Researchers and academics have been studying attitudes since the early 1930s. In 1935 Allport (as cited in Krosnick et al., 2005:22) defined attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". Eagly and Chaiken in 1993 (as cited in Krosnick et al., 2005:22) add to the above by defining attitude as a

"psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour".

Currently, the word attitude is still defined in numerous ways but encompasses the same components given in early literature aiming to define the word. Attitude thus refers to a mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways. In other words, a person's attitude is his or her ongoing pattern of belief and like or dislike for an item, which can in turn predict his or her behaviour (Anonymous, 2000: para.1). Reber and Reber (2001:63) define 'attitude' as "Some internal affective orientation that would explain the actions of a person, an extension of a person's *intention* to do something". For the purpose of this study, 'attitude' is defined as the manner in which an individual thinks about and values a certain object or subject, either positively or negatively, and how this subsequently influences the behaviour of the individual.

It is therefore important to understand the attitudes of learners towards violence, not only to develop effective strategies to prevent/reduce school violence, but also to change delinquent attitudes and behaviours of learners that contribute to the school violence phenomenon. In addition, the attitudes of learners towards violence are particularly important in this study for the reasons mentioned.

5.2 The Measurement of Attitudes

Krosnick et al. (2005:21) aver that attitude measurement is pervasive. In other words, when attitudes are measured, their causes as well as how they change and their impact on cognition and behaviour, are studied.

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Techniques used to measure attitudes have varied across history, as well as across professions and current researchers. Pioneering scholars of attitude measurement initially presumed attitude measurement to be accurately assessed utilizing only a large set of questions, selected through a complicated process. However, currently, single questions with relatively simple wordings and structures are used to measure attitudes. Numerous techniques, tools and approaches to measuring attitudes accurately do exist, which suggests there is not merely one optimal way to achieve the goal of measuring attitudes accurately (Krosnick et al., 2005:21), but rather, that it may be reached by means of various tools and approaches.

When explaining the process used to measure attitudes, Ajzen (2005:6) differentiates between the direct and indirect assessment of dispositions. Indirect assessment provides respondents with opportunities to review different aspects of a given domain, as opposed to direct assessment, where respondents are asked to evaluate one statement related to the disposition in question, in order for the researcher to draw certain conclusions. Direct measurements of dispositions may be useful in researching attitude and personality, but can be somewhat limited as the data may provide rather superficial responses (Ajzen, 2005:10). An indirect measurement of violence-related attitudes was employed in this study because the responses to a set of specific questions can be utilised to infer the attitude under investigation.

In order to examine the attitudes of learners towards violence, the researcher employed an integrated approach. Firstly, a well tested tool, namely *The Attitudes Toward Violence Scale: A Measure for Adolescents* (AVS), originally developed by the "Victims Forum" (as cited in Funk et al., 1999:1124), and then redesigned and adapted by J. B. Funk, R. Elliott, M. L. Urman, G. T. Flores and R. M. Mock (1999:1123) to fit adolescents, was utilised as the main source for testing the attitudes of learners towards violence. The AVS is a self-report measure of attitudes towards physical violence, and is scored according to a five-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree),

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with higher scores indicating attitudes that are more pro-violence. The AVS is designed to measure the attitudes of adolescents pertaining to the likelihood of specific responses to potential violent situations. According to the authors, this scale demonstrates good internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and a meaningful two-factor solution was identified, namely: 1) Reactive Violence, used in response to actual or perceived threat, and 2) Culture of Violence, a pervasive, ingrained identification with violence as an acceptable and valued activity (Funk et al., 1999:1123).

Secondly, in conjunction with the use of the AVS, the researcher also integrated a scoring technique used to measure attitude as given by Ajzen (2005:10). Similar to the AVS, Ajzen probes the attitude of respondents to a given phenomenon, by asking respondents to indicate their agreement or disagreement with each statement. Respondents subsequently answer each item by choosing one of five alternatives, which include strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree. This format is known as a Likert-scale, proposed by Likert in the early 1930s, as his contribution to attitude scaling techniques (as cited in Ajzen, 2005:11). The possible answers to the given statements are then scored as follows:

- strongly agree = 5
- agree = 4
- undecided = 3
- disagree = 2
- strongly disagree = 1.

The score of the respondent is then computed by adding all item scores. High scores subsequently indicate positive attitudes towards the phenomenon in question (Ajzen, 2005:11).

Thus, the attitudes of learners towards violence were measured by utilising the 17-item scale of statements related to physical violence on the AVS, with the identified and reliable two-factor solution (however, three items were dropped, due to no substantial loadings on the two-factor solution). The two-factor analysis differentiates between items on the AVS that depict a culture of violence and items that depict reactive violence (Funk et al., 1999) amongst learners. In addition to the AVS, the researcher employed an attitude scaling method and scoring technique used in indirect assessment of the attitudes of respondents towards a phenomenon, as proposed by Ajzen (2005:11) and applied this technique to the answers given by the learners on the AVS.

5.3 Findings on the Attitudes of Learners towards Violence

In order to provide the reader with the findings of the attitudes that learners (in the current study) hold towards violence, the researcher included the following steps:

1) The items on the AVS were analysed by utilizing the 'Factor analysis' function in the SPSS 15.0 programme for Windows;

2) The answers of the learners on the AVS are displayed in a frequency table;

3) The standard deviations and mean scores of the answers the learners gave on the AVS are displayed as well as compared with previous literature findings; and

4) An attitude scaling technique proposed by Ajzen (2005:11) was used to score the answers of the learners on 12 items of the AVS.

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Indication of the Answers Learners Gave on the AVS

Firstly, factor analysis was carried out on the 14-item AVS. Principal-axis factor analysis with varimax rotation was performed on the AVS scores of the learners. The AVS factor scale demonstrated acceptable internal reliability for the current study sample (Cronbach's alpha = .85) as also found by Funk et al. (1999:1123) (Cronbach's alpha = .86) and Collings and Magojo (2003:129) (Cronbach's alpha = .80), in their respective studies. The findings pertaining to factor analysis of the AVS of the current study are displayed in Table 5.1 below.

Table 5.1: Factor Loadings of Items on the Attitude towards Violence Scale

ITEM	FACTOR LOADING	
	CULTURE OF VIOLENCE	REACTIVE VIOLENCE
I could see myself committing a violent crime in 5 years[1]	**.770**	.091
I could see myself joining a gang[1]	**.753**	.150
It's okay to use violence to get what you want[1]	**.806**	.135
I (do not) try to stay away from places where violence is likely (reverse scored)[1]	**.313**	-.209
People who use violence get respect[1]	**.387**	.272
Lots of people are out to get you[1]	**.422**	.206
Carrying a gun or knife would help me feel better[3]	**.504**	**.498**
If a person hits you, you should hit them back[2]	.130	**.588**
It's okay to beat up a person for badmouthing me or my family[2]	.225	**.550**
It's okay to carry a gun or knife if you live in a rough neighbourhood[2]	.331	**.596**
It's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself[2]	-.075	**.516**
It's good to have a gun[2]	.180	**.340**
Parents should tell their children to use violence if necessary[2]	.192	**.328**
If someone tries to start a fight with you, you should (not) walk away (reversed scored)[2]	.054	**.356**
Someday I will be a victim of violence*	(dropped)	
I'm afraid of getting hurt by violence*	(dropped)	
It's too dangerous for kids my age to carry guns*	(dropped)	

1 = Factor 1 – Culture of violence
2 = Factor 2 – Reactive violence
3 = Item has substantial loading on both factors
* = Item has no substantial loading on either factor

The data in Table 5.1 illustrates that the factor analysis produced a factor structure akin to that reported by the authors of the instrument (Funk et al.,

1999:1128), as well as that reported by Collings and Magojo (2003:135). The data in Table 5.1 thus indicates that the statements reliably reflect either a 'Culture of violence' or 'Reactive violence'. The researcher can subsequently draw certain conclusions based on the findings of the AVS.

The frequencies of indications of disagreement or agreement of the learners to given statements pertaining to physical violence are contained in Table 5.2. Table 5.3 displays the Means and Standard Deviations of the answers of learners on the AVS, as well as a comparison between two previous studies where the AVS had been used to probe the attitudes of adolescents towards violence.

Table 5.2: Frequency table of indication of disagreement or agreement of learners to statements on the AVS

ITEM	STRONGLY DISAGREE		DISAGREE		NEUTRAL		AGREE		STRONGLY AGREE		MISSING VALUES		TOTAL
	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_f_	_%_	_%_
I could see myself committing a violent crime in 5 years[1]	322	60.5	52	9.8	60	11.3	33	6.2	51	9.6	14	2.6	100
I could see myself joining a gang[1]	310	58.3	54	10.2	44	8.2	43	8.1	59	11.1	22	4.1	100
It's okay to use violence to get what you want[1]	318	59.8	55	10.3	36	6.8	48	9.0	53	10.0	22	4.1	100
I (do not) try to stay away from places where violence is likely[1] (reverse scored)	185	34.8	92	17.3	61	11.5	44	8.3	122	22.8	28	5.3	100
People who use violence get respect[1]	219	41.2	53	10.0	71	13.3	62	11.7	97	18.2	30	5.6	100
Lots of people are out to get you[1]	210	39.5	74	13.9	104	19.5	46	8.6	63	11.8	35	6.7	100
Carrying a gun or knife would help me feel better[3]	258	48.5	59	11.1	62	11.7	47	8.8	71	13.2	35	6.7	100
If a person hits you, you should hit them back[2]	162	30.1	62	11.7	91	17.1	84	15.8	101	19.2	32	6.1	100
It's okay to beat up a person for badmouthing me or my family[2]	177	33.3	88	16.5	71	13.3	76	14.3	87	16.4	33	6.2	100
It's okay to carry a gun or knife if you live in a rough neighbourhood[2]	202	38.0	60	11.3	88	16.5	67	12.6	87	16.4	28	5.2	100
It's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself[2]	115	21.6	50	9.4	71	13.3	91	17.1	176	33.1	29	5.5	100
It's good to have a gun[2]	279	52.4	65	12.2	63	11.8	32	6.1	66	12.4	27	5.1	100
Parents should tell their children to use violence if necessary[2]	244	45.9	72	13.6	72	13.5	56	10.5	58	10.9	30	5.6	100
If someone tries to start a fight with you, you should (not) walk away[2] (reverse scored)	212	39.8	96	18.0	48	9.0	36	6.8	115	21.6	25	4.8	100
Someday I will be a victim of violence*	206	38.7	50	9.4	100	18.8	59	11.1	85	16.0	32	6.0	100
I'm afraid of getting hurt by violence*	110	20.7	46	8.6	51	9.6	98	18.4	192	36.1	35	6.6	100
It's too dangerous for kids my age to carry guns*	126	23.7	28	5.3	30	5.6	64	12.0	263	49.5	21	3.9	100

1 = Factor 1 – Culture of violence

2 = Factor 2 – Reactive violence

3 = Item has substantial loading on both factors

* = Item has no substantial loading on either factor

From the data in Table 5.2 it can be seen that a considerable number of learners agree or strongly agree with the statements on the AVS that reflect a culture of violence, such as *people who use violence get respect* and *it's okay to use violence to get what you want*. This suggests these learners exhibit a pervasive, ingrained identification with violence, resulting in their acceptance and value of this behaviour.

Almost a sixth (15.8%) of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they could see themselves committing a violent crime in 5 years. This indicates some level of acceptance of violent behaviour by the learners, because acknowledging that they might commit a violent crime in 5 years is not merely a violent reaction to a perceived threat. Supporting this conclusion is the fact that just under a fifth (19.0%) of the learners agreed or strongly agreed that *it is okay to use violence to get what you want*. Again, this statement must not be confused with a situation where violence must be used to protect oneself, but rather that violence is accepted as a means and part of everyday life.

Youth, at the age of the learners in the study sample (14 to 16 years), are undergoing various phases of life, such as the great need for acceptance and respect by their friends and fellow classmates. Just less than one third of the learners agree or strongly agree that violence earns respect, as 29.9% of them indicated as such on the relevant item in the AVS. This percentage is considerably high. This finding is also a near indication of a cultivated culture of violence amongst learners. In addition, if learners perceive it true that acting violently can fulfil these needs, violence in schools is imminent.

The data in Table 5.2 does not only display high frequencies of agreement to the statements on the AVS that have substantial loadings on the Culture of Violence factor, but also some agreement with violence as a mean self-defence. Approximately two thirds of the learners agreed or strongly agreed that *you should hit a person that hits you* (35.0%) **and** that *it is okay to beat*

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up a person that badmouths you or your family (30.7%). Both these statements support the idea that violence is used in situations where actual or perceived threat prevails, thus implying that learners act violently when protecting themselves. In support of this, is the fact that more than half (50.2%) of the learners agree or strongly agree that *it is okay to do whatever it takes to protect oneself*, even if it entails behaving violently. 29.0% of the learners even agreed or strongly agreed that, if necessary, carrying a gun or weapon in a rough neighbourhood, is acceptable; again depicting the lengths learners are willing to go to in order to protect themselves or feel safe.

Thus, the data in table 5.2 indicates learners do not only use violence in threatening situations in which they might find themselves. Instead, considerably high frequencies of learners indicated they agree with statements on the AVS that reflect a culture of violence. This suggests these learners display a cultivated acceptance towards violence, where violence is not only a measure of self-defence, but rather a way of living.

When comparing the findings with that of previous studies, it seems that the suggested 'culture' of violence amongst learners is growing stronger because a greater agreement with statements on the AVS that have substantial loadings on the Culture of Violence factor is depicted in the current study when compared with previous research on the topic. Funk, Elliot, Urman, Flores and Mock (1999) researched the attitudes of learners towards violence by making use of the AVS in a study of 1266 junior and high school students in the inner city of a medium-sized Midwestern city in the United States of America. Collings and Magojo (2003) utilised the AVS in a study examining youth violence with a study sample consisting of 561 male high school learners in the Durban greater metropolitan area in South Africa. The comparative findings of these studies are displayed in Table 5.3. Note that higher mean scores indicate stronger agreement, as learners answered on a scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

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Table 5.3: Comparison of Means and Standard Deviations of Items on the AVS with Two Studies in the Relevant Literature

ITEM	CURRENT STUDY		COLLINGS & MAGOJO (2003)		FUNK ET AL. (1999)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
I could see myself committing a violent crime in 5 years[1]	1.92	1.37	1.81	1.05	1.71	1.03
I could see myself joining a gang[1]	1.99	1.44	1.83	2.05	1.61	1.01
It's okay to use violence to get what you want[1]	1.95	1.42	1.71	1.03	1.67	0.82
I (do not) try to stay away from places where violence is likely (reverse scored)[1]	2.65	2.00	2.82	1.43	2.27	1.10
People who use violence get respect[1]	2.53	1.59	2.24	1.28	2.21	1.11
Lots of people are out to get you[1]	2.35	1.42	2.47	1.16	2.17	1.15
Carrying a gun or knife would help me feel better[3]	2.22	1.50	2.33	1.33	2.68	1.17
If a person hits you, you should hit them back[2]	2.80	1.54	2.88	1.30	4.01	1.03
It's okay to beat up a person for badmouthing me or my family[2]	2.62	1.52	2.68	1.32	2.89	1.19
It's okay to carry a gun or knife if you live in a rough neighbourhood[2]	2.56	1.53	2.74	1.41	2.99	1.14
It's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself[2]	3.32	1.58	3.60	1.33	3.92	1.02
It's good to have a gun[2]	2.09	1.45	2.76	1.32	2.55	1.24
Parents should tell their children to use violence if necessary[2]	2.23	1.44	1.97	1.21	2.95	1.23
If someone tries to start a fight with you, you should (not) walk away (reversed scored)[2]	2.50	2.00	2.68	1.38	2.69	1.15
Some day I will be a victim of violence*	2.53	1.53	(dropped)		2.55	1.12
I'm afraid of getting hurt by violence*	3.43	1.59	(dropped)		2.82	1.27
It's too dangerous for kids my age to carry guns*	3.61	1.69	(dropped)		2.27	1.35

1 = Factor 1 – Culture of violence

2 = Factor 2 – Reactive violence

3 = Item has substantial loading on both factors

* = Item has no substantial loading on either factor

The data in Table 5.3 depicts (in all three studies) higher mean scores (indicating stronger pro-violence attitudes) for items endorsing the use of violence as a response to violent actions. For example *if a person hits you, you should hit them back* and *it's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself.*

Even so, the data in Table 5.3 also indicates an increase in agreement with the statements on the AVS that reflect the 'Culture of Violence' factor. The mean scores of the current study for these statements, compared with the findings from studies conducted in 1999 (Funk et al., 1999) and 2003 (Collings & Magojo, 2003), have increased considerably. For example, the mean score for the statement, *people who use violence get respect* rose from 2.21 in the study conducted in 1999 (Funk et al., 1999) to 2.53 in the current study. This indicates an increase in violence as being an ingrained, cultivated part of the lives of these learners.

The learners' agreement with the statements on the AVS that reflect the 'Reactive Violence' factor in the current study, show a decrease compared with that of Funk et al. in 1999. For example, the mean score for the statement, *if a person hits you, you should hit them back*, decreased from 4.01 in the study conducted in 1999 (Funk et al., 1999) to 2.80 in the current study. Another example is that the mean score for the statement, *it's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself*, decreased from 3.92 in the study conducted in 1999 (Funk et al., 1999) to 3.32 in the current study. However, this decrease may not necessarily mean learners react less frequently with violence when faced with actual or perceived threat. This statement is supported by the notably large percentages of learners in the current study who did in fact agree or strongly agree with statements reflecting the 'Reactive Violence' factor. The decrease in mean scores for factors on the 'Reactive Violence' factor should rather be interpreted as an indication that learners justify the use of violence more frequently for certain reasons other than self-defence, such as to gain respect or due to peer pressure. This then supports the notion that violence is increasingly becoming an ingrained, cultivated part of the lives of these learners.

The above data furnished the reader with some idea of the disagreement or agreement of learners to given statements pertaining to physical violence, while differentiating between a culture of violence and violence used in

situation of actual or perceived threat. The learners' answers to these statements were also scored according to Ajzen's technique in order to ascertain the attitude of a respondent towards a given issue (Ajzen, 2005).

Scoring of the Answers of the Learners Regarding Specific Statements in the AVS

The answers to specific statements reflecting the two-factor solution extracted from the AVS, namely 'Culture of Violence' and 'Reactive Violence', were scored in order to add to the description of the attitudes of learners towards violence.

The researcher scored the answers of the learners in terms of the following two sets of statements in the AVS respectively:

Culture of Violence
- I could see myself committing a violent crime in 5 years
- I could see myself joining a gang
- It's okay to use violence to get what you want
- I try to stay away from places where violence is likely (reverse scored)
- People who use violence get respect
- Lots of people are out to get you

Reactive Violence
- If a person hits you, you should hit them back
- It's okay to beat up a person for badmouthing me or my family
- It's okay to carry a gun or knife if you live in a rough neighbourhood
- It's okay to do whatever it takes to protect myself
- Parents should tell their children to use violence if necessary
- If someone tries to start a fight with you, you should walk away (reverse scored)

As suggested by Ajzen (2005:11), the answers given by the learners on the relevant statements were scored as follows:

- strongly agree = 5
- agree = 4
- neutral = 3
- disagree = 2
- strongly disagree = 1.

The scores of the learners were computed by adding all the item scores. Answers to each of the two factors were scored separately in order to obtain two sets of scores for each learner. One set of scores indicates their agreement with a culture of violence and the other, their agreement with reactive violence. Six statements reflecting each of the two factors were scored with the possible calculated scores ranging from 0 to 30 for each learner on each factor. Subsequently, higher scores indicate positive attitudes towards the factor in question.

The researcher divided the scaling scores of the learners, regarding each of the two factors, into two categories, namely those below and including 15 (out of the possible maximum 30 points) and those above and including 16 (out of the possible maximum 30 points) so as to show the reader approximately how many of the learners indicated positive attitudes towards violence. This supports the suggestion of a culture of violence amongst learners, as well as the number of the learners who indicated positive attitudes towards reactive violence. The results are displayed in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4: Scores of the learners on the statements reflecting the 'Culture of Violence' and 'Reactive Violence' factors

Learners' Scores		Culture of Violence		Reactive Violence	
		Frequency	Valid %	Frequency	Valid %
Valid	0 to 15	390	74. 7	263	50.9
	16 to 30	132	25.3	254	49.1
	Total	522	100.0	517	100.0
Missing	System	10		15	
Total		532		532	

The data above indicates that one quarter (25.3%) of the learners obtained scores above 50% for the statements that reflect a culture of violence, and therefore, according to Ajzen (2005:11), indicated positive attitudes towards the use of violence and approval of violent behaviour. This is a considerably high percentage and adds to the findings already discovered in this chapter that learners do show an acceptance of violent behaviour, the likelihood that learners have an ingrained identification with violence, and that violence is a valued activity.

The standard deviations and mean scores of responses to the two given sets of statements that reflect the 'Culture of Violence' and 'Reactive Violence' factors are also displayed.

Table 5.5: The Standard Deviations and Mean scores (out of a possible 30) of the answers of the learners on the 'culture of violence' and 'reactive violence' factors

		Culture of Violence	Reactive Violence
N	Valid	523	517
	Missing	9	15
	Total	532	532
Mean		12.97	15.57
Standard Deviation		5.829	5.769

The data in Table 5.5 depicts a difference in the mean scores of the frequencies of learners who consider the use of violence an acceptable part of everyday life and the frequencies of learners who agree with the use of violence as a reaction to perceived or actual threat. This finding is to be noted in the fact that a mean score of 12.97 was calculated for the set of statements that reflected the 'culture of violence' factor while a mean score of 15.57 was calculated for the statements that reflected the 'reactive violence' factor. Also note that a higher mean score indicates a positive attitude towards the given factor. In other words, when interpreting Table 5.5, it can be said that even though learners do show an attitude slightly more favourable towards violence used during perceived or actual threat (reactive violence), their attitude towards violence as a means to gain respect, resolve conflict, sense of belonging etcetera, is notably positive. This supports the alleged culture of violence amongst South African learners. In order to argue that learners have not yet engaged in a culture of violence, their scores on the statements reflecting the 'culture of violence' factor should have been substantially lower than these results.

Cotten et al. (1994) made similar findings pertaining to the pro-violence attitudes of learners. Cotten et al. utilised a 15-item scale consisting of statements that expressed either a non-violent or a violent orientation to assess the attitudes of the students towards interpersonal peer violence. Students indicated their agreement or disagreement with the relevant statements on a 4-point scale and their responses were summed in order to obtain scale scores of the attitudes of the students towards violence. Low scores indicated a non-violent orientation and vice versa. Cotten et al. (1994:620) reported that scores on the attitude towards violence scale for the students, ranged from 15 to 55, with the mean 31.3 and the standard deviation 7.2. The high mean score indicates the positive attitudes of the respondents towards the use of violence, similar to the findings in the current study.

In this chapter thus far it has been established that some learners hold pro-violence attitudes and justify the use of violence on a daily basis. These learners consider violence as a valued activity and a part of their everyday life. Chapter 3 examined the actual violent behaviour of learners and depicted that violet behaviour amongst learners is substantially prevalent. Consequently, the following section reflects on the theory provided in Chapter 2 with regards to the relationship between attitude and behaviour, specifically concerning how this theory is applicable in the current study. Thus, a link between the pro-violence attitudes of learners in the current study is drawn with their actual violent behaviour in the school environment.

5.4 Application of Attitude-Behaviour Theory

Considerable percentages of learners reflected attitudes conducive to violence. In addition, considerable percentages of learners indicated that they display violent behaviour at school. Theory regarding the relationship between attitude and behaviour, discussed in Chapter 2, suggests, and explains how attitude can be a predictor of behaviour. Therefore, it can be assumed that the pro-violence attitudes of the learners in the current study played a role in their violent behaviour in the school environment.

According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005), the following is an example where attitude influences behaviour. A third of the learners (31.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that people who use violence gain respect. In other words, this is their expectation when acting violently at school. In addition, a considerable percentage of learners justified their violent behaviour at school as a means to gain respect. They also expect it to earn them respect and then experience that it does. As such, due to the similarities between expectancies and experiences in this regard, behaviour related to pro-violence attitudes ensues.

Another example of a close match between the expectations and experiences of learners in the empirical research was the 20% of learners who reported positive attitudes towards joining a gang. In addition, 13.7% of the learners indicated that they currently belong to a gang or are involved in gang activities. Approximately one in ten learners reported that gang activities lead to their violent behaviour at school. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action, learners with positive attitudes towards gangs and gang activities expect the outcome of belonging to a gang to be positive and successful, for example, to feel a sense of belonging and unconditional support. These learners then subsequently become involved in gangs and gang activities as these assist them in fulfilling some of their needs as youth.

Over and above the close match between the expectations of violent behaviour at school and positive experiences that follow violent behaviour, learners experience few or no penal consequences for their violent behaviour. This lack of perceived behavioural control and control beliefs (according to the Theory of Reasoned Action) experienced by learners, relating to violent behaviour at school, leads to pro-violence attitudes and consequently, violent behaviour, and is also maintained. This perceived lack of behavioural control over school violence is visible in the fact that over half (59.8%) of the learners indicated their school does not have an effective leadership system, and this implies a lack of disciplinary measures.

Assumptions pertaining to violent behaviour and pro-violence attitudes of learners can be made by examining the empirical research in the current study and applying the Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model (as cited in Magee, n.d.). For example, learners more frequently perceive violent events and situations in society, at school, in the media, etcetera as being less serious and rather more acceptable. Not many years ago children played with dolls, cars, building blocks and kites; watched children's programmes such as *Heidi* and *Pinocchio*; and listened to the *Spice Girls* and the *Backstreet Boys*. Currently, violence and aggressive themes overshadow the games children

play, the television programmes they watch and the music they listen to, and this is accepted by these children. Popular games like '*God of War'* and music bands like '*Slipknot'* and '*Marilyn Manson'* are examples of how children accept violence and aggression as a part of everyday life. In addition, the perceptions of violent events and situations of learners are noteworthy indications of their attitudes towards violence. According to the Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model, if social norms do not influence behaviour, attitudes will predict it. Society seldom or never provides learners with guidance and examples of socially acceptable behaviour and, as a result, the pro-violence attitudes of learners predict and lead to actual violent behaviour.

The Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model also suggests that the perception a person has of an event or situation is largely formed from past experience and past memory. One of the top three reasons for school violence reported by the learners was that violence is used to resolve conflict. This finding implies that learners lack the necessary skills to resolve conflict, control their anger, solve problems etcetera. It can be assumed that learners remember past experiences and past memory that violence can be used to handle conflict successfully. This consequently maintains positive attitudes towards violence and subsequent violent behaviour. It is also possible that learners perceive violence as an efficient means to solve conflict as this behaviour is learned from their parents. Parents are frequently reported as lacking effective problem-solving skills and use violence as a way of handling conflict in the household.

Assumptions pertaining to violent behaviour and pro-violence attitudes of learners can be made by examining the empirical research in the current study and applying the MODE Model (as cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). For example, as discussed above, considerable percentages of learners hold positive attitudes towards violence. With regards to these pro-violence attitudes of learners suggesting a culture of violence amongst learners, their attitudes were relatively strong when compared to those towards using

violence merely as a response to an actual or perceived threat (reactive violence), where only a diminutive difference was reported. Once again, this implies that learners accept the use of violence more frequently and more often as part of everyday life. It appears that these strong pro-violence attitudes most likely bias their behaviour. For example, even though committing a crime is obviously illegal and does have penal consequences, more than one in ten learners (16.2%) indicated that they could see themselves committing a violent crime in 5 years. These learners possess the motivation and cognitive capacity to spontaneously activate strong attitudes towards certain behaviour (in this case to commit a violent crime) and consequently, attitude related behaviour follows. Examples of such attitude related behaviour include violent crimes committed by the learners such as the 5.4% of learners who reported they have tried to kill someone on a previous occasion, and the 11.5% who carry a weapon to school.

From the examples mentioned above, it can be seen that the positive attitudes learners have towards violence may influence their behaviour accordingly. Numerous researchers have investigated the relationship between pro-violence/aggressive attitudes and violent behaviour. The findings of studies support the above assumption that violent behaviour can stem from pro-violence attitudes. Examples of studies where a positive relationship was found between pro-violence attitudes and actual violent behaviour include Collings and Magojo (2003:130), Guerra and Slaby (1988:586), and Cotten et al. (1994:620). The findings of these studies were discussed in Chapter 2. This data supports the notion that pro-violence attitudes displayed by learners ultimately may lead to actual violence in the school environment.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, the researcher aimed to gather further evidence of an existing culture of violence amongst South African learners. She identified two

variables of the learners in the study sample which were used to draw conclusions, with regards to the above notion. In Chapter 3, it was established that learners behave violently at school, the first variable identified by the researcher in order to conclude the existence of a culture of violence in South African schools. In this chapter (5), the second variable identified by the researcher was examined, namely the learners' attitude towards violence. The definition of the term 'culture' provided in the introductory chapter supports the influential relationship between a person's culture and his or her attitude. Haviland (1993:29) writes that culture consists of the abstract values, beliefs, and perceptions of the world that the members of a group share. Attitude is linked to culture as it refers to a mental state involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions to act in certain ways. Since attitude is thus an element of culture, and if learners possess pro-violence attitudes, the researcher can conclude that this is evidence of the symptoms of a culture of violence amongst these learners.

The empirical evidence in this chapter indicates that learners possess pro-violence attitudes towards the use of violence not only in cases where a perceived or actual threat occurs, but also that an ingrained identification with violence is an acceptable and valued activity associated with the norms and values of a culture of violence. A substantial percentage of the respondents have learned and internalised violent behaviour and so replicate it in their everyday lives. This suggests that crime and violence have been normalized and become culturally acceptable amongst South African learners. Thus, with regard to the attitudes of the learners in this study, the researcher concludes that the learners do show warning signs of a culture of violence in South African schools. This violent culture in-turn increases the frequency and severity of violence in South African schools.

After having established a) that learners do behave violently at school; b) the variables that cause school violence; and c) that learners hold pro-violence attitudes, it is important to discuss how this information can contribute to the

curbing of school violence. Chapter 6 therefore provides the reader with recommendations pertaining to the curbing of school violence, while also utilizing the empirical data and secondary literature to propose a programme that may assist in reducing violence in the school environment. In addition to the latter, Chapter 6 sets out the conclusion of this study, as well as the final remarks the researcher considers the most important to leave with the reader.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The objective of this research study was to explore the attitudes learners have towards violence and the occurrence of school violence in the Tshwane South District in Gauteng, as well as (as far as possible) in South African schools, in order for the researcher to establish whether a culture of violence exists amongst South African school-going youth. The researcher identified the attitudes and behaviour of learners as indicators of their 'culture', based on a definition of the term 'culture'.

With reference to Haviland's (1993:29) definition of culture in the introductory chapter, attitude was defined as involving beliefs, feelings, values and dispositions of a person which lead him/her to act in certain ways. The definition of culture thus confirms the relationship between attitude, behaviour and culture. The researcher could subsequently draw certain conclusions regarding the culture that exists in schools, based on their behaviour and attitudes. The researcher also examined the relationship between attitudes and behaviour. Literature on the attitude-behaviour relationship showed that a positive correlation exists between attitude and behaviour. This means that a person's attitude towards a given object/subject may influence his/her behaviour accordingly, which subsequently plays an important role in the culture of that person.

The study produced findings both similar and contradictory to those of previous research studies. The study also produced new findings that add

unique and recent literature to the numerous existing writings on the school violence phenomenon. In Chapter 1, the word *phenomenon* was defined as a **significant** physical occurrence, a fact, or proven event out of the ordinary, especially one whose cause is in question. As such, the current research showed that violence in South African schools can be classified as a phenomenon. The findings of this study indicate that school violence is no longer only occurring as the exception to the rule, but has become a noteworthy ongoing event, visible in all schools under all circumstances. Traditional causes of school violence, such as poverty, can no longer be used to explain its frequency and nature. Instead, school violence appears to be the result of a prominent violent culture developing amongst South African school-going youth. This trend is not isolated and prevalent only in schools, but it is also a characteristic common to society in South Africa as a whole.

6.2 Key Findings

This chapter serves to provide the reader with an all encompassing collection of the main findings of this study and consulted literature, with subsequent discussions on the key findings. The reader is also furnished with recommendations to assist in curbing school violence based on the findings gathered in the literature and the empirical data.

6.2.1 A Profile of the Learners

In this study, the researcher placed an emphasis on the role of **learners** in the school violence phenomenon. This was important to the researcher because school-going youth are seldom thoroughly consulted in the search for answers and solutions to the increasing school violence problem. In order to examine school violence and the role of learners, it was important to firstly gain a better understanding of the type of learners who were involved in the current study.

In profiling the learners, the researcher considered the following aspects of the learners in the study sample:

- Demographic information, including age, gender and race;
- Background and childhood information, including family structure, involvement of parents, violence and substance abuse in the family;
- Neighbourhood and community information, including violence and substance abuse in the community;
- Behavioural patterns of learners, including involvement of learners in school and extra-curricular activities, and substance abuse amongst learners; and
- What the profile of the learners tells the researcher and the reader.

Demographic Information

The demographic characteristics of the learners depicted an equal distribution of gender amongst the respondents; they were all between 14 and 16 years of age. More than half of the learners were African while those who participated in the rest of the study, were White, Coloured and Indian. The socio-economic status of the majority of the learners seemed to be average: approximately three quarters of the learners indicated their households have a medium income. However, it was also noted that two of the four schools that participated in the study were located in the poorer suburbs of the Gauteng, Tshwane South District, and it was expected that more learners would have indicated their families as in receipt of a low income. Since the socio-economic status of the learners were not identified as an important variable in the study this inconsistency was discussed briefly.

The demographic characteristics of a study sample are important as these factors can, in some cases, explain why certain phenomena occur. In the

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current study, however, the researcher did not find the demographic characteristics of the learners to be as important. The age, gender and race factors of the learners were not among the significant factors that correlated with violence in the school environment.

Background and Childhood Information

The researcher also examined factors relevant to the background and childhood of the learners because these factors play an important role in understanding the behaviour and attitudes of the learners. It is well known that one's personality is influenced by experiences from one's background and childhood. Personality, in turn, influences one's behaviour and attitude. Background and childhood factors as well as personal traits of learners can either enhance or decrease their likelihood of becoming involved in delinquent and anti-social behaviour. Various background factors, personal traits, as well as high-risk behaviours, may enhance the possibility of juveniles becoming involved in criminal behaviour, such as drug and alcohol abuse and neighbourhood influences, such as the prevalence of substance abuse and violence.

The primary source of socialization is a child's family and childhood. The characteristics and experiences linked to the family life of a child lay the foundation of personality formation and frame of reference for the child. Even though the family nowadays is not what it traditionally used to be, that is, consisting of a mother, father and children, the concept of growing up and living in a stable, supportive environment, forms the basis of who and what a child becomes. Delinquent and anti-social behaviour is highly probable in the absence of this important source. The findings of the current study supports this notion, where more than a third of the learners reported living in a single-parented home, but interestingly, no noteworthy correlations were found between these learners and violent behaviour at school. This suggests that

even although these learners do not live in a home with a traditional family structure, they enjoy supportive, positive family lives. This proved to be true when learners were asked to characterise their childhood. The majority (more than 80%) of learners reported they had loving and happy childhoods. While the majority of learners reported their childhood and family lives to be loving and happy, a third of these reported living in a single parented home. Less than 1 in 10 learners indicated that substance abuse, violence, sadness, loneliness and isolation characterized their childhood Thus, it can be assumed that most of the learners in this study sample were happy children. Statistically significant relationships were found between these variables and school violence, but these learners, who were affected by the variables in question, were in the minority. This suggests that in addition to the family, supplementary socialization factors contribute to the desensitizing of learners towards violence, namely the neighbourhood and the community in which a child grows up.

Neighbourhood and Community Information

The data in the current study showed that the neighbourhoods of these learners are more desensitized towards anti-social and violent behaviour than their households. One in five learners reported living in a neighbourhood where violence and substance abuse are rife. This is substantially more than the approximately one in 20 learners who reported violence and substance abuse in their households. Some families still aim to prevent their youth from being exposed to, and subsequently engage in, delinquent and violent behaviour. Unfortunately the communities in which they live lack some of this commitment to prevent anti-social behaviour. Instead, these kinds of behaviour are supported and positively reinforced through glamorization by community members. Thus, next to the family, the neighbourhood and community serve as a major role player in the lives of youth. As such, the characteristics of a neighbourhood are crucial when predicting and attempting to curb anti-social behaviour amongst youth. Statistically significant

relationships were found between learners who lived in violent neighbourhoods where both substance abuse and violent behaviour were prevalent, as well as violent behaviour at school. However, when the small percentages of learners, who reported living in neighbourhoods with anti-social characteristics, are compared with the large percentages of learners who reported behaving violently at school, it can be assumed that there are additional causes of school violence that contribute to this phenomenon extensively, above and beyond the influences of a neighbourhood characterized by delinquency.

Behavioural Patterns of Learners

The profile of the learners included establishing the approximate levels of substance abuse amongst these youth. The findings suggested that one in five learners abuses alcohol and one in twenty-five uses drugs. These numbers are notably high, especially considering that these learners are between 14 and 16 years of age. Substance abuse related positively with all of the explored forms of school violence in the current study. This emphasizes the seriousness of this variable since the data indicated that substance abuse may directly cause school violence. Alcohol and drug abuse is definitely one of the most important variables to address when intervening in the school violence phenomenon.

The researcher also examined the involvement learners enjoy in their communities, schools and families, such as quality family time, religion and extra-curricular activities. It is important for youth to be involved in constructive, external activities, as this involvement ensures their engagement with activities that positively add to their development. Such involvement also restricts the opportunities for them to engage in delinquent behaviour. Travis Hirschi (as cited in Vold et al., 2002: 183-184) included 'involvement' as one of the key elements in social control that prevents delinquent behaviour.

Hirschi argued that individuals who are tightly bonded to social groups, such as the family and school, would be less likely to commit delinquent acts. Hirschi identified 4 elements of this social bond, namely Attachment, Commitment, Involvement and Belief (as cited in Vold et al., 2002: 183-184). The researcher subsequently probed the learners with regards to their involvement in external activities, in order to draw conclusions regarding the influence this variable exerts on their violent behaviour at school. In the empirical data it was evident that the social bonds and social involvement of learners are far from ideal, as low percentages of learners indicated they are frequently involved with their families, parents, religion, school activities and extra-curricular activities. The lack of involvement of learners in family life and society correlated positively with their actual violent behaviour at school.

What the Profile of the Learners Tells One

The profile of the learner in this study can thus be summarized as follows:

- One in two learners was either male or female;
- The learners were either 14, 15 or 16 years of age;
- The average learner was black and the rest were either White, Coloured or Indian;
- The average learner lives in a household with a medium income;
- One in three learners live in a single-parented home;
- The average learner has a loving and happy childhood and lives in a safe and friendly neighbourhood;
- Approximately one in 20 learners experienced violent childhoods where substance abuse was prevalent;
- Approximately one in five learners live in neighbourhoods where violence and substance abuse are rife;
- One in 5 learners abuses alcohol;

- One in 25 learners uses drugs;
- Roughly one in six learners does not attend a place of worship;
- Approximately one in three learners never participates in weekly after-school activities;
- Approximately one in two learners are not involved in extra-curricular activities outside the school environment;
- One in seven learners does not engage in mutual family activities; and
- One in 10 learners' parents are not willing to assist them with school work.

After profiling the learners, the following represents a conclusion stemming from the important factors which the profile of the learners tells the researcher and reader. This study reveals that these learners are definitely exposed to high levels of violence, substance abuse and delinquency. Exposure to these variables is prevalent in their homes and neighbourhoods. It was expected that even more learners would have reported living in areas where high levels of delinquency are prevalent, as recent crime statistics have shown that violence and crime are becoming more prevalent in South Africa. A reason for this might be that learners have already been desensitized towards crime and violence, and subsequently overlook or do not report minor offences in their communities. However, even if one child lives in a neighbourhood where violence and delinquency is prevalent, it is one too many. It is clear that intervention is needed in the households and neighbourhoods of South African youth. This is especially important in order to improve the anti-social profile of South African youth and ultimately to decrease the prevalence and intensity of school violence.

The profile of the learners also depicted that alcohol and substance abuse is rife amongst these learners. Learners indicated that substance abuse has always been common in their lives and that these substances are easily available in the communities where they live.

The profile of the learners revealed that learners lack social bonds with their families and communities. Few learners indicated that they spend quality time with their families and parents and few learners indicated they are involved in extra-curricular activities, such as school sport, religious influences and community activities. An individual, who is tightly bonded to these social groups, is less likely to commit delinquent acts. This study found that the learners involved the lack the four important variables required to form strong bonds with social groups. It can thus be assumed that this might be a contributing factor to their delinquent or violent behaviour at school.

6.2.2 The Attitude-Behaviour Relationship: Pro-Violence Attitudes to Violent Behaviour of Learners

The important question in this study pertaining to the attitude-behaviour relationship was: 'Do pro-violence attitudes lead to and cause violence in the school environment?' Garcia (1998:2) answers this question by noting that pro-violence attitudes and the culture of violence in South African schools result in learners displaying an intolerant and violent approach towards their fellow human beings. De Wet (2003:94) comments that attitudes of learners who accept and legitimize violent behaviour increase the incidence of aggressive and violent acts in children, and, subsequently, yield unrealistic perceptions of the effectiveness of violent acts. The impact is thus apparent. Learners who have positive attitudes towards violence subsequently become violators and victimizers in the school environment. This in turn leads to the increase in frequency and magnitude of school violence in South Africa.

Chapter 2 dealt with the relationship between attitude and behaviour and it was found that research findings and theory depicted a positive correlation between these two variables. Three major theories on the attitude-behaviour relationship were explored, namely the Theory of Reasoned Action, the Attitude-to-Behaviour Process Model, and the MODE Model. Even though

these theories varied in content, they all concluded that attitude may be a predictor of behaviour. In other words, these theories underlined that a positive correlation between attitude and attitude-related behaviour exists.

In applying these three theories to the current study, noteworthy conclusions were drawn. When applying these theories, it was evident that the pro-violence attitudes of learners could lead to violent behaviour at school. These findings were supported by that of the literature. Numerous researchers have explored positive attitudes of learners towards violence and aggression and found violent and aggressive behaviour at school to be one of the consequences.

Maree (2008:61) supports the positive correlation between attitude and behaviour, especially the fact that criminally orientated attitudes and beliefs increase a child's likelihood of becoming involved in criminal activities. Maree writes that the most unfortunate aspect of South Africa's social transformation from an authoritative to a democratic community is that the old system was rejected before new norms, values and laws could have been implemented. This subsequently led to a situation of anomie and normlessness in South Africa. Crimes are thus easier to commit as weakened social control and social bonds exist in the country. As a result, youth are socialized in a community where crime and violence is accepted and endured and they do not experience the same social control as youth living in a culture that finds anti-social, criminal, and violent behaviour unacceptable. These youth then form attitudes and beliefs that are positive towards crime and violence and engage in attitude-related behaviour. Vandalism, stealing and violent behaviour have become internalized and part of everyday living for some South African learners. These types of behaviours are viewed as being almost normal and acceptable for youth who hold attitudes and beliefs supporting crime and violence.

Even though the exact strength and direction of the correlation between the positive attitudes learners have towards violence and their actual violent behaviour is unclear, the causal relationship exists. This is an important finding with regard to the school violence phenomenon and should be further researched in order to generate interventions in the on-going fight against violence in the school environment.

The next section describes for the reader the behaviour of learners in South African schools, in order to examine the current situation with regards to the prevalence and intensity of violence in South African schools. The depicted picture on the nature and extent of school violence in South Africa undoubtedly increases the urgency in curbing this phenomenon.

6.2.3 The School Violence Phenomenon

It may seem almost unnecessary to provide the reader with a picture of the nature and extent of school violence since newspapers, television and radio news bulletins report on brutal and violent instances of school violence in South African schools daily. Chapter 3 of this study reported the findings of school violence literature and the empirical data pertaining to the extent of the violent behaviour of learners at school. The data below displays the major findings that paint the picture of the school violence phenomenon in South Africa, derived from literature and the data of the current study. A summary of the major findings below clearly depicts the seriousness of the situation in South Africa as well as the behaviour the youth portray at some stage during their school going career:

- One in two learners hits another learner;
- Roughly one in two learners verbally abuses another learner;
- One in three learners kicks another learner;

- One in five learners threatens another learner with violence;
- One in 10 learners carries a weapon to school;
- One in 20 learners tries to kill another learner; and
- Seven in 10 learners witness a physical attack on a fellow learner at least once in their school career.

In addition, the researcher examined the recurrence of certain violent acts carried out by learners on a daily basis. These findings are listed below.

- One in five learners teases, swears at, or calls another learner a hurtful name;
- One in 10 learners punches, hits or kicks another learner;
- One in 20 learners verbally threatens another learner;
- One in 50 learners threatens another learner with a weapon;
- One in 50 learners bullies another learner;
- One in 50 learners engages in a fight at school;
- One in 50 learners sexually harasses another learner; and
- One in 50 learners engages in ethnic or racist conflict at school.

While much emphasis has been placed on the perpetrators of school violence by the media and studies etcetera, it is just as important to highlight the victims of these violent acts and who are also, in most cases school-going youth. As such, the researcher specifically posed questions to these victims and found the following:

On a daily basis...

- One in six learners is teased, sworn at, or called hurtful names by fellow classmates;
- One in 20 learners is verbally threatened at school;
- One in 30 learners is threatened with a weapon at school;

- One in 20 learners is punched, hit or kicked at school;
- One in 20 learners is bullied at school;
- One in 30 learners engages in a fight at school;
- One in 50 learners is sexually harassed at school; and
- One in 30 learners becomes a victim of ethnic and racist conflict.

The above data furnishes the reader with a clear understanding of the extent of violence in South African schools, which some may describe as a common, everyday occurrence. The researcher would argue that regardless of whether a learner was the victim or the perpetrator, the element of violence has become part of South African learners and their school environment.

Findings on the nature of school violence indicated that this phenomenon is no longer limited to bullying and moderate hitting, punching, verbal abuse etcetera. Instead, the nature of violence in South African schools has deteriorated acutely to the extent to which incidents frequently include the unnatural, brutal and vicious killings of fellow classmates and role players in the school environment. Literature indicated that frequent reports of school violence also include incidents of, amongst others, rape, knife, sword and scissor stabbings, stone throwing, hostage taking, armed robbery, drive-by shootings and firing of guns on school property.

From these findings, a parallel can be drawn between the nature and extent of school violence and violence in the South African society. However, as serious as violent crime in South African schools and South African society as a whole has become, intervention and prevention thereof does not seem to measure up. It is a common feeling amongst South African citizens that no noteworthy or successful attempts to curb this violence have been made by the relevant authorities.

The researcher believes that a violent society with ineffective law enforcement will have a major impact on the youth of that society. As a result, the youth grow up with the misperception that they can get away with anything and that every action does not necessarily have a reactionary 'consequence'. This may serve to explain why South African youth may grow up with positive attitudes towards violence, which is in turn portrayed in their behaviour. These attitudes and behaviour then influence the nature and extent of violence accordingly.

6.2.4 The Roots of School Violence

Exploring the causes of school violence is a crucial part of research related to the violent behaviour of learners. If the causal relationship between two variables is known, the prevention thereof is more achievable. Numerous causes of school violence have been identified and explored over the years. Examples include: gang related behaviour, lack of discipline and alcohol and drug abuse. Many of these causes are considered by professionals in the field as being the root causes of school violence.

In this study (in Chapter 4), various causes of school violence as suggested by research findings in the literature were examined. Learners were probed on the reasons for their violent behaviour at school. The findings of Chapter 4 supported the suggestion that a culture of violence exists amongst South African youth. The explanation of traditional causes of school violence, such as self-defence and substance abuse, reflected the characteristics of a violent culture. These characteristics include, amongst others, the use of violence to resolve conflict and the formation of violent gangs. A large variety of social, socio-economic, historical, political, religious and educational factors were also found to be responsible for school violence. However, it can be said that no individual cause of school violence singlehandedly leads to actual violent behaviour in the school environment. Instead, a combination of risk factors

and causal factors increased the extent of violence in the participating schools.

The following are some of the most significant causes of school violence found in the current study and literature consulted:

- Gangs and gang activities;
- Weapons and guns in the school environment;
- Alcohol and drug abuse;
- Violent role models and heroes;
- Lack of conflict resolution skills;
- Violence used to acquire respect;
- Lack of discipline;
- Learners copy what they see on television; and
- Learners try to emulate the "feats" of "heroes", such as thugs, criminals and others making easy money.

According to Funk et al. (1999:1123), a society that reflects a 'Culture of Violence' includes, amongst others, the pervasive, ingrained identification with violence as an acceptable and valued activity. These significant causes of school violence listed above can be considered as characteristics of a culture of violence. The reason for this notion is that the nature of these causes reflects that the learners identify with violence and consider it an acceptable and valued activity. For example, learners who have violent criminals as heroes, indicate they not only accept violent behaviour, but also aspire to act in the same manner. Another example is when learners use violence to resolve conflict, it implies that these youth consider violence to be a valued activity, as they derive value from the use thereof. Variables such as the aforementioned imply violence has become a social norm and accepted value. This, in turn, again supports a culture of violence. Nevertheless, the variables identified as significant causes of school violence may be prevalent

in the lives of learners due to reasons other than a violent culture. However, it appears that these causes have become more prevalent as a result of learners accepting violence as a valued and legitimate part of everyday life, as do South Africans in general. As such, these variables may be accepted as characteristics of a violent culture developing in South African schools.

In addition to the above causes of school violence, it is evident that (some) children learn delinquent behaviour from their peers, family and in their communities, because these are the primary and secondary sources of socialization. In other words, a culture of violence is subsequently taught by a cycle of violence in communities and families. The profile of the learners revealed that some of the learners grew up in a violent neighbourhood, where substance abuse and anti-social behaviour was prevalent and acceptable and as a result they experienced a violent childhood. However, the vast majority of learners characterised their childhoods and neighbourhoods as loving, safe and friendly. Thus, it seems 'strange' that learners grow up in fairly ideal circumstances characterised by traits such as safety and love, yet learn to accept violent, anti-social behaviour as part of everyday life. It may be that even though children feel loved and safe, their communities are desensitized towards violence and subconsciously model and support behaviour that teaches children the use of violence is socially acceptable. The current study as well as previous literature shows that criminogenic risk factors on a social level such as a violent neighbourhood and childhood, community involvement and so forth, do contribute to school violence. This may be the starting point where learners are desensitized towards violent behaviour. While relatively few learners reported living with violence, statistically significant relationships were found between social criminogenic risk factors and violent behaviour for those who did. The most significant of these were learners who grew up in communities where violence and drug and alcohol abuse were prevalent.

Another factor identified in the empirical data that contributes to school violence is the extent to which learners are involved with their families and

uplifting extra-curricular activities, such as school sport and other religious influences. Where these are lacking or unattended to, a child more easily turns to (knowingly or subconsciously) subcultures and peer groups in society for support and socialization. If these groups are desensitized towards and accepting of violent behaviour, these will be the norms and values a child will internalize. This statement is supported by the findings in the current study and literature, where causal relationships were found between youths' violent behaviour, inadequate childrearing and socialization. Integrated sociological theories support the importance of family and the community involvement of learners. The interactional theory of Thornberry (as cited in Siegel & Senna, 2000:194) states that the deterioration of the social bond during adolescence leads to the onset of crime. Thornberry avers that weak social bonds of youth and adolescents are marked by a weakened attachment to parents and family, reduced commitment to school and external involvements, and diminished belief in conventional values. He argues the weaker these social bonds and involvement of youth, the more likely these youth will engage in anti-social behaviour. Youth who are committed to and involved in their families and society are less likely to engage in delinquency, as their actions are better controlled by stronger social bonds and associations with peers that engage in conventional behaviour (Hunter & Dantzker, 2002:144). It may thus be observed that attachment to the family, school society and religion are some of the most important determinants of whether youth will adjust and adhere to conventional society.

The explanations for violence in schools and in society are nothing new. The difference however is the fact that in the past anti-social and violent behaviour and attitudes were unacceptable and against the norms and values of society. Learners were apprehended and taught not to engage in such behaviour and attitudes which ultimately lead to school violence. Today however, the attitudes and behaviour in which learners engage, resulting in violent behaviour at school, are taught, accepted and even respected in certain communities, peer groups and media broadcasting. Examples include gang formations, alcohol- and drug abuse, risky sexual behaviour, resolving conflict

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by means of violence etcetera. In other words, violent behaviour has become acceptable behaviour and part of the lives of South Africans – a country with a violent culture.

While school violence is not a unique or new phenomenon in South African society today, the motive for violence in South African schools may have changed. Violence and crime in South Arica and South African schools are no longer only the result of opportunistic criminals and racist conflict, but more frequently result in brutal and fierce killings for no understandable reason. In some cases, a person will even be violated or killed for only a small amount of money such as R100. Surely this supports the notion that a culture of violence exists amongst South Africans and South African learners. In the researcher's opinion this suggests an attitude of 'Rape, murder, violate and steal from our fellow South Africans and fellow classmates, not for survival purposes, but rather because that is what we do. This is how we live and this is our career. Nothing or no one will stop us'. Violence in South Africa is no longer a means to survive, but rather an acceptable way of living.

The prevention of this violent behaviour is increasingly difficult as the youth of today have become socialized in a culture of violence. Thus, the prevention and curbing of school violence must address the root causes of the phenomenon as cultural characteristics.

6.2.5 How Learners View Violence

The attitudes learners hold towards violence were dealt with in Chapter 5. The main finding in that chapter was clear and straightforward: learners exhibit pro-violence attitudes and are becoming less offended and less perturbed by the daily use of violence and aggressive behaviour. Literature and previous studies pertaining to the variable in question were found to support this notion.

MacDonald and Da Costa (1996), in their study, highlighted that learners increasingly accept violence as part of their everyday lives and schooling experiences. This suggests the learners are desensitized towards violence and violent behaviour at school, as well as in general. This can and in turn does lead to violent behaviour of learners as they do not perceive violent behaviour as serious and delinquent as it really is. Learners justify the use of violence for self-defence in light of actual or perceived threat. This finding is understandable because it is a natural human reaction to want to protect oneself from threat. However this also indicates that learners may lack the necessary interpersonal skills to protect and defend themselves without the use of violent behaviour.

In this study, the attitudes learners have towards violence were examined by means of a well tested tool – according to its authors (Funk et al., 1999:1123) – namely, The Attitudes towards Violence Scale (AVS). This scale demonstrated good internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .86 in the current study), which emphasizes its efficiency. This scale constitutes a self-report measure, designed to measure the adolescent's attitude about the likelihood of specific responses to potentially violent situations. The AVS is subsequently used to collect a reliable measure of the attitudes of adolescents towards violence. The results of the AVS showed that learners consider violence to be an acceptable and valued activity, exercised on a daily basis.

The most prominent items on the AVS included the following:

- One in six learners can see themselves commit a violent crime in 5 years;
- One in five learners can see themselves joining a gang in future (it is assumed that the 13% who reported they are already involved in a gang or gang activities are excluded from this finding);

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- One in five learners agrees that it is okay to use violence to obtain what one wants; and
- One in three learners agrees that people who use violence gain respect.

The researcher is of the opinion that the above findings undoubtedly imply that certain learners identify positively with violence and violent behaviour. These pro-attitudes learners have towards violence strongly support the idea that a culture of violence exists amongst these learners. This statement is confirmed by the literature in Chapter 5 where it is noted that numerous other researchers drew similar conclusions regarding the pro-violence and pro-aggression attitudes displayed by school-going youth, for example, the studies conducted by Collings and Magojo (2003), Guerra and Slaby (1988) and Cotten et al. (1994).

This study also found that for learners the use of violence has become synonymous with (amongst others):

- A means to earn respect;
- A sense of belonging;
- Getting back at those who have hurt them by violating innocent victims;
- A means to obtain things in life they (supposedly) cannot get via legitimate means; and
- Modelling of behaviour learnt from family, friends and society.

The above findings suggest that characteristics of a culture of violence exist amongst these learners, because violence is seen as a legitimate and acceptable part of everyday life. According to Garbarino (as cited in Shafii & Shafii, 2003:157) a culture of violence exists in the United States of America, Australia and South Africa, as citizens of these countries violently discriminate

against different races and minority groups; they respond violently to dishonour and affront; and they have cultural values that promote violence.

Having established that learners hold pro-violence attitudes and that a culture of violence is forming (or has already largely been formed) amongst learners, the causes of these attitudes need to be understood. Further research needs to be carried out with regards to the exact nature and causes of a culture of violence amongst South African youth. However, Pelser (2008:6) addresses the topic of a culture of violence and the normalisation of crime and violence by writing that victimisation, crime and violence is a very common experience for South Africans, especially young South Africans. Pelser subsequently emphasises that this indicates how the country's youth are socialised and how they develop their identities. What a person feels, sees and understands of the way people in his or her environment do things, shapes what that person views as 'normal', 'routine', acceptable' and 'everyday'. This provides an individual with the framework of what is required to belong to a 'normal' environment. This leads to the development and replica of a 'culture'. Anthony Giddens (1991:38) supports this statement by asserting that "Self identity is not something that is just given … but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual". This suggests that learners develop pro-violence attitudes from environmental factors and influences stemming from neighbourhoods and childhoods.

It can also be deduced that, even though strong pro-violence attitudes and characteristics of a culture of violence exist amongst South African learners, it is a reality not unique to the school environment. South Africa as a country displays the characteristics of a violent culture. Brutality, cruelty, excessive violence and rampant meanness are being taught and accepted as part of who we are as South Africans. Curcio and First (1993:7) agree that society desensitizes learners towards violence and teaches them to behave violently when they refer to learners growing up in a culture where 'violence is normal'. According to numerous researchers such as Hamburg (1998:46-47), White

(1995:52), Van den Aardweg (1987:229), and Bybee and Gee (1982:107) the media represent some of the most influential role players in the lives of youth. De Wet (2003:94) avers that violence is glorified in the printed media, television programmes, films and fiction. This subsequently leads to a situation where "violence is accepted and legitimized in a general sense". Lund (2000:5) adds that "communities allow children to grow up in an atmosphere where violence is considered the only solution". Zulu et al. (2004:174) emphasizes that South African school-going youth have been "caught in a vicious spiral: a culture of violence and disrespect breeding a new culture of the same". Zulu et al. believe that learners have not yet realised the absurdity of placing their own futures, education, relationships, and their own happiness on the altar of violence.

Chapter 5 concluded that learners hold pro-violence attitudes and that a culture of violence exists amongst South African learners. However, it is just as important to determine the impact that this may or may not exert on the behaviour of school-going youth and the school environment.

6.3 Curbing School Violence: Discussion and Recommendations

Findings on the nature, extent and causes of school violence in the current study depicted that violence in South African schools is rooted in the broader violent South African environment. Thus, the culture of violence in some South African schools may be prevalent as a result of the culture of violence in the broader South Africa. South African authorities deal with crime in South Africa from a holistic point of view, addressing all contributing factors, such as socio-economic, racial, poverty, penal, moral issues. School violence thus needs to be addressed in terms of a similar holistic approach. Burton (2008b:3) agrees with this statement by identifying the 'whole school' approach to dealing with school violence as being the most effective. He further asserts that a school is an entity consisting of various components,

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such as learners, educators, principals, school management, parents etcetera. All these components subsequently need to be actively involved in intervention initiatives aiming to curb school violence.

However, this study focused on the contributing role **learners** play in the school violence phenomenon. This role included the attitudes and behaviour of learners that were likely to increase violence in South African schools. Thus, in this section, the discussion and recommendations to curb school violence will mainly focus on the contributing attitudes and behaviour of learners that would increase violence in schools.

Kempen (2008: Karate against crime, para. 5) explains that the term 'discipline' derives from the word 'disciple', which means to teach or guide. In addition, learners can be taught socially acceptable ways to behave if appropriate and effective discipline is employed. Educators, parents and those involved in disciplining learners all possess different opinions and views regarding the correct ways to regulate learners. Nonetheless, one thing is sure: legislation does not allow corporal punishment in schools and alternative measures of discipline need to be explored and put in place. 'Alternative' forms of discipline require creativity, commitment, time and resources. All of these are not always easily accessible. However, if we aim to successfully prevent school violence, factors such as creativity and commitment need to become part of our dialogue in order to teach learners to exercise self-control, respect for others and responsibility for their own actions. The suggested programme for intervention proposed by the researcher (which is discussed later in this section) is an example of a creative and committed programme, aimed to fight school violence.

In order to make certain recommendations to assist in curbing school violence, the researcher firstly examined intervention suggestions by numerous experts and researchers concerned with violence in South African

schools and abroad. Secondly, the researcher consulted literature on changing attitudes, because pro-violence attitudes of learners were identified as one of the main causes of school violence. Lastly, the researcher looked at examples of practical intervention programmes used to address juvenile delinquency in order to gather information and successful ideas on how to curb school violence in a creative manner. Thereafter, the researcher integrated 1) the consulted literature, as well as 2), the findings from the empirical research in an all-encompassing proposed programme focusing on the attitudes and behaviour of learners that contribute to school violence. This study found that a culture of violence exists amongst South African youth owing to their pro-violence attitudes and subsequent violent behaviour. The proposed programme will thus aim to instil in learners norms and values that condemn the use of violence. As a result, the researcher hopes that this will start to bring about change in the current violent culture amongst learners. In addition, the researcher hopes this change will assist in replacing the values and norms of a violent culture with those of a culture of 'ubuntu' in South African schools. Learners need to be taught socially accepted behaviour, based on socially accepted values and norms.

6.3.1 Suggestions for Intervention from Consulted Literature

Following is a summary of important key suggestions for the prevention of school violence and intervention at schools that were identified in the consulted literature. The reader will notice that these suggestions are both broad and specific, and cover a variety of contributing factors that negatively influence the safety of youth in the school environment.

Pelser (2008:12-13) highlights three important aspects in curbing violence in schools. The first is the importance of a coherent and sustained family behavioural support programme that focuses on dysfunctional and violent homes. Besides addressing the improvement of the family as a whole, he also

highlights the importance of a dedicated and comprehensive early childhood development programme. Such a programme should aim to improve the cognitive abilities, learning ability, self-esteem and empathy for others of a young individual. Lastly, he emphasizes the importance of a sustained effort to improve the management and quality of South African schools, so that they function more positively as places of learning and socialization. Pelser thus focuses on the individual, the family and the school environment as being important role-players in the curbing of school violence.

Steyn and Naicker (2007:10-11) largely focus on effective security measures in the school environment in the curbing of school violence. In doing so, Steyn and Naicker emphasize the importance of the use of ID cards for access to school property and the restriction of outsiders, as well as keeping school gates locked during school hours. In addition, Steyn and Naicker recommend schools should be regularly patrolled, searched and visited by the South African Police Service. Learners should also be involved in the school safety committee, as well as regularly attend self-defence classes.

Maree (2000:8-10) considers the altering of pupils' behaviour as essential in the curbing of school violence. He states that this can be done by a) drawing up a set of written and workable school codes and rules, with the involvement of learners, teachers, parents, and consultants or experts in the field of education; b) setting up quiet places where temperamental learners can cool down; and c) setting up workable and appropriate channels for dealing with learners' complaints including the following important suggestions to prevent school violence. Maree further avers that it is equally important to involve parents and teachers in the process to curb school violence by educating and supporting these role-players in order for them to better understand the phenomenon. Lastly he recommends active involvement from the government and professional services, such as psychologists, in order to address external factors that contribute to school violence, for example, poverty and problems within a family.

MacDonald and Da Costa (1996:16) specifically focus on the appropriate treatment of the victims and witnesses of school violence. They recommend that policies and practices should be revised, and input from learners should be included because they are not always satisfied with that which teachers perceive to be effective consequences for bullies. Greater attention should also be placed on the treatment of school violence victims and witnesses who report school violence should be treated with care and a positive response that would result in a meaningful learning experience.

Petersen et al. (1998:352-357) emphasize the importance of interpersonal skills in the curbing of school violence and recommends learners should receive training in conflict resolution, effective communication, crisis management strategies, and peer mediation. They further recommend an active involvement of the family in the school career of learners in order to assure that parents exert an influence on the behaviour which the learners display in the school environment.

Zulu et al. (2004:174) identify the lack of respect for oneself, fellow human beings, peers, parents, school property and authorities, as well as a lack of vision for the future, as key factors contributing to school violence. They recommend that these factors should be addressed by introducing, for example, the principles of "*ubuntu*" to learners as well as codes of conduct and psychological services in schools riddled by violence with a view to improving the resultant lack of a culture of teaching and learning.

Neser (2006:140) recommends that a focus should be placed on the psychosocial attributes contributing to school violence. For example, psychosocial trauma counselling should be readily available to, and even made compulsory for, victims of serious peer aggression. He also recommends moral standards and values should be instilled in learners in

school and at home in order to tackle the prevailing moral climate, the attitudes towards crime and general tolerance towards violence.

Lastly, Stevens et al. (2001:150-152) focus on greater external involvement in the lives of learners in assisting to curb school violence. This external involvement includes active parental participation, broader community involvement and the involvement of learners in after-school safety activities. Stevens et al. also assert that behaviour, conduct and discipline codes in the school environment, as well as the involvement in and responsibility towards the leadership system of the school, may contribute to the on-going process to curb school violence.

The above areas cover a variety of factors relevant to the curbing of the school violence phenomenon. However, for the purposes of this study, the researcher only focused on the factors relating to the behaviour and attitudes of learners. The researcher subsequently added these relevant factors to the proposed programme discussed later in this section.

6.3.2 Change of Delinquent Attitudes

In view of the findings in Chapters 2 and 5, in order to curb school violence it is thus important to change the pro-violence attitudes of learners in addition to addressing other causal factors. Guerra et al. (1995:526) highlight the importance of changing the positive attitudes of learners towards violence by stating:

> *If community violence remains high, then neighbourhood violence stress will remain high. If community violence is reduced but a*

particular boy does not change his views about aggression, then his
beliefs are still likely to stimulate aggressive behaviour.

Attitudes are however not changed effortlessly, since they constitute a person's patterns of beliefs, feelings, values and likes or dislikes towards certain behaviour. These sets of beliefs towards acting in a certain way are formed over time and enhanced by positive results and experiences. Consequently, in order to change these attitudes, similarly intensive processes need to be implemented.

The following theories stem from some of the most influential exponents identified in attitude-behaviour literature, specifically in those studies pertaining to attitude change. These theories are summarized below.

The Role of Accuracy of Information

Davidson (1995:326-329) identifies the role of accuracy of information as key to changing attitudes towards a given subject. He argues that according to the theory of reasoned action, a person will possess a positive or negative attitude towards performing a certain behaviour based on balancing the positive against the negative expectations. A person's initial experience with a specific behaviour provides an opportunity to compare the outcomes of the behaviour with its expectations. The important factor for attitude change here is the magnitude and direction of any discrepancies between the expectation and experience of the specific behaviour. If initial information of the outcomes of the behaviour is correct, resulting in a close match between expectancies and experiences, attitude towards the behaviour will remain unchanged. However, experiences that are markedly more negative or positive than the expected will result in attitude change. Even though discrepancies between experiences and expectancies are most likely to occur after initial behaviour,

subsequent experiences can also lead to a revision of expectancies, and in turn a change in attitude.

In applying Davidson's theory to the learners in the current study, they must be corrected with regards to their view (and experiences) that behaving violently leads to being rewarded. Chapters 4 and 5 both indicated that learners perceive violence as a means to (amongst others) defend oneself, feel safe, gain respect, resolve conflict, and experience feelings of belonging to peers and a reference group, such as a gang. In addition, learners are successful when using violence to achieve the above. Consequently, learners expect that violence will earn them respect, solve conflict and protect them, while their subsequent positive experiences create and enhance their positive attitudes towards the use of violence. In addition to this close match between expectancies and experiences, few or no repercussions follow this violent behaviour of learners. Corporal punishment is illegal and few schools have effective, alternative penal systems in place. Hence, experiences of acting violently at school should change in order to alter the prevailing attitudes of learners towards violence. For example, learners must be introduced to alternative means to gain respect at school, such as leading a committee or sports team, as well as alternative ways to resolve conflict, such as discussion groups and applying the principles of restorative justice. The positive experiences and results of these alternatives should supersede those of using violence.

The Importance of Persuasive Communication

Hovland, Janis and Kelley (1973:115-128) explain persuasive communication as a tool to change attitudes by providing a summary of studies on opinion change. Their summary highlights the generalizations on the topic, while also identifying three important areas for effective, persuasive communication, namely:

1)   The communicator (*who* says it);
2)   The communication (*what* is said); and
3)   The audience (*to whom* it is said).

With regard to *who* delivers the message, the expertness and trustworthiness of the communicator is of the essence. A communicator with high credibility has substantially greater immediate effect on an audience's *opinion* than a communicator with low credibility. Subsequently, communications attributed to low credibility sources tend to be considered more biased than identical ones attributed to high credibility sources. Pertaining to the communication or *what* is conveyed to the audience, arguments and appeals that function as incentives should be used. Such incentives include substantiating arguments that may lead the audience to judge the conclusions as being 'true' or 'correct'. Other examples of such incentives include 'positive' appeals that call attention to the rewards to be gained from acceptance; and 'negative' appeals, including fear-arousing contents that represent the unpleasant consequences of failure to accept the conclusion.

Lastly, the audience *to whom* the message is given should be taken into account in persuasive communication. People react differently to the same social pressures while incentives can only be effective as far as an individual is motivated to change. By taking into account factors such as 'group

conformity motives' and 'individual differences in persuade-ability', it may be possible for the communicator to arrive at a more comprehensive set of general principles for predicting opinion and attitude change.

One of the most important and effective forms of communication is the media, which include the television, radio and news. Thoman (n.d.: para.5) makes the connection between the role of the media and a society endorsing violence by highlighting beliefs of certain experts that of the 25,000 murders committed in the United States of America every year, at least half are due to the influence and desensitising effects of violence in the media. As media is thus theorised to increase the levels of violence in society, it should also be used to reverse the developing culture of violence in South African schools. In other words, media should communicate to learners and youth that violence as unacceptable and immoral by portraying it as such. The media should clearly stigmatize specific types of violence and violent behaviour in the school environment, as well as promote zero-tolerance attitudes towards violence.

In applying persuasive communication as a tool to alter the positive attitudes of learners towards violence, the following can be averred with regard to the communicator, the communication and the audience:

- Persuasive communication that aims to influence pro-violence attitudes of learners should stem from a person whom they trust, respect and regard as credible and reliable. These persons should, for example, be positive, local sports and television stars, such as rugby player Bryan Habana, athlete Oscar Pistorius and actor/singer Bonginkosi Thuthukani Dlamini (AKA Zola 7).
- The message given to learners regarding school violence, drug abuse, and other delinquent behaviour should convince learners that these kinds of behaviours are wrong and unacceptable. Learners must be assured that delinquent behaviour will have negative consequences to

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such an extent that they fear displaying any behaviour of this nature. In addition, learners should realise that law-abiding behaviour, based on socially accepted norms and values, is correct and will be positively rewarded; and

- The communicator who aims to change pro-violence attitudes of learners should keep in mind a variety of personalities, peer groups, demographic traits etcetera when communicating a message to a group of learners. Differences amongst individuals influence their likelihood of responding to a message aiming to alter attitudes. The communicator must adapt his or her message according to these differences in order to exert maximum effect when working with youth and learners in South Africa. Large groups of learners should rather be divided into smaller groups, differentiating between those specific traits that might hamper the communication process.

Hovland et al. (1973:123) assert that students who manifest social inadequacy, inhibition of aggression, and depressive tendencies show the greatest change in opinion and attitude. According to these findings, it can be assumed that violent learners are highly likely to respond positively to attempts to alter delinquent attitudes by means of persuasive communication. This supports the inclusion of activities changing pro-violence attitudes of learners in the curbing of school violence.

Active Participation as a Tool in Attitude Change

Fishbein (1975:411) identifies the following forms of active participation used to bring about attitude change:

- Contact and interaction between people with different views, beliefs and attitudes;

- Choice between several alternatives in attitude towards a given object/subject;
- A public speech in favour of some position or performance of some other behaviour; and
- Role playing between people with different views, beliefs and attitudes.

It is expected that experiences like these will generate changes in beliefs, attitudes, intentions, and behaviour. Fishbein (1975:411) avers the effectiveness of active participation in noting that this strategy might be even more effective than passive exposure to information, in bringing about attitude change. Two effective examples (amongst others) of active participation are 'interpersonal contact' and 'role-playing'. A general assumption is that interpersonal contact generates more favourable interpersonal relations, which may in turn lead to positive influences on differences in attitude and beliefs. For example, interpersonal contact between members of different races and ethnic groups tends to produce some change in attitudes towards diversity. The key assumption of 'interpersonal contact' is that it provides individuals with an opportunity to get to know each other, to appreciate and perhaps to accept the other's point of view. This will consequently change attitudes and improve relations (Fishbein, 1975:417).

Role-playing as an initiative to change attitudes is based on the same premises as 'interpersonal contact'. The theory here is that a person would be more likely to display attitude change if he or she was induced to play the role of someone who holds opinions in contrast to his or hers. In other words, when an individual has to act out the role of someone else, it facilitates changes in the individual's views of himself, other people, and events (Fishbein, 1975:418). These changes in opinion generate alterations in attitude towards the behaviour of others and one's own.

'Interpersonal contact' and 'Role-play', as examples of Active Participation which aims to change attitudes, can be applied to violence in the school environment as follows:

- In order to change pro-violence attitudes of learners via interpersonal contact, learners should be regularly and personally exposed to learners from other schools who display anti-violent behaviour in the school environment and experience successful consequences. Violent learners are thus exposed to individuals just like them, but through interpersonal contact, they realise that the values and norms of these learners are different to theirs. This may lead to learners with pro-violence attitudes eventually accepting and adapting to anti-violent norms and values displayed by fellow learners; and
- Role-playing can be employed to change positive attitudes of learners towards violence by creating scenes where learners experience how it feels to be on the receiving end of violence. In other words, a teacher can set up a role-playing scene where the school bullies are being victimised by those learners who are usually the victims. Both parties, especially the bullies and violent learners, will become familiar with what the other party experiences in such an incident. This may lead to a change in pro-violence attitudes and subsequent violent behaviour at school.

All the above mentioned theories on changing attitudes indicate that attitudes **can** be altered in some cases. Subsequently, attitude change could bring about a transformation in behaviour. From this study, it would appear that a change in pro-violence attitudes will most likely bring about a difference in violent behaviour displayed by learners. These changes should, in turn, decrease the levels of violence in South African schools.

6.3.3 Examples of Successful Disciplinary Intervention Programmes

This section provides the reader with practical examples of successful programmes supporting participatory involvement and commitment of youth in the attempt to combat school violence and juvenile delinquency. The purpose of including this information in the discussion on curbing school violence is the fact that the programme to prevent school violence proposed by the researcher will adopt an approach fostering the active participation of learners. Thus, in examining successful programmes that address juvenile delinquency, important lessons can be learnt and applied in the researcher's own suggested programme. Three intervention programmes are discussed, namely *Karate Against Crime*, *Midnight Basketball*, and the *Silence the Violence Programme.*

Karate Against Crime – A Sports Programme with Proven Results

In this project, learners are introduced to karate as a sport and those who excel in this sport are also given recognition. The project aims to restore discipline in areas where learners experience discipline problems, as well as to teach learners the art of self-discipline, control and the ability to accept responsibility for their decisions and actions (Kempen, 2008). When the *Karate Against Crime* project was originally called into life at *Gelvandale* SAPS in the Eastern Cape, the first milestone was reached when the SAPS station of the gang ridden *Gelvandale* area won the competition for being the best police station in South Africa. After this, the project was implemented at *Ceres* where visible differences in the lives of learners were reported.

Quotes (as cited in Kempen, 2008) such as the following were published:

Ek wil my opregte dank uitspreek teenoor [karate] *Sensei, Andries Douglas. My broer se kind in Gr.6 is een van die leerders wat baat gevind het by die Karate Against Crime projek. Dit is ongelooflik hoe sy selfvertroue die afgelope paar weke verbeter het. Tuis is hy nou hoflik en sy ouers hoef hom nie aan te praat om sy tuiswerk te doen nie. Selfs sy eksamenpunte het verbeter. In slegs 2 maande het sy hele persoonlikheid verander.*

and

The violent attack, physical abuse and merciless killings of young, helpless and vulnerable children in and around Ceres, have led to the school's decision to make use of the project. Learners take these classes very seriously and are always eager to learn new skills.

Benefits of the *Karate Against Crime* programme include the following:

- Learners show a positive change in attitude;
- Learners show more self confidence;
- Learners show increased self discipline regarding school work, which leads to an improvement in examination results;
- Learners have an alternative to spending their leisure time on the street, becoming involved in drugs or crime, or being influenced by bad elements;
- Police have the opportunity to engage with youth and talk to learners about child abuse, drug abuse and crime awareness; and

- Children have the opportunity to share with their karate instructor important pieces of information about suspects' whereabouts, criminal offences, drug posts and illegal 'shebeens', as it was noticed that these children's respect for their karate instructor exceeds that for the local drug lord (Kempen, 2008: Benefits, para. 2-4).

From the above results and benefits of the *Karate Against Crime* project, it can be concluded that this programme is successful in contributing to school violence prevention. It influences the levels of discipline and conformity to acceptable values and norms amongst learners.

Midnight Basketball

Santiago (2006) reports a success story where officers of the Third District Metropolitan Police Department in Kennedy, United States of America, engaged in a programme to bring together police and youth in the area. The *Midnight Basketball* programme aims to keep high-risk young people from getting caught up in street life and to build relationships with authorities. This will result in these youth behaving in accordance with acceptable norms and values of society. Benefits of the Midnight Basketball programme include:

- Youth are shown that officers patrolling their neighbourhoods enjoy sports like they do, which will lead to some form of unity;
- Officers and authorities are afforded an opportunity to engage with and talk to juveniles about delinquent behaviour and the consequences; and
- Juvenile delinquents have an opportunity to commit to something other than their antisocial peers, which introduces them to acceptable behaviour and attitudes.

The data above suggests numerous possibilities for successful influences on the lives of juvenile delinquents. Youth need positive role models who can share information regarding socially acceptable behaviour. These role models also provide an opportunity to relate and commit to law-abiding and law-enforcing citizens, as these role-players offer youth alternative ways and means of living.

The most important benefit generated from interaction between youth and the law-enforcing authorities is the fact that this leads to stronger relationships and unity between them in their communities. As a result, these youth will display greater respect for the rules and regulations, as well as socially accepted norms and values of a community, which may positively influence their violent and delinquent behaviour.

Silence the Violence Programme

Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative, a South African non-governmental organization, designed and facilitates the *Silence the Violence* programme (www.khulisaservices.co.za). The *Silence the Violence* programme aims to make participants aware of the limitations of their belief systems and to help them find ways to construct and rebuild new pathways for fulfilment. Other objectives of the programme include helping the participants to identify the things that trigger their violence and to interrupt their patterns of violent responses. The programme also confronts sectarianism that often leads to prejudice, discrimination, ill will and malice towards people of another belief.

Youth and offenders benefit by the programme in numerous ways, including:

- Positive attitude changes (specifically changes in pro-violence attitudes);
- Knowledge and training in belief systems, self awareness and fulfilment, restorative justice principles, theory and levels of violence;
- Ability to express themselves and their feelings clearly, both verbally and in writing; and
- A major opportunity to change violent peers and communities by changing themselves first.

The *Silence the Violence* programme facilitated by *Khulisa Crime Prevention Initiative* represents a successful example of an intervention programme that addresses violence and pro-violence attitudes amongst youth, in communities and in societies at risk. Participants of the programme are made aware of and their violent behaviour and the reasons for it, as well as exposed to alternative law-abiding behaviour. The programme teaches participants conflict resolution skills, as well as living in harmony in a diverse society.

These three examples of programmes that require the active participation of youth, all assist in preventing juvenile delinquency and violent behaviour displayed by youth. The researcher is thus of the opinion that it is important to include similar activities in a programme that aims to curb school violence.

6.3.4 Proposed Programme

The following is a proposed 12-week programme that requires active participation from learners. The programme addresses the destructive factors identified in the empirical data and in the consulted literature relevant to the

behaviour and attitudes of learners who contribute to school violence. The main goals of this programme include the following:

1)   Change pro-violence and delinquent attitudes and behaviour of learners;
2)   Equip learners with necessary life skills; and
3)   Get learners highly involved with their families, schools, communities and law-enforcement agencies.

The proposed 12-week programme will be divided into three x four-week workshops, each with a specific theme that addresses the three main goals of this programme, as set out above.

The programme will aim to affect the lives of the learners on four levels, namely:

1) Individual;
2) Family;
3) School; and
4) Community levels.

The first four week workshop will focus on changing the pro-violence attitudes of learners, as well as that of the family and community members involved in the lives of learners. The activities in this workshop will be based on literature and theory pertaining to attitude change, such as persuasive communication by positive heroes/role models, authorities and the media, who will aim to stigmatize violence. In addition, learners will be involved in active participation activities, such as role playing, and interpersonal contact and interaction between fellow class mates and other individuals with different backgrounds and different attitudes towards violence. These activities will be facilitated by
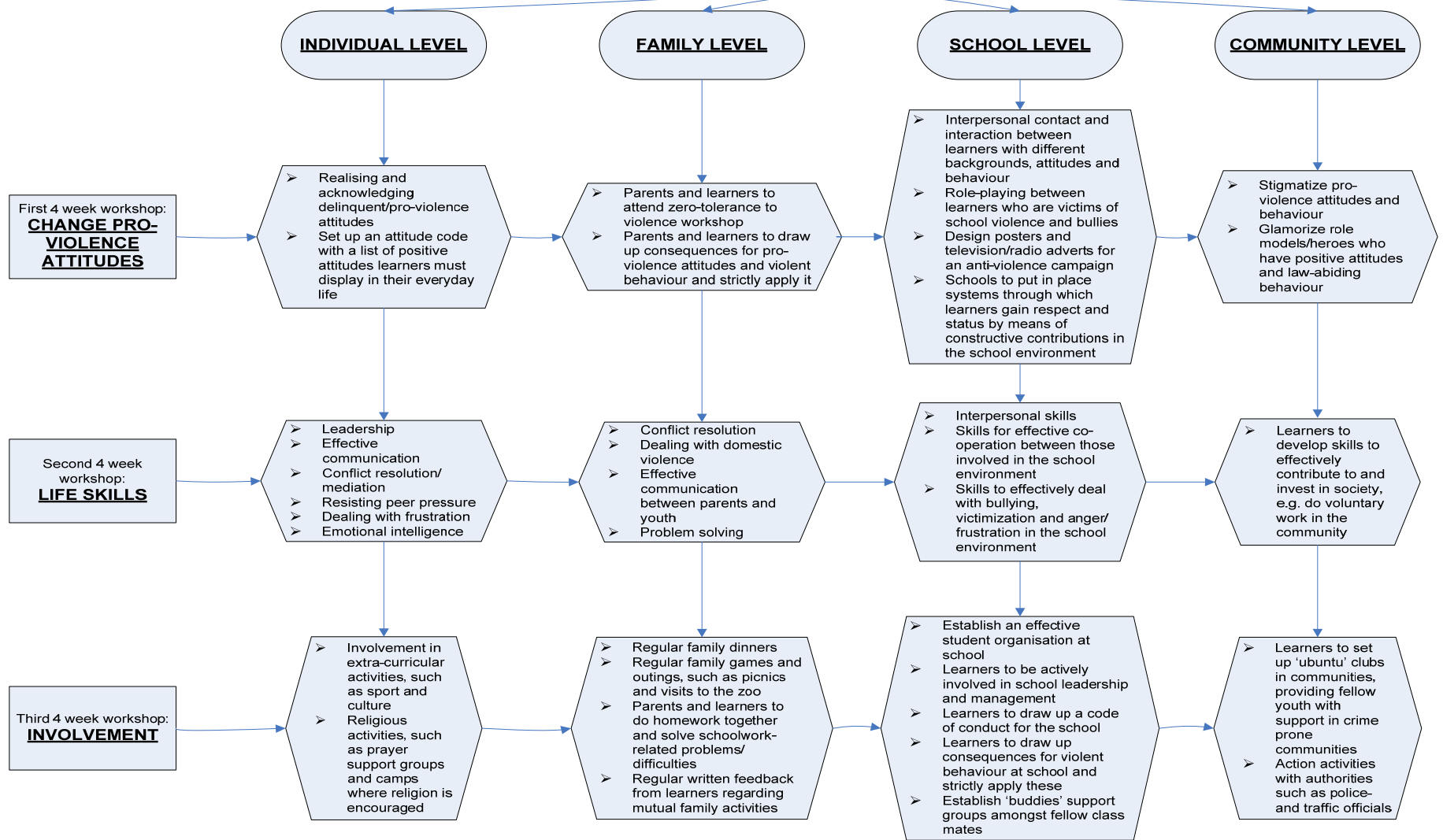
experts in the field of violent behaviour and the attitude-behaviour relationship. This workshop will aim to alter the pro-violence attitudes of learners and subsequently curb their violent behaviour. Pro-violence attitudes of learners may be replaced during this workshop with positive attitudes that support moral- and law-abiding behaviour, as well as respect for oneself and others, that is, attitudes of 'ubuntu'.

The second four week workshop will focus on equipping learners with the necessary life skills needed to be successful in life, as well as those needed to display moral and law-abiding behaviour. The important skills that will be addressed in this workshop include, amongst others, leadership, effective communication, conflict resolution and dealing with frustration and peer pressure. This workshop will be facilitated by psychologists, criminologists, social workers, teachers, and other experts with knowledge on life skills, especially in the school environment. Learners, who have the necessary life skills to deal with difficulties and frustration in life, might refrain from using violence as a means to deal with issues in life. This may in turn curb school violence.

The third and last four week workshop in the 12 week proposed programme will focus on getting learners highly involved with their families, schools, communities and law-enforcement agencies. This involvement may contribute to the behaviour of learners becoming more socially accepted because these learners will actively invest time and effort into constructive activities and agencies. Learners may realize that violent and delinquent behaviour will result in breaking the bonds that were formed with the people who are important to them. Learners may also change their violent behaviour and rather model the behaviour of law-abiding citizens who possess morals and socially accepted values. Learners' involvement in constructive activities and agencies may also result in learners having less time and energy to engage in delinquent, violent behaviour.

The 12 week proposed programme will run in the afternoons after school and learners will rotate between the three workshops. Learners will be involved in numerous activities, which will aim to positively influence the lives of these learners. After completing the proposed programme, learners will hand in a portfolio indicating that all the activities have been completed. Learners will also have to submit written feedback in their portfolios pertaining to what they learnt, as well as how the workshop influenced their lives. A 'graduation ceremony' will follow after the proposed 12 week programme, where respect and status will be given to those learners who successfully completed the 12 week programme and whose attitude and behaviour have changed positively in the aftermath of the programme. A diagram of the proposed programme and specific activities is displayed in Figure 6.1 on page 239.

PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES ON IDENTIFIED LEVELS

INDIVIDUAL LEVEL   **FAMILY LEVEL**   **SCHOOL LEVEL**   **COMMUNITY LEVEL**

First 4 week workshop: CHANGE PRO-VIOLENCE ATTITUDES

Individual Level:
- Realising and acknowledging delinquent/pro-violence attitudes
- Set up an attitude code with a list of positive attitudes learners must display in their everyday life

Family Level:
- Parents and learners to attend zero-tolerance to violence workshop
- Parents and learners to draw up consequences for pro-violence attitudes and violent behaviour and strictly apply it

School Level:
- Interpersonal contact and interaction between learners with different backgrounds, attitudes and behaviour
- Role-playing between learners who are victims of school violence and bullies
- Design posters and television/radio adverts for an anti-violence campaign
- Schools to put in place systems through which learners gain respect and status by means of constructive contributions in the school environment

Community Level:
- Stigmatize pro-violence attitudes and behaviour
- Glamorize role models/heroes who have positive attitudes and law-abiding behaviour

Second 4 week workshop: LIFE SKILLS

Individual Level:
- Leadership
- Effective communication
- Conflict resolution/ mediation
- Resisting peer pressure
- Dealing with frustration
- Emotional intelligence

Family Level:
- Conflict resolution
- Dealing with domestic violence
- Effective communication between parents and youth
- Problem solving

School Level:
- Interpersonal skills
- Skills for effective co-operation between those involved in the school environment
- Skills to effectively deal with bullying, victimization and anger/ frustration in the school environment

Community Level:
- Learners to develop skills to effectively contribute to and invest in society, e.g. do voluntary work in the community

Third 4 week workshop: INVOLVEMENT

Individual Level:
- Involvement in extra-curricular activities, such as sport and culture
- Religious activities, such as prayer support groups and camps where religion is encouraged

Family Level:
- Regular family dinners
- Regular family games and outings, such as picnics and visits to the zoo
- Parents and learners to do homework together and solve schoolwork-related problems/ difficulties
- Regular written feedback from learners regarding mutual family activities

School Level:
- Establish an effective student organisation at school
- Learners to be actively involved in school leadership and management
- Learners to draw up a code of conduct for the school
- Learners to draw up consequences for violent behaviour at school and strictly apply these
- Establish 'buddies' support groups amongst fellow class mates

Community Level:
- Learners to set up 'ubuntu' clubs in communities, providing fellow youth with support in crime prone communities
- Action activities with authorities such as police- and traffic officials

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(Above) Figure 6.1: Proposed 12 week active participation programme

The 12 week programme discussed above involves active participation from learners, and will aim to address the unconstructive factors relevant to the behaviour and attitudes of learners who contribute to school violence in an attempt to curb the latter. This study found that learners have pro-violence attitudes and display high frequencies of violent behaviour in the school environment. Based on these findings, the researcher concluded that a culture of violence exists amongst these learners. Violence in certain South African schools has become a growing culture. Violence has undoubtedly become part of the worldwide image of South African schools, whether or not South Africans want to acknowledge the nature and extent of violence in our schools. Violence is tearing South African schools apart and creating educational environments only fit for abuse, violation and murder. Maree (2000:10) supports this statement by writing:

> *It seems as if some South African schools are increasingly beginning to resemble 'war zones' and as if there is a 'spectacular' lack of decisive leadership in the war against runaway crime in schools.*

Violence in South African schools needs urgent attention, intervention and prevention. The researcher hopes the suggested programme can be explored, tested and improved in order to contribute to the on-going 'war' against the school violence phenomenon.

This section provided the reader with recommendations and suggestions for intervention in order to address the high levels of violence in South African schools. The prevention of school violence was not the main focus of this study, but the researcher emphasizes in this discussion that, due to the widespread occurrence of brutal violence in South African schools, the

curbing of this phenomenon needs to be urgently and effectively addressed. This can be done by investigating violence in South African schools regularly and in more detail. The following section subsequently provides the reader with suggestions for future research, which may contribute to the fight against violence and brutality in our schools.

6.4 Future Research

It was envisaged that the conduction of this research study might lead to action being taken and policies being formulated by those involved in education for the interventions necessary to deal with school violence and the culture of violence that exists amongst some South African learners. The recommendations in the previous section may assist such actions and policies aiming to address school violence. In addition, in this study, certain factors that can be further explored in future research, emerged.

Firstly, future research should address the prevalence of pro-violence attitudes amongst learners, specifically why learners hold these attitudes favouring violence and how such attitudes are developed. Such research should focus on probing the vital role players that desensitize youth towards violence, as well as how this desensitization should be curbed.

Secondly, future studies could focus on a more detailed analysis of the nature, strength and direction of influences involved in the relationship between pro-violence attitudes and subsequent violent behaviour of youth in the school environment. In probing this relationship between attitude and behaviour, future research should also investigate whether pro-violence attitudes can be changed and if so, how this should be achieved. In addition, it would be valuable to investigate whether an alteration in pro-violence

attitudes amongst learners brings about change in the levels of violence in the school environment.

Lastly, future studies should continue and further investigate the efficacy of the proposed 12 week programme generated from this study and discussed earlier in this chapter. Based on the findings of such future studies, the proposed programme can be adapted and applied in the war against the school violence phenomenon.

6.5 Final Remarks

The aim of this study was to establish whether a culture of violence exists amongst some South African learners by investigating the attitudes and behaviour of these learners towards violence. In addition, the causes of school violence were also investigated, as these contribute to the violent behaviour displayed by learners at school. The researcher also intended to establish what measures should be taken to create a safer school environment.

This study proved to be true that which is known with regard to the school violence phenomenon, that is, school violence is prevalent in South African schools with high levels of frequency and increasing levels of severity. Traditional causes of school violence, such as racial conflict and poverty, were not as prominent in this study as expected. Instead, moral degeneration and exposure to and desensitization of youth towards violence are noteworthy factors, which ultimately result in pro-violence attitudes and violent behaviour of learners.

This study examined the possibility that a culture of violence exists amongst South African learners. In order to draw conclusions on the above notion, the researcher identified the 'attitudes' and 'behaviour' of learners as being the two variables that give an indication of the culture of South African learners. The definition of the term 'culture' stipulated the relationship between a person's attitude, behaviour and culture. 'Culture' was defined as a set of rules or standards shared by members of a society, which, when acted upon by the members, produces behaviour that falls within a range of variation the members consider proper and acceptable. In addition, attitude was defined as the norms, values and rules that regulate the behaviour of an individual. These definitions confirmed the bond between a person's attitude, behaviour and culture.

The researcher found that learners display favourable attitudes towards violence and high frequencies of violent behaviour to such an extent that it generates a culture of violence amongst these youth. From the empirical research and literature, it appears that (if pro-violence attitudes are left un-attended) a growing culture of violence is imminent in South Africa. Pelser (2008:7) reinforces this statement by writing that this 'culture of violence' theme had already been mentioned 22 years ago by the late Percy Qoboza. In the *City Press* in April 1986 Qoboza wrote "the dark, terrible beauty" of the courage of young township fighters, and acknowledged "…. a great shame…. that this is our heritage to our children: the knowledge of how to die, and how to kill" (as cited in Pelser, 2008:7). In subsequent years to date, numerous authors (as cited in Pelser, 2008:7) commented on the development of a 'culture of violence' in South Africa, for example:

- Colin Bundy (as cited in Pelser, 2008:7) highlighted the blurring of political and criminal activity as well as the destruction of families and schools in the township violence in the 1980s by stating "Social workers and psychologists speak of brutalisation; an alternative term might be the internalisation of violence";

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- Graeme Simpson (as cited in Pelser, 2008:7) commented on the "*amagents*" and the emerging "culture of violence" where crime and violence are justified in terms of mainstream "business", "status", "lifestyle" and "materialism"; and

- Antony Altbeker (as cited in Pelser, 2008:7) in 2007 wrote in a book titled *A Country at War with Itself. South Africa's Crisis of Crime*, the pervasiveness of crime and violence is the result of a chain reaction where high levels of criminality and violent behaviour lead to even more people copycatting others in similar behaviour. Altbeker added that crime and violence have become problems larger than those solely explained by historical, social or economic factors, which are usually said to be the 'root causes'.

Research supports the above statement by revealing that crime and often violent crime is a primary aim for many youth in South Africa to gain "respect", "status", sexual partners, "justice", bonds with society, and to demonstrate "achievement" amongst their peers in their communities.

It seems that the manner in which today's youth are socialized largely contributes to their pro-violence attitudes and behaviour. The majority of learners are no longer taught morals and socially accepted norms and values. In addition, the current study found that background, family, neighbourhood etcetera, are not necessarily the root causes of moral degeneration of youth and ultimately violent behaviour. Instead, the change in society is the (over) **exposure** of youth to violence in the news, media, television, music, games, being on the street, etcetera. The researcher is of the opinion that **these** may be the root causes of moral degeneration, which in turn generates a culture with no morals and norms, and one favourable towards violent behaviour.

The issue of violence in South African schools is not getting better. No sufficient relief is in sight for those involved in the school environment, which

is identified as one of the places where one is most likely to be violated. Thus, urgent intervention is needed. The researcher is of the opinion that the starting point of such intervention should be with the learners, which should be initiated by adults, professionals and authorities involved in the school environment, as well as in the socialization of youth. Examples of people that should take responsibility for the intervention in schools include parents, the Department of Education, the Department of Social Development, and professionals in the Human Sciences. The pro-violence attitudes and violent behaviours of learners can more likely be influenced and changed because they are still young and still developing who they are and want to become. As such, it is of great importance to address the causes and prevention of the culture of violence amongst youth, as youth are trained to use violent skills in conflict resolution, as well celebrate death, cruelty and destruction as being positive values.

The research rationale for this study included that school violence needs to be urgently addressed, as it is increasing on a daily basis in frequency and severity and subsequently has irreversible effects on all those involved in the school environment. A school is an institution where parents send their children to learn under the supervision of teachers. A school is also a place to which learners go to receive education and preparation for their adult lives. However, when parents send their children to enrol at school, they do not expect to discover that school is the 'single most common' site of crime and victimization where youth are twice as likely as adults to become victims of crime. When parents send their children to enrol at school, they do not expect them to become a member of a growing culture of violence aided by the very environment that is supposed to prepare them for their futures. Instead, parents expect a school environment to provide their children with a safe atmosphere, conducive to successful education. The school environment should provide our learners with not only skills to work efficiently as adults some day, but also life skills in order to be valued members of the South African society. Culture is learnt and shared between those who share the values and norms that underwrite the specific culture. Thus, South Africans

need to break the cycle of violence that currently overshadows the precious characteristics of our country, such as our unique wildlife, nature and true African quality that attract thousands of international tourists annually to this country. With that accomplished, a culture of 'ubuntu', that generates respect, co-operation and behaviour governed by morals, can positively influence and change the extremely violent atmosphere in South African schools.

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