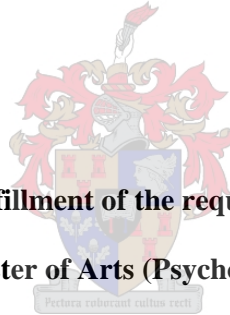


**Exploring 12 to 14 year old children's perceptions of the
causes and effects of physical violence between children:**

A Lynedoch study

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Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts (Psychology)

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work, and that I have not previously or in its entirety or in part submitted it to any other university for a degree.



.....
Grant Henry Demas

March 2010

.....
Date

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ABSTRACT

Violence occurs everywhere in the world, yet in poor communities like Lynedoch, located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, physical violence between children has become endemic. It is so severe that in 2004 a child from this community was murdered by peers. Furthermore, a trend has been observed throughout South Africa, of serious acts of physical violence between children. This has escalated to such an extent that in 2008 the country's schools were declared the most unsafe and dangerous in the world.

The present study was undertaken to obtain a firsthand understanding of the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch. It was further motivated by the researcher's location as a Lynedoch resident and school teacher. The information was obtained from 12 child participants who reside in Lynedoch. Qualitative research was employed and a depth focus group interview was used to obtain the information. The information which was obtained was then categorised into units, from which the themes were extrapolated. It was the research instrument of choice, because it is highly recommended for conducting research with children and for exploring sensitive topics. Once the information was obtained, the participants were debriefed.

In order to formulate a holistic and systemic understanding of the research findings Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory was used as a framework. This enabled the researcher to discuss the findings within the constructs of the micro-system, the meso-system, the exo-system, the macro-system and the chrono-system.

The discussion also included the issue of the influence of nature versus nurture, the emotional system, the cognitive-system and the behaviour-system.

The findings of the present study revealed that the perceived causes of the physical violence between children in Lynedoch include a lack problem solving skills, difficulty dealing with certain emotions, low self-esteem, poor conflict resolution skills, domestic problems, difficulty communicating, a need for attention, and adults modeling physical violence to children. The perceived effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch include painful emotions, desensitisation, displaced anger, vengefulness and suicidal ideation.

In order to practically address the problems that were revealed through the formulation of the research findings, the present study recommends the implementation of systemic changes at multiple levels, including political, social, economic and personal changes.

OPSOMMING

Geweld kom oral in die wêreld voor, veral in armer gemeenskappe soos Lynedoch, wat in die Wes-Kaap Provinsie van Suid-Afrika geleë is. In hierdie gemeenskap het fisiese geweld tussen kinders 'n endemie geword. In 2004 is 'n kind vermoor deur ander kinders van hierdie gemeenskap. 'n Tendens is dwarsdeur Suid-Afrika opgemerk, van ernstige gevalle van fisiese geweld tussen kinders. Dit het so vererger dat Suid-Afrikaanse skole in 2008 as die mees onveilig en gevaarlike skole ter wêreld bestempel is.

Die huidige studie was onderneem om 'n eerstehandse begrip van die oorsake en gevolge van fisiese geweld tussen kinders in Lynedoch te verkry. Die navorser was verder gemotiveer deur sy betrokkenheid as onderwyser by die laerskool en as inwoner van die Lynedochgemeenskap. Twaalf kinders van die Lynedoch gemeenskap het deelgeneem aan die studie. Kwalitatiewe navorsing was gedoen. 'n Fokusgroeponderhoud was gebruik om die inligting te verkry. Hierdie navorsingsinstrument was gebruik omdat dit die aanbevole metode is vir navorsing met kinders en veral wanneer sensitiewe onderwerpe ondersoek word. Na die afloop van die onderhoude, was daar 'n ontlonting vir deelnemers.

Om 'n holistiese en sistemiese begrip van die navorsingsresultate te formuleer, is Urie Bronfenbrenner se bio-ekologiese sisteem teorie gebruik. Dit het die navorser in staat gestel om die bevindinge binne die raamwerk van die mikro-sisteem, meso-sisteem, exo-sisteem, makro-sisteem en die chrono-sisteem te bespreek. Die bespreking het ook die kwesie van die invloed van die mens se natuur teenoor die

invloede van die omgewing, die emosionele sisteem, die kognitiewe sisteem en die gedrag-sisteem gedek.

Die bevindinge van die huidige studie het die volgende oorsake van fisiese geweld tussen kinders in Lynedoch geopenbaar: 'n gebrek aan probleemoplossingsvaardighede; die swarigheid om pynlike emosies te verwerk; lae selfbeeld; swak konflikthanteringsvermoëns; huishoudelike probleme; probleme met kommunikasievaardighede, en 'n tekort aan aandag en volwassenes se fisiese gewelddadige gedrag. Die waargenome effekte van fisiese geweld tussen kinders in Lynedoch sluit die volgende in: pynlike emosies; desensitisering; verplaasde gevoelens van woede; wraaksugtigheid en selfmoordgedagtes.

Ten einde die probleme wat deur hierdie studie na vore gekom het, prakties aan te spreek, word sistemiese veranderinge op verskeie vlakke, insluitend persoonlike, sosiale, ekonomiese, sowel as politieke aanbeveel.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background to the study

More than a decade after the fall of apartheid in South Africa, the legacy of structural poverty and institutionalised violence against black people continues to be experienced (May & Woolard, 2009). Over the years crime and violence have become pervasive, exposing South African children to extremely high levels of violent crime at home, at school and in their communities (Blaser, 2008). This exposure places children at undue risk of developing psychopathological behaviour (Kim, Levanthal, Koh, Hubbard, & Boyce, 2006) and of having their general well-being compromised. Furthermore, the relationship between children being exposed to physical violence and the chances of consequently becoming a perpetrator thereof is well documented (Allwood & Bell, 2008).

It has been noted that physical violence is one of the main causes of child trauma in South Africa (Dussich & Maekoya, 2007). Chronic exposure to physical violence can have lasting harmful effects on the physical and psychological health of the victims (Suglia, Enlow, Bosquet, Kullowatz, & Wright, 2009) including depression, psychotic symptoms and substance misuse (McAloney, MacCrystal, & McCartan, 2009). Understanding the causes and the effects of physical violence between children also has important implications for the prevention of consequent criminal behaviour (Wilson, Stover, & Berkovitz, 2009).

The present study was conducted at Lynedoch, a community in which physical violence between children and child criminal behaviour is reportedly a serious problem (G. Jansen, personal communication, 7 August 2009). Lynedoch is a rural wine-farming community situated in the Western Cape Province of South Africa, on the outskirts of the university town of Stellenbosch. It is a community that is predominantly inhabited by historically disadvantaged people who are employed as farm workers. According to a community leader, Lynedoch is plagued with social problems, such as poverty, alcoholism, substance abuse, teenage pregnancy, gangsterism and physical violence (C. Abrahamse, personal communication, 7 August 2009).

Many of the Lynedoch community's current social problems have their origin in oppressive apartheid practices like the "dop system." With the "dop system," farm workers were compensated in part for their labour with alcohol. Over the years this problem became so severe that the Western Cape Province has the highest incidence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in the world (McKinstry, 2005).

1.2 Statement of the problem

In 2004 the Lynedoch community was the focus of much media attention, because of extreme acts of physical violence between children. These incidents included brutal sodomy with sharp objects, the slaughtering of 21 tame buck, the murder of a child and the attempted murder of another (Annecke, 2005). Rather than abating, the problem of physical violence between children in Lynedoch steadily increased (G. Jansen, personal communication, 7 August 2009). This trend has been observed

throughout South Africa to the extent that the country's schools have been deemed the most dangerous unsafe schools in the world (Blaser, 2008).

1.3 Rationale for the study

Given the socio-political history of the Lynedoch community and its problems regarding children who reportedly engage in brutal acts of physical violence, the present study was undertaken. The researcher's interest in exploring this problem was further motivated by his position as an educator at the local primary school and his location as a resident in the Lynedoch community. The researcher is aware that because of his position within the school and the community, he could be biased and that his objectivity could be compromised at times.

Via the present study information was obtained to formulate an understanding of the problem of children and violence in the Lynedoch community. This was an important initial step in the process of being able to design properly informed interventions, intended to make a tangible difference in lives of the countless child victims of extraordinarily high levels of violent crime in South Africa (Hargovan, 2007). Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory was used as a framework for the formulation of the research findings.

Institutionalising children, or so called juvenile perpetrators of physically violent crimes, is not the solution to the problem. A recent research study found that juveniles who are institutionalised, subsequently displayed a higher incidence of violence and misconduct (Kuanliang, Sorensen, & Cunningham, 2008). Rather, what is needed is an understanding of the causes and effects of this problem, from the

perspective of those who are directly impacted by it namely the children (G. Jansen, personal communication, 7 August 2009).

This study employed a qualitative research design using a depth focus group interview to obtain information from the child participants. This technique was chosen because it was assessed to be most amenable to obtaining information from children, especially where literacy levels may be low (Steward & Shamdasani, 1990). The depth focus group interview was conducted in Afrikaans, the mother tongue of the participants. This ensured that all the participants had adequate opportunity to express their perceptions (Roth & Epston, 1996). An audio-recording was made of the interview. It was subsequently transcribed and translated into English and then encoded into themes using the thematic analysis model of Vaughn, Schumm and Sinagub (1996). The findings were then formulated and discussed using Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory as a framework. The discussion was located within the broader South Africa context and the local Lynedoch context.

1.4 The Aims of this study

This study endeavoured to:

- gather information about the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, from children who reside in Lynedoch,
- formulate an understanding of the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, based on the information gathered, and
- contribute towards the body of knowledge concerning the cause and effects of physical violence between children in South Africa.

1.5 Thesis structure

While this introductory chapter provides a background to the study, a delineation of the research problem, the rationale for, and the specific aims of the present study, Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature that was reviewed as part of the study. It commences with an introduction, followed by definitions for the terms *violence* and *physical violence*. Then it proceeds to explore various research findings and theoretical perspectives regarding the causes and effects of physical violence. Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory is subsequently explained, since it provides a meaningful framework for discussing the research findings. The chapter ends with an overview of the broader research context; namely the Western Cape, South Africa.

Chapter Three develops the research aims of the study and then discusses the research methodology and the instrument that were used in the study. The chapter also explains why this instrument was considered the most suitable for obtaining information from child participants. The process and procedures involved in obtaining the information and analysing the research findings are then explained. The chapter is concluded with a discussion of the ethical considerations that were raised during the study.

Chapter Four states and discusses the research findings. It provides evidence of how the information which was obtained was organised into themes, using the model explained in Chapter Three. These themes, which constitute the findings of this study, are then discussed against the backdrop of the theory reviewed in Chapter Two. Subsequently, the findings are formulated using Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological

systems theory and located within the research context of Lynedoch, in the Western Cape province of South Africa.

Chapter Five is the concluding chapter. It summarises the main findings of the study against the backdrop of the initial aims. It then details the limitations and implications of the research findings, makes suggestions for future research and proposes certain interventions.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The entire African continent is being confronted by a range of challenges. Among these, physical violence and crime are enormous problems and the results are devastating (Erasmus & Mans, 2005). South Africa has a long history of socio-politically engineered violence under the apartheid regime (Seedat 2003). Although the country has undergone dramatic changes in recent years, the psychologically damaging legacy of the apartheid ideology persists (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

One of the greatest challenges encountered when researching violence, is finding a clear, useful and acceptable definition (Gelles & Straus, 1998 cited in Straus, 2008). In the ensuing section such a definition is proposed. Using the same criteria, physical violence is subsequently defined and clarified, as but one of the ways in which violence is expressed. Various research findings and theoretical perspectives regarding the causes and effects of physical violence related to children are then explored. This is followed by an overview of the research framework, namely Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory, and the research context, namely Lynedoch, South Africa.

2.1 Definitions

2.1.1 Violence

Violence may be defined as any relation, process, or condition by which an individual, or group violates the physical, social and/or psychological integrity of another person, or group (Bulhan, 1985).

2.1.2. Physical violence

Physical violence, which is but one of the ways in which violence is expressed, may be defined as any kind of physical, or bodily injury that is inflicted by someone who is in a position of power in relation to the other (Lewis, 1995).

2.2 The causes and effects of physical violence pertaining to children

High incidence of physical violence has become an increasingly familiar part of the global social landscape, driving researchers and policy makers increasingly to understand the causes and effects of this phenomenon (Cauffman, Feltman, Jensen, & Arnette, 2000). Physical violence is also one of the greatest threats to children's lives (Ozer, 2005) and there is general consensus that a positive relationship exists between being exposed to physical violence at home, during childhood, and a host of problems experienced later in life (Maxwell & Maxwell, 2003).

Fry (1988) holds the view that children learn to engage in physically violent behaviour, when it is modelled to them and socially sanctioned in their environment. When physical violence is inflicted on children at home, they consequently learn to reply to it in the same way they experienced it. Dawes (2004) contends that children, who grow up in an environment where they are abused, identify with the behaviour of their abusers and hence exhibit the same behavioural patterns.

Another view attributes physically violent behaviour in children, to the frequency of a child's exposure to it (Bell & Jenkins, 1993). Frequent exposure to physical violence not only reproduces it, it also results in a decrease in pro-social behaviour (Sprinkle 2008). Desensitisation of the observer is another consequence of frequent exposure to

physical violence (Garbarino, 1992), whilst Duckworth, Danielle, Clair and Adams (2000), purport that it results in behaviour problems. Furthermore, it is purported that children who are frequently exposed to physical violence in any form are more likely to relate in this way to others, than children who are not exposed to it (Dussish et al., 2007). When violence is part of a child's everyday life, it is learnt and adopted into their behaviour (Leach, 2003).

When children grow up with violence the risk of socio-emotional problems and criminal behaviour is increased (Maxted, 2003). Direct exposure of children to physical violence, also teaches them from an early age that their communities, homes and schools are not safe places (Lewis, 1995) and in those instances where children experienced chronic exposure to violence their psychological adjustment is impaired (Richter, 1994).

Developmental models suggest that when children are exposed to violence, it is harmful immediately and in the long term (McDonald, Jouriles, Briggs-Gowan, Rosenfield, & Carter, 2007). The effect of physical violence on the victims is not only restricted to the period during which they are being harmed. These victims experience continuous psychological, social and physical effects (Ando, Asakura, & Simons-Morton, 2005). These effects can be so severe, that the adult survivors of physical violence experienced during childhood, either adopts a victim script in relation to others, or they become perpetrators or mimickers of physical violence (Smith, Singer, Hoel, & Cooper, 2003).

The social coping model suggests that children who are victims of physical violence fall into one of two categories as a result. These categories are the *fight group* which involves aggressive responses and power relationships, and the *flight group* which involves escape responses and vulnerable relationships (Dussish et al., 2007).

Age and developmental level are important sources of variation in how children respond to being exposed to violence (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1994). In the case of certain children, it is most likely to play out in regressive symptoms such as bed-wetting and re-enactment in their play (Osofsky, 1995). Jenkins and Bell (1997) are of the opinion that young children who are exposed to physical violence are more vulnerable to developmental impairment. This is particularly so, in the absence of psychological defences.

Risk and protective factors operating in multiple contexts of child development are important considerations (Lorion & Saltzman, 1994). While research has yielded valuable insights into the effects of physical violence on children, insufficient attention is paid to children's socialisation into violent lifestyles. This may explain in part, why physical violence in schools and in the family has become a common phenomenon (Pelzer, 1999).

School violence is a complex, widespread issue and it has been a concern since the 1950s (Ting, Sanders, & Smith, 2002). Violence in schools has become so serious over the years that it has resulted in the efforts of community based organisations becoming institutionalised, especially since the violence which manifests in schools is not a school problem, but a family and community based one (Casella, 2002). The

growth of criminal activity amongst the youth is particularly pronounced in places like schools (May & Dunaway, 2000). Leonard, Quigley, and Collins (2002) found that there is a high rate of physical violence on school properties.

Since there are multiple ways in which children respond to violence there is a critical need to understand these responses (De Voe & Smith, 2002). This is especially so, since victims of violence showed the greatest tendency to become perpetrators of violence (Brook, Brook, Rosa, Montoya, & Whiteman, 2003). There is strong evidence that when a child has been the victim of physical violence, the risk of negative adolescent behaviour, including delinquency, substance use and violence is increased (Fergusson, Horwood, & Lynskey, 1996, cited in Herrenkhol, Huang, Tajima, & Whitney, 2003).

Cousins (2001) contends that there is an inherent and irreducible complexity regarding morality and violence. Clearly supportive relationships and physically safe environments, connections to pro-social organisations and well-run schools promote good psychological functioning (Ozer, 2005). Children exposed to any kind of family violence are more prone to have psychological and social difficulties than children who have no history of family violence (Yexley, Borowsky, & Ireland, 2002).

Understanding the factors that result in a reduction in youth violence is important in maintaining and enhancing these reductions. Changes in the environment, economic status, school policy, legislation, law enforcement and introducing violence prevention programmes are an integral part of this. Hence there is a great need for researchers to explore the issues related to children and violence (Tajima, 2002).

2.3 Theoretical formulations of the causes and effects of physical violence between children

2.3.1 Jean Piaget

The developmental theorist Jean Piaget (1972) formulated a constructivist theory which focuses on how children need to develop the ability to be empathic.. He contended that developmental limitations in children not having sufficient conflict resolution skills to deal effectively with interpersonal conflicts, resulting in the use of physical violence.

2.3.2 Lev Vygotsky

According to the social development theory of Lev Vygotsky (1978), human development is far too complex to be explained solely in terms of developmental stages. He suggests that child development depends on social interaction. He therefore attributes the causes and effects of a phenomenon like physical violence in children to being a direct result of interpersonal events within the family.

2.3.3 Albert Bandura

The social learning theory of Albert Bandura emphasises observing and modelling the behaviours, attitudes, and emotional reactions of other people. It further purports that learning would be laborious and hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling. From observing others, ideas are formed of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action (Bandura, 1977).

2.3.4 Patricia Hawley

The developmental theorist Patricia Hawley (1999) makes a case for what she calls socio-metric status. An example of this would be when a member of a social group engages in physical violence in the presence of others, in order to acquire what he/she wants, thereby asserting his/her dominance in relation to others. Within this theoretical framework, physical violence between children would be viewed as is a means to achieve this end.

2.3.5 Urie Bronfenbrenner

Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system focuses on the relationships between individuals and their environment. It also emphasises the constant interaction between individuals and society (Garbarino & Ganzel, 2000). Within this framework, children are considered as active participants in their development, interacting with multiple levels of a bio-ecological system (Bronfenbrenner, 1997, 2004). This perspective is helpful in that it enables identifying the different levels of an eco-system. Risk and protective factors operating in multiple contexts of child development can also be identified and consequently addressed (Lorion & Saltzman, 1994).

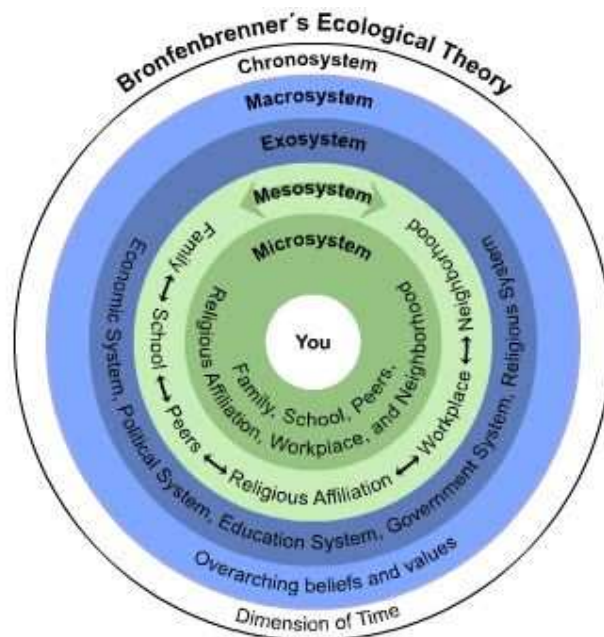
While research has yielded valuable insights into the effects of physical violence on children, insufficient attention has been directed at children's socialisation into violent lifestyles. This may partly explain why physical violence in schools and in the family has become a common phenomenon in South African townships (Pelzer, 1999).

2.4 Theoretical framework

Within bio-ecological systems theory, a child's life is affected by a number of interacting systems which impact its development. This framework conceptualises the environment as being comprised of 5 inter-related layers, referred to as systems. It includes; the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system, macro-system and chrono-system, illustrated in Figure 1 (Bronfenbrenner, 2004). Not included in the diagram below, but also included in Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological system are, the child's body as part of the micro-system, the issue of nature versus nurture, the emotional system, the cognitive system and the behavioural system. This is explained in more detail in the discussion that follows the diagrammatic representation.

Figure 1

A diagrammatic representation of the five layers of Urie Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory



Sourced from: <http://faculty.weber.edu/tlday/human.development/ecological.htm>

2.4.1 The Micro-system

The micro-system constitutes the inner-most layer of the bio-ecological systems theory framework. Structures within this system include family, care-givers, day-care, school and the neighbourhood. It encompasses all the relationships and face to face interactions a child has with its immediate surroundings and also includes the child's experiences of its maturing body (Berk, 2000).

Relationships in the micro-system are bi-directional. The effects of the behaviour and beliefs of parents and care-givers on a child are as significant as the effect of the behaviour and beliefs of a child on its parents and care-givers. Whilst the bi-directional influences impact the child most significantly within the micro-system layer, the interactions between outer layers also have a significant impact on this innermost layer (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

2.4.1.1 The Child's Body

The body is a very important part of the micro-system and its effects on the other systems are very significant. A child's body is its life support system, its mobility system, and the mechanism through which it perceives and interacts with the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

There are several characteristics of the body that influence development in different ways. The first and broadest being the general health of the body and this is determined by how effectively the various sub-systems in the body function and the influences of environmental factors. Whilst the complexity of the human body is well beyond this discussion, it is important to note that if all the bodily systems work

together and effectively, then that child is in good health and vice versa. Unfortunately this is not the norm for many children in South Africa, which severely compromises their general well-being. The number of child deaths in South Africa remains unacceptably high and most of these deaths are preventable (Lake & Marera, 2009).

There are many more known disorders of the body than there are of the mind, and some affect both the body and the mind. During the course of growth from infant to adult the body is impacted by countless external threats. Some of the disorders are genetic; others are due to environmental factors. All the same, since the body is a child's life support system, any threat or harm to its physical integrity is likely to evoke defensive and protective behavioural responses. As research shows, many children engage in physical violence as a way of protecting themselves (Kwast & Laws, 2001).

2.4.1.2 Family and Care-givers

The ecology or effect of family extends to all parts of the child's life. This is because the family is the closest, most intense and most influential structure in a child's life. Nutrition, health, safety, security, language and beliefs develop through the input and related feedback within the family structure. The role that family plays in a child's development is so important that Laing and Esterson (1964) purported that mental illness is largely due to family dynamics.

Mother-child, father-child, and mother-father dyads form the basis of the early micro-system. Increasingly however, care-givers are playing a very significant role in

children's lives, since they're taking on the roles that biological parents would traditionally play. In contemporary society children are often left in the care of someone other than the biological parent/s for significant periods of time each day (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

The traditional family in which the mother stays home with the children and the father works is becoming increasingly less common, whilst divorced parents and single parent families, generation skipping families and other non-traditional groupings are increasingly common. Problems such as the global economic recession and HIV and AIDS have resulted in many ad hoc, alternate constellations of the family. Understanding these constellations is crucial to understanding the hidden dynamics that impact how families and the children within those families function (Cohen, 2006).

Family functioning is an important influential factor in the development of children. Optimal child development requires that children be immersed in an environment that is nurturing and supportive (Maccoby & Martin, 1983 cited in Mandara, 2006). Conversely, however, when children grow up in homes where parents are incapacitated by problems such as alcoholism, their development is seriously impaired.

Research has shown that as alcohol-exposed children grow older, deficits in socio-emotional function become increasingly salient, particularly with regard to social judgment, interpersonal skills, and antisocial behaviour (Jacobson, 2003). An example of how these deficits could manifest is when children resort to physical

violence to resolve a problem. This behaviour signals failure within the normal development process (Fonagy, 2003) and it is particularly evident in the poorer parts of South Africa where alcohol has played a pivotal role in the community's history, being directly linked both to the oppression of the black majority and to efforts aimed at resisting such oppression (Parry, Pluddemann, Steyn, Bradshaw, Norman, & Laubscher, 2005).

2.4.1.3 Day-care, school and the neighbourhood

Children spend a great deal of time at day-care facilities, at school and in their neighbourhoods. The relationships fostered within these structures play a crucial role in the child's development. To highlight the significance thereof, 5 propositions are outlined in Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework. Each of these propositions articulates the significance of bi-directional relationships with caring adults in the various structures of the micro-system. These caring adults within these structures include caregivers, educators and neighbours. The propositions are delineated as follows.

2.4.1.3.1 Proposition 1

The child must have ongoing long-term mutual interaction with an adult, or adults who have a stake in the development of the child. The adult or adults must believe that the child is *the best* and the child must know this (Bronfenbrenner 1997, 2004).

2.4.1.3.2 Proposition 2

This tie, if strong enough, will provide a pattern for the child concerning how s/he should relate to the features of its meso-system. The skills and confidence gained

from these initial relationships will help increase the child' ability to effectively explore and grow from outside activities (Bronfenbrenner 1997).

2.4.1.3.3 Proposition 3

Attachments to and interactions with adults, other than primary adults such as parents, will help the child to progress and develop more complex relationships. As a child gains affirmation from these third party/secondary relationships, it will incorporate those skills into its primary relationships. The secondary adults such as caregivers and teachers also provide support for the relationship with primary adults and enable the child to grasp the importance of their primary relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1997).

2.4.1.3.4 Proposition 4

The relationships between the child and primary adults will progress only with repeated interchanges and mutual compromise. Children need these interchanges at home, day-care and at school. Parents need these interactions and exchanges in their neighbourhoods and at workplaces. The skills acquired through these exchanges and within these structures provide the fuel for relational growth (Bronfenbrenner, 1997).

2.4.1.3.5 Proposition 5

The relationships between the child and the adults in its life require a public attitude of support and affirmation of the importance of these roles. Public policies must enable the availing of time and resources for these relationships to be nurtured, and a culture that values the people doing this work, must be promoted. This includes

parents and teachers, extended family, friends, co-workers, and neighbours (Bronfenbrenner, 1997).

2.4.1.3.2 Implications of propositions

The five propositions that have been detailed hold significant implications for practices within families, at day-care facilities, at schools and in neighbourhoods. Within bio-ecological systems theory, the instability and unpredictability of modern family life is the most destructive force, or risk factor to a child's development (Addison, 1992). This inevitably spills over into day-care, the school and neighbourhood. Consequently, children do not have the required mutual interaction with significant adults that is necessary for healthy development.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), if the relationships within the immediate family break down, the child will not have the tools to explore other necessary parts of its meso-system. It consequently will look for these affirmations which should be present in the child-parent dyad, from others, often finding the desired attention in inappropriate places. These deficiencies are often revealed in schools, as anti-social behaviour, lack of self-discipline, and inability to provide self-direction (Addison, 1992).

Given the breakdown occurring within children's homes, day-care workers and school teachers need to find creative ways to make up for the deficiencies. Care-givers and educators need to provide the kind of support that will foster more stable, long-term relationships between; the children and themselves and the children and their parents. Care-givers and educators should work to support the child's primary relationship and

to create an environment that welcomes and nurtures families. This could be done as part of working towards the realisation of Bronfenbrenner's ideal; namely, the creation of public policy that eases the workplace-family conflict (Henderson, 1995, cited in Addison, 1992).

2.4.2 The Meso-system

This is the second layer of the bio-ecological theory's framework. It provides the connections between the structures within the child's micro-system (Berk, 2000). Examples hereof include the connections between the child's parents and care-givers, parents and educators, or between the school and neighbourhood. Within this layer, the structures of child's micro-systems interact with one another. The meso-system is a set of micro-system structures interacting with each other. It links the different micro-systems that form part of an individual's life.

The economic strain on a single female parent may reduce the parent's ability to respond to the child's emotional needs (Richter, 1994). However, the child may have an attentive and caring educator who is able to provide a positive environment which boosts the child's self esteem. Thus, the child's experience of the micro-system structure of the school provides a protective influence to counter the effect of the deficit within the family structure (Rutter, 1985). This influence therefore reduces the impact of the stress within the micro-system structure of the family. In another situation a distressed family may have a supportive neighbour who has a warm relationship with a vulnerable child, protecting that child to a certain extent, from the psychological effects of emotional neglect in his own home (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991).

2.4.3 The Exo-system

This layer refers to those contexts in which the child is not directly involved. It may however, influence the people with whom the child has proximal relationships. Phrased differently, the exosystem includes the people and places that the child itself does not interact with directly, but that still have a significant effect on the child's life, such as the parents' workplaces, extended family members, the neighbourhood, and so forth (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

If a child's parent is retrenched at work, it may have negative affects on the child if the parent is unable to pay the bills or to purchase groceries. If, however a parent receives a promotion and a wage increase at work, this may have a positive affect on the child because its parent will be in a more favourable position to meet the child's physical needs (Dawes & Donald, 2004). Even if the parent's employment situation does not involve the child, the parents' experienced stresses or benefits will influence the quality of the child's relationship with that parent.

Parental social isolation is another feature known to increase the risk of child neglect (Garbarino, 1995). However, a single parent who lives in a neighbourhood where there is high social cohesion and mutual support is less likely to be isolated and this in turn may have a positive influence on his or her child-care capacities. Another common example would be the supports or constraints placed on a school by the body or department which controls it. These supports or constraints would influence the proximal interactions of educators with their learners (Dawes & Donald, 2004). Schools in which educators have access to good infrastructure and other resources are more likely to benefit their learners.

2.4.4 The Macro-system

This is the fourth layer of Bronfenbrenner's theory. It may also be considered the outermost level in the child's environment. This layer is comprised of cultural values, customs, and laws (Berk, 2000). The effects of broader principles and values, defined by the macro-system have a cascading influence throughout the interactions of all other levels.

If it is the belief of the dominant culture that parents are solely responsible for raising their children, that culture is less likely to provide resources to help parents. This in turn affects the structures in which the parents function. The parents' ability or inability to carry out that responsibility toward their child within the context of the child's micro-system structure of the family is also affected.

This layer also includes the wider political, cultural and material influences on all other layers of the larger system that the child is part of. At the highest level there are international forums like conventions, requiring signatory countries to implement laws that ensure the well-being of children. At a lower level there are the prevailing values and norms of a particular society regarding how children should be treated and raised.

Cultural values and ideas about childhood give rise to scripts for child-care. Thus, a culturally determined script may include developing obedience to authority and respect for senior members of the community as goals of child care. In many African communities, the means to the attainment of this goal is strict discipline (Le Vine, Dixon, Le Vine, Rickman, Leiderman, Keefer, & Brazelton, 1994). This macro-

system value filters through the relevant meso-system and exo-system down to the proximal interactions occurring in the child's micro-system structures.

2.4.5 The Chrono-system

The chrono-system refers to the internal and external factors of a child's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Internal factors are the physiological changes due to the aging of the child. The external factors include events such as the death of a parent or someone significant to the child. This system reflects changes in the child linked to simultaneous changes in its developmental context. The family or any of the systems in which a developing child is involved, may be regarded as being in a process of development itself (Carter & McGoldrick, 1989) and these developments interact with a child's progressive stages of development.

An important aspect of the chrono-system is the envelope of historical time that surrounds all other systems. The idea is that development is influenced by the historical features of the period during which it is occurring. These may contain stable elements as well as disruptions such as periods of economic depression, political violence, and war. These events shape the children who are growing up at that time in a way that is different to other generations. However, the particular impact of the events will always depend on the developmental level of the child, how the child perceives the events, and how they are mediated through proximal interactions (Moore, 2007).

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework helps to foreground children's developmental contexts as central influences in the formation of their psychological capacities. It also encouraged the emergence of a more culturally sensitive approach to developmental psychology and to interventions in this field.

2.5 Other components of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory

2.5.1 Nature versus Nurture

Contemporary child development theories accept that both a child's biology and its environment, plays a role in change and growth. These theories focus on the role played by each and the extent to which they interact.

Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory focuses on the quality and context of the child's environment. He states that as a child develops the interaction within these environments becomes more complex. This complexity may also arise as the child's physical and cognitive structures grow and mature. Given that nature continues on a given path, it is important to explore how the world that surrounds the child, helps or hinders continued development (Bronfenbrenner 2004).

Bronfenbrenner uses his bio-ecological model to provide a startlingly clear view of the problems that have been observed in children and in families. Modern technology has changed our society, and whilst great efforts are being made to safeguard the physical environment from the damage done by a technology, we have spent no resources to provide similar safeguards to the damage done to our societal environment (Henderson, 1995).

The global economy has shifted from an industrial one to a technological one, yet the patterns of the workplace have largely continued to rely on the factory work ethic that is associated with an industrial economy. Parents are expected to work a schedule derived from factories, regardless of technological advances that do not require it. Modern technology enables many workers to be free of manual labour, and it should also free them from the time and place boundary. The contemporary work ethic however, demands more face-to-face time, rather than less.

When women entered the labour market they were subjected to demands that resulted in family life becoming less important than the needs of the workplace. Furthermore, parental monitoring which is a crucial part of preventing negative behaviour in children (Lohman & Billings, 2008) is therefore almost non-existent in many contemporary families. This is particularly pertinent in the present study where both parents work long hours away from their children, who are left to fend on their own.

Bronfenbrenner (2004) also contends that a *deficit model* is used to determine the level of support granted to struggling families, by the public. According to this model, parents are required to declare that they are deficient, in order to solicit help. This is a problem that has come about because of a culture that values independence and individualism. A larger amount of support for a family would suggest a large degree of personal failure. By working from this deficit model, families therefore learn to remain silent concerning the problems. Speaking out, or requesting help is often regarded as shameful. This is part of the reason why certain problems in families persist (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). An example of this phenomenon would be alcoholism which carries a very negative personal and social stigma.

2.5.2 Emotional System

Emotions are a very complex area of psychological study and there are many theories concerning what causes them, why we have them (or don't), and how they develop. One theorist, Plutchik (1982) believes that emotions are the result of evolutionary processes and are therefore present in animals as well as humans. His theory is that they have an adaptive function related to survival. His list of basic emotions is acceptance, anger, anticipation, disgust, joy, fear, sadness, and surprise. These can be seen to be sets of opposites and are the components that constitute more complex emotions. Gardner (1999) states that the purpose of emotional processing or coding is important to memory function. He purports that the memories that are associated with strong emotions are often the ones that can most easily be recalled. Family structures fraught with problems, not only perpetuate the dynamics that cause painful emotions, they also fill a child's life with negative memories that form the genesis of many problems later in life (Pinches, 2008).

Bronfenbrenner's micro-system is the first domain of emotional encounters. Emotions that are experienced within the family structure of the micro-system are central to a child's development. As the child matures his/her emotional repertoire incrementally included the influences of the expanding environment. Culture and other external forces are strong determinants in the emotions that a growing child may experience. Dominant experiences therefore reinforce certain emotions, which subsequently also become dominant. Experiences in dysfunctional families are a good example of a structure that provides children with expansive negative emotional repertoires.

2.4.3 The Cognitive System

The cognitive system is a core part of a child's being and environmental factors play a significant role in the development of this system before and after birth. A good example of this is when children are born into an environment where alcohol is abused, since this greatly increases the risk of cognitive damage resulting in conditions like Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, otherwise known as FAS. Furthermore, FAS often occurs where poverty is rife, such as the rural areas of South Africa (Viljoen, Julie, Phillip, & Phillip, 2002).

Dixon, Kurz and Chin (2009) purport that the link between prenatal alcohol exposure and deficits in a child's cognitive system is so significant that a thorough history should be conducted regarding the prenatal alcohol exposure of all children who present with cognitive deficiencies. Although prenatal alcohol exposure is only one of the ways in which a child's cognitive system may be impaired, it illustrates the impact of the parent's behaviour on the development of the cognitive system.

Theorists like Piaget and Erikson have formulated models to explain the development of human cognitive faculties. According to both models, cognition develops in stages and the nested environments that Bronfenbrenner speaks of may be seen as the physical structure related to these stages. Using the Piagetian terms, when the infant is in the sensory-motor stage its whole world is the micro-system and the most immediate part of the meso-system. During the preoperational stage however, the meso-system's role becomes more significant and as language develops, school and community become more involved, whilst in the formal operational stage, the higher cognitive abilities reach out farther into the exo-system and even the macro-system.

All of this involves both internal and external dynamics of the child's life, which illustrates the role of the chrono-system, thereby revealing how the entire bio-ecological system is linked to the development of a child's cognitive system.

2.5.4 The Behavioural System

Since we have no direct method of observing a person's mind in action, we observe the behaviour of the person. Many researchers have noted the correlation between environmental elements and behaviours. We can observe the response of an individual to a stimulus and we can see the individual learn from this incident and the repetition of similar incidents. This is called classical conditioning. This can be illustrated by and input which represents the external stimulus, and an output, which is the resulting behaviour. The behaviour is associated with the environmental event, and when a similar event occurs the response is recalled and replayed. In the bio-ecological system, it is the richness of the environment in the micro-system that is important to the development of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1997).

The mother-child, father-child, and father-mother pairs, or dyads, form the basis of the early micro-system and may therefore be seen as being most influential at that stage. These two person systems are very bi-directional in nature; both parties develop together (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Much of a child's behaviour is learned in the micro-system, though as the child ages, the other, more distant, systems will have increasing influence. Internal systems also have an effect on behaviour.

The emotional system and the biology of the child are two internal forces that can have significant influence on behaviour. Any parent can verify that illness modifies

(at least temporarily) a child's behaviour. Protracted illness or a physiological abnormality can be underlying causes for more lasting behavioural issues. Similar behavioural variations can come from emotional causes such as stress, depression, and grief.

As the cognitive system develops, it can have an offsetting influence versus emotional and even biological factors. The more mature child will be able to apply social rules and mores to the behavioural influences of emotion and learn to compensate for and even appreciate biological differences as the cognitive system develops.

2.6 Physical violence in South Africa

Many of South Africa's problems stem from the fact that it is arguably the most unequal society in the world (Burgis, 2009). In unequal societies like this where poorer neighbourhoods are characterised by extremely high levels of physical violence, the children who reside there are constantly exposed to it (Ensink, Robertson, Zissis, & Leger 1997). This has an extremely negative impact on them psychologically (Richter, 1994). Physical violence in South Africa is so severe that it has been determined as one of the main causes of death in the country (Myer, Ehrlich, & Susser, 2004).

In the South Africa's Western Cape Province, where the Lynedoch community and the present study are located, extreme levels of physical violence are experienced on a daily basis by primary school learners (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). In contexts like this, where children are chronically exposed to physical violence, they normalize

it, since it is modeled for them and it forms part of the lived and vicarious experiences of everyday life (Erante, 2003). Furthermore, in a society where physical violence has become endemic, it would appear that it is socially sanctioned as a means to an end, or as a form of problem solving (Vogelman & Simpson, 1990).

In 2003 it was reported that there was a massive increase in the number of cases of violence and that the average age of victims and offenders was becoming lower (Van Niekerk 2003). In 2004 a group of children from Lynedoch was involved in clubbing 20 buck to death, they murdered another child and brutal sodomy with sharp objects (Annecke, 2005.) A recent study conducted in South Africa found a high prevalence of physical violence perpetrated by men against their intimate partners and it was established that men who experienced physical abuse during childhood or were exposed to parental violence were at the greatest risk (Gupta et al., 2008).

It comes as no surprise that crime and physical violence which was labelled as endemic to South African schools 15 years ago (Eliasov & Frank, 1994) continues to persist to this day (G. Jansen, personal communication, 9 August 2009). Physical violence has consistently been so bad, that certain researchers predicted it would continue in South Africa's historically disadvantaged townships, regardless of the political system having changed (Pinnock, 1997). Other researchers subsequently described physical violence as a common phenomenon in South Africa, with severe lifelong traumatic effects on children physically, emotionally and psychologically (Erasmus & Mans, 2005).

In a preliminary survey conducted with school-going children in the Western Cape Province it was concluded that there is a positive association between exposure to violence and post-traumatic stress disorder (Seedat, van Nood, Vythingum, Stein, & Kaminer, 2000). This amplifies the severity of the level, nature and impact of the violence. While this was found to be the case in the Western Cape Province, throughout South Africa, children experience physical violence on a daily basis (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Magwaza, Killian, & Petersen, 1993; McKendrick & Senoamadi, 1996).

The constantly increasing number of children becoming perpetrators of physical violence in South Africa is a consequence of the psychological damage that has already been done (Mokutu, 2000). This phenomenon was recently highlighted by the arrest of a group of learners from prominent schools in the Gauteng Province of South Africa, who stabbed a fellow learner to death (Mail and Guardian, 26th September 2007). Increasingly, it would appear that there is a disregard for human life, as a feature of what appears to have become a culture of violence in South Africa (Erasmus & Mans, 2005).

Regardless of the perspective from which researchers and theorists write about physical violence in South Africa, the problem is pervasive and children in particular are exposed to disturbingly high levels of this violence, in their homes and communities. In spite of South Africa's constitution being based on a bill of human rights, violence continues, often within the "safe domain" of the family and the broader community and practically enforcing these human rights laws is a problem (Malley-Morrison, 2004). According to Jazzbhay (2009), South Africa's laws

protecting children look very good on paper, but the experiences of people “on the ground” are often different.

The Child Bill of South Africa acknowledges the complexities surrounding the issue of violence and children (Jamison, 2005). In light thereof, it departs from the premise that children who are at conflict with the law are often themselves victims of violence and other harsh environmental factors. Whilst such acknowledgement is good, it does nothing to change South Africa’s extraordinarily high levels of criminal violence, which are not abating (Hargovan, 2007). In order to address, or change the behaviour of families and communities stricken by physical and other forms of violence, intuitional support and other interventions that make a tangible difference in the lives of children, are desperately needed (Leoschut, 2006).

A recent governmental report regarding children and violence in the Western Cape Province yielded the following findings:

- Most children affected by physical violence, to the extent where they require hospitalisation, are under the age of 5 years old.
- More than fifty percent of the children, who are hospitalised due to physical violence, are boys.
- Most of the incidents of violence occur at the children’s homes.
- One in every five children in the Western Cape Province experiences domestic violence.
- One in every eight children has been a perpetrator of violence.
- Twenty three percent of children in the province between 12 and 17 years old were victims of physical threats or acts of violence at school.

- Fifty-six percent of the children claim to be on the receiving end of physical violence perpetrated by educators at school.
- Boys are victims and perpetrators of physical violence, but girls are usually the victims.
- Sixty eight percent of children between the ages of 12 and 17 have witnessed physical violence in the form of assault in their neighbourhoods (Dawes, Long, Alexander, & Ward, 2006).

Information Management Centre statistics for 2007 reveal that from April to March 2006/2007 there were 19 202 murders, 52 617 rapes, 218 030 assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm and 210 057 common assault cases in South Africa (Willemse, 2008). In spite of the South African government's commitment to combating the problem and its radical legislation concerning this problem, it is escalating. Ways therefore must be found to prevent former victims, namely children, from becoming perpetrators.

Given the alarming statistics related to physical violence in South Africa, a collective attitude of denial and disbelief could easily occur, which would have dire implications for the mental health of the victims. In South Africa there is a dynamic cycle of violence, in which the victim becomes an offender and this should never be forgotten (Richter, Dawes, & Higson-Smith, 2004).

According to a community leader the Lynedoch community, located in the Western Cape Province of South Africa was adversely impacted by the racially oppressive practices of the Apartheid system (G. Jansen, Personal Communication, 7August

2009). Bulhan (1995) contended that structural violence, such as legislated racial oppression, is the most lethal form of violence, since it is the least discernable and fosters institutional and intra-personal violence, pervades values, social relations and individual psyches.

2.7 Conclusion of Chapter

Physical violence is but one of the ways in which violence is expressed. Although violence is a global problem, the effects of South Africa's history of institutionalised violence and structural oppression are still prevalent. This is most evident in the country's poorer communities. Finding solutions to the pandemic of physical violence in these communities require a thorough exploration of the structures that created and perpetuate it and a good understanding of its impact on people. In attempting to do so, this chapter has highlighted the important role of research in this regard. Via the literature that has been reviewed, it has also illuminated some of the complexities of physical violence and exposed certain personal and structural deficits that hinder change.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter the methodology that was used to conduct the present study is discussed. First the research aims are reiterated, followed by a discussion of the study design, the participants, the choice of research instrument, and a description of the research procedures adopted for processing of the data obtained. The ethical considerations pertinent to this study are also discussed.

3.1 Research Aims

The present study aimed to:

- Gather information about the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, from children who reside in Lynedoch.
- Formulate an understanding of the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, based on the information gathered.
- Contribute towards the body of knowledge concerning the causes and effects of physical violence between children in South Africa.

3.2 Study Design

A qualitative research design was employed for the purpose of this study and since qualitative research is primarily exploratory, the researcher was able to embark on a journey of discovery rather than verification (Ferreire, Mouton, Puth, Schurink, & Schurink, 1988). Furthermore, by using a qualitative research design, the researcher was able to facilitate participant disclosure about a relatively sensitive behaviour

(Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2006) and focus on their perceptions of the phenomenon being explored (Skinner, 1991).

3.3 Participation

Participation in, and withdrawal from, the present study was voluntary. Inclusion in the study was dependent on meeting the following criteria:

- Being a child who resides in Lynedoch
- Being between the ages of 12 and 14 years old at the time of the study

In total, twelve participants were included in the 60 minute focus group interview. Two of the participants were in grade 7 and ten were in grade 8. They were included in the study, because they met the gender, age and residential requirements for participation and because the necessary consent for their participation was secured. Informed written consent was required from each participant and at least one of their legal guardians, because of their status as children. Sixteen consent forms were distributed and only twelve were returned. Amongst these forms, six were submitted by boys and six were submitted by girls. All of these children were subsequently included in the study, making the selection procedure relatively uncomplicated.

3.4 Research instrument

An hour long focus group interview was conducted which enabled the researcher to organise a discussion with a small group of individuals, in order to obtain information about topic that was researched (Kitzinger, 1994). It also allowed the researcher to interact with the group, drawing on and noting the participants' attitudes, feelings, experience and reactions (Morgan, 1997).

The focus group interview is reputed to be a very effective research tool, when conducting research with children (Kruger, 1994) and it is well recommended for undertaking exploratory research (Merriam 2001). It is also reputedly very conducive to, researching sensitive topics, tapping into feelings and eliciting otherwise untold stories. Furthermore, via this research instrument the researcher is able to establish rapport and build trust with the participants, which is crucial when facilitating interviews of such a sensitive nature (Dickson-Swift et al., 2006).

The focus group interview also made it possible for the researcher to create the space and a mechanism to draw out the participants' personal experiences and views (Morgan, 1997). In order for participants to tell their stories to the researcher in a manner that felt safe enough, the trust which was established within the group and with the researcher was crucial (Booth & Booth, 1994). The unthreatening manner, in which the focus group interview was facilitated, proved very helpful in strengthening rapport and deepening trust within the group (Noddings, 1989).

3.5 Research process and procedures

Before this study was conducted in the Lynedoch community, the necessary approval was granted by the ethics committee of the University of Stellenbosch. A letter was drafted and sent to the Lynedoch youth project manager, located in the Lynedoch Eco-village, detailing the study and requesting her consent to conduct the research group with project members who met the research criteria for participation. The Lynedoch youth project provides various extra-mural enrichment activities for the local youth. Once written consent in reply to the written request was obtained, prospective participants met with the researcher and were informed about the nature

and purpose of the study. Upon enquiry the prospective participants indicated that they understood the researcher's deliberations concerning the study and they were subsequently issued with consent forms. A deadline was agreed upon for the return of these forms.

Only twelve of the sixteen prospective participants returned completed forms indicating that they had secured consent from one of their legal guardians to participate in the study. Since an equal number of girls and boys were amongst those who returned forms, they were included in the study and informed of the logistical arrangements for the focus group interview. The interview schedule that was submitted to and approved by the university was used to facilitate the focus group interview. Using this schedule ensured that the researcher and the participants remained focused on the issues being explored (Vaughn, Schumm, & Sinagub, 1996).

The interviews were conducted in Afrikaans, which is the participants' mother tongue. The interviewer's mother tongue is English, but he is bilingual. The information obtained was captured using an audio-recorder, enabling the researcher to remain engaged in the interviewing process (Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2002). The recorded information was subsequently transcribed and then translated into English. Although the researcher is fully bilingual, two Afrikaans speaking educators were asked to double check with the researcher that the translations were clear and accurate. The information was then analysed and organised into themes, using the thematic analysis technique prescribed by Vaughn et al. (1996). This made it easier to discuss the research findings, within the chosen theoretical framework. The

researcher could also contextualise the findings more easily and formulate a more thorough understanding of the research phenomenon.

3.6 Processing of information obtained

After carefully listening to the audio-recording of the focus group interviews, a transcript was prepared (Krueger, 1994). The transcribed information was then translated from Afrikaans into English. The translated transcript was then subjected to a process of analysis based on a model suggested by Vaughn et al. (1996). According to this model, analysing the information obtained consists of the following four steps; firstly, identifying the big ideas, secondly; unitising the information, thirdly; categorising the information and fourthly; identifying themes. Each of these steps will be discussed below, clearly mapping the process that was followed in analysing the information.

3.6.1 Step 1: Identifying the “big ideas”

The “big ideas” emerged after a careful consideration of the audio recordings and the transcribed data. It involved listening and re-listening to the audio-recordings as well as reading and re-reading the transcripts of the focus group. This process is likened to detective work (Krueger, 1994), through which the researcher tries to discover trends and patterns, called the “big ideas,” because it reappears in the responses of different participants. The big ideas were refined as the process of analysis unfolded. This involved taking care to ensure that smaller “units” of information were carefully considered, in a meaningful and logical way. In other words, the process allowed the researcher to see the trees and the forest (Vaughn et al., 1996).

3.6.2 Step 2: Unitising the information

This step entailed a careful reading through the transcript and then sorting the information into units, as described by Steward and Shamdasani (1990). In essence, each statement of each participant was considered as a unit of data. At this stage it was possible to continue with the next step, namely, categorising/ grouping the units.

3.6.3 Step 3: Categorising the units

This step entailed organising or grouping the identified units into meaningful categories or themes. Firstly, information units that were related to the same content were brought together. Processing the information in this way helped to generate headings, which provided initial themes under which the units of information could be categorised. During this step, the researcher defined the central idea of each category, enabling him to place each unit of information in the appropriate category. Once this process was completed, the researcher reviewed all the categories, their defining characteristics and the criteria for including it into a specific category. This entire review process resulted in a few minor changes as a few units of information were moved into more appropriate categories.

3.6.4 Step 4: Identifying the themes.

The final step involved identifying the themes. It required re-examining the “big ideas” which emerged in the first step. The researcher questioned whether the ‘big ideas’ established during the first step were supported or contradicted by the various categories and the respective units which had been created in steps 2 and 3. At this stage, the researcher realised that the “big ideas” had not been contradicted by the analytic work done in steps 2 and 3. However, the researcher was now much more

familiar with nuances of the data which had not been apparent during the first step of analysis.

The researcher was then in a position to refine and transform the initial “big ideas” into various themes. These themes constitute the “findings” of the study which are presented and discussed in the next chapter. Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher was mindful that the process was a fairly simple one, and because of this he needed to guard against going into unnecessary detail (Miles & Humberman, 1984). The researcher was also aware of the influence that his own interpretations could have on the data. The selection of themes was based on the transcriptions and initial study of the reviewed related literature.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

3.7.1 Issues of informed consent

The present study was community based. It was not located in the school. Therefore, prior to gathering information the Lynedoch youth group manager and participants in the present study were thoroughly briefed about the purpose thereof and procedures involved therein. Informed written consent was obtained from the Lynedoch youth group manager and each of the participants and their legal guardians. The letter requesting consent also contained all the details of the study. Participants and their legal guardians were also assured that they were free to withdraw at any time from participating in the study with no negative consequences and that there was no financial remuneration for participation. This ensured that all participation was informed and voluntary.

3.7.2 Confidentiality

Participants' identities are not revealed, thereby eliminating the risks that could be incurred were it not the case. All information was stored securely during the research process and only the researcher had access to the research data. The audio recordings will be destroyed once the study has been completed, since the transcriptions already exist.

3.7.3 Risks and benefits to participants

Since the participants were children, care was exercised to elicit information in a sensitive manner. The research question was of such a nature that discussing it could prove difficult for certain participants. In light of this, the participants were collectively debriefed and an opportunity was created for individual participants to request additional support, if they felt the need, but none of the participants requested additional support.

The participants were informed verbally and in writing that there would be no financial remuneration for participation in the study. During the debriefing session, participants expressed the sentiment that they found it meaningful to talk about challenges that children in their community are confronted by. This is in keeping with the research findings that purport that participants in studies like the present one are seldom re-traumatised by participating in the research and instead they often experience it as beneficial (Newman & Kaloupek, 2004).

3.7.4 Reflexivity Issues

Since characteristics of the researcher may influence the participants' willingness to engage with and respond to the subject matter, the researcher tracked this dynamic very carefully. In addition to this, research regarding the interviewer's effect on the research process, indicates that participants disclose more readily to an interviewer who they perceive to be similar to them-selves (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). Since the researcher is from the same community as the participants this dynamic was facilitative to the research process and to the rapport with the participants. The researcher, however also hold a position as teacher at the school and was aware of the position of power he held in the context by virtue of this.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

In this study 12 children from the Lynedoch community were interviewed to explore and understand their perceptions of the causes and effects of physical violence between children in their community. This chapter commences with a brief profile of each participant. Subsequently, an explanation is presented to account for the nature of their contributions to the research findings. The 10 themes that emerged from processing the focus group interviews, using the 4 step model proposed by Vaughn et al. (1996) will be presented. Relevant quotations in the words of the participants will be used to illustrate each theme. Both the translated and original text will be provided, to ensure that the nuances of their expressions are not lost in translation. The themes, which constitute the findings of the present study, will subsequently be discussed against the backdrop of the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory will provide a conceptual framework for the formulation of this discussion, which will be located within the research context, namely Lynedoch, South Africa. The chapter will then conclude with a brief summary.

4.1 Participant Profiles

The brief profiles that have been provided for each of the participants serve only to enhance the readers understanding of their individual contributions. In order to protect the identities of participants they have been given code names which are not reflective of their names or surnames.

WIM is a very confident 14 year old boy who is in Grade 7. He is an only child and lives with his mother, who is single. He exhibits a great deal of emotional maturity and insight. He is well spoken.

POK is an intelligent, quiet, unassuming 13 year old girl, who is in Grade 8. She lives with her parents and siblings and her family life is reportedly fairly stable. She is, however, very sensitive to the needs of others.

DLR is a playful 14 year old boy in Grade 8, the eldest of 2 children. He is from a very dysfunctional family and sometimes impresses as an attention seeker. His father is reportedly an addict, who becomes violent at times.

ILK is very competitive, confident 14 year old girl in Grade 8. She's youngest of 2 children, a provincial athlete and reputed for being glamorous. She expresses herself easily and is very outspoken.

KBM is an only child, who is fostered by an aunt. He is 14 years old and in Grade 8. He is well liked. He is very witty. He has been exposed to a great deal of violence on the farm where he lives.

ZBT is a leader at school. She is 14 years old, a Grade 8 learner, very eloquent, but in no way loud or offensive. She has a great deal of insight into life's issues and wants to be a social worker one day.

KJD is shy, but very clever 14 year old boy. He is in Grade 8. He lives with his mother and brother in an area that is plagued by violence and crime. He is, however, reportedly a good example to his peers.

LCB is mature 14 year old girl in Grade 8; she has a good sense of humour. She is the youngest of 2 children and very concerned about making a difference. She would like to be social worker one day.

CRW is serious well-mannered, very intelligent 13 year old boy, in Grade 7. He is the eldest of 2 children. He lives with his grandmother, mother and sister, on a farm renowned for alcoholism and physical violence.

TMK is an assertive, sensitive 14 year old girl, who is in Grade 8. She is honest person, mature in her outlook and mannerisms. She is well-liked by her friends and communicates easily in groups. She speaks her mind.

QAM is a shy, quiet, 13 year old Grade 7 boy. He lives in a home where there is drug and alcohol abuse and is not uncomfortable talking about it. He is very good at his school work and sport and has a very supportive mother.

DFT is a very mature 14 year old girl, who is in Grade 8. She lives with her parents and two siblings. She has strong leadership qualities, is well-informed and very outspoken. She is liked and respected by her educators and friends.

4.2 Nature of participants' contributions

At the time of this study all the participants attended the same primary school. They lived in close proximity to one another and were reportedly fairly well acquainted with each other. They were involved in the same activities in the past and therefore shared many common experiences. They've also participated in a number of interviews with researchers and as well as various programmes with psychologists, social workers and community development workers. Their communication and group participation skills have been refined in the process (GML Jansen, personal communication, 7 August 2009). This would explain why their contributions, although brief, were of a quite a sophisticated nature and why it contains certain discipline-specific jargon. Whilst these experiences may have aided the interviewing process, it may also have been potentially disadvantageous.

4.3 Research Findings: Themes

4.3.1 Lynedoch's social problems

Participants described Lynedoch as a place fraught with social problems including poor living conditions, negative influences, indifference towards the plight of others, physical poverty, child neglect, alcoholism, family violence, shame, drug abuse, gangsterism, teenage pregnancy, a high incidence of children dropping out of school, parents who model negative behaviour to children, physical violence and a lack of resources and amenities.

"...Conditions are poor...it is not a positive influence..."

"...daar's swak omstandighede meneer... dit is nie 'n goeie invloed..." (ZBT)

"...Lynedoch has many problems...the place is small, but people in the community do not help each other..."

"...Lynedoch het baie probleme...die plek is klein, maar die mense in die gemeenskap

help nie mekaar nie...” (ILK)

“...Adults do not buy food for their children...they not a good example to the youth...”

“...die grootmense koop nie vir hulle kinders kos nie...hulle is nie ’n goeie voorbeeld vir die jeug nie...” (POK)

“...They consume a lot of alcohol...they use violence against their children...they do childish things

“...hulle drink baie meneer...hulle gebruik geweld op die kinders...hulle gaan soos kinders aan...” (LCB)

“...They use drugs and stuff like that...”

“...Hulle gebruik en dwelms en sulke goet...” (WIM)

“...They want to be gangsters...”

“...hulle wil soos gangsters wees...” (QAM)

“...Having babies before their time...”

“...hulle kry voor die tyd babas...” (ILK)

“They do not complete their schooling...”

“...hulle maak nie skool klaar nie...” (KJD)

“...Children follow the example that their parents set, like when their parents assault each other...”

“...kinders volg die voorbeelde wat hulle ouers stel, soos byvoorbeeld as hulle mekaar fisies aanrand...” (ZBT)

“...better facilities can be made available...”

“...beter geriewe kan beskikbaar gemaak word...” (KBM)

Safe environments and supportive relationships reputedly promote good psychological functioning (Ozer, 2005), whilst the absence thereof and the exposure of children to behaviour like physical violence, increases the risk of susceptibility to psychological and social difficulties (Yexley et al., 2002). Based on the feedback from the participants, Lynedoch provides neither the safe nurturing environment, nor

the relationships that are conducive to the well-being of children. This also predisposes the children to learning a range of harmful and antisocial behaviours which are modeled to them.

4.3.2 Negative behaviour modeled by adults

Many of the participants described the adults who live in Lynedoch in terms reflecting their immaturity and as poor examples to the youth. They expressed the view that many parents do not model positive behaviour to their children and that those children consequently imitate their parents' negative behaviour. Negative behaviour reportedly modeled to children by their parents included lack of concern for their own welfare and that of others, poor conflict resolution skills, physical violence, and drug and alcohol abuse. Whilst there was a sense that the participants felt embarrassed by the behaviour of the adults, they also acknowledged identifying with and imitating their behaviour.

"...If you saw them you would not say that it is adults..."

"...as 'n mens hulle sien sal 'n mens nie sê hulle is grootmense nie..." (ZBT)

"...People do not help each other..."

"...mense help nie mekaar nie..." (ILK)

"...They do not buy food...they buy alcohol..."

"...hulle koop nie kos nie...hulle koop alkohol..." (POK)

"...Children follow the example their parents set. Like when their parents physically assault each other then they follow the same example and do it at school..."

"...kinders volg die voorbeelde wat hulle ouers stel, soos byvoorbeeld as hulle mekaar fisies aanrand..." (ZBT)

"...Parents physically assault each other..."

"...mense rand mekaar fisies aan..." (KBM)

“...When they are in a group and everyone uses drugs...they start fighting... they hurt each other”

“...wanneer hulle in ‘n groep is en hulle rook almal saam...dan begin baklei hulle...dan maak hulle mekaar seer” (WIM)

“...They do what adults do...”

“...Hulle doen wat die grootmense doen.” (TMK)

“...if the parents use alcohol and drugs...the children will leave school and they will also start using...parents will wonder why...”

“...as die ouers drank en dwelms gebruik...sal die kinders die skool verlaat en ook gebruik...ouers sal wonder hoekom...” (DFT)

“...Teachers use foul words...they mock the children...”

“...Onderwysers vloek...hulle gaai die kinders...” (KJD)

Children who grow up with violence learn to imitate it. This happens through stimulus response interactions in their social networks (Bandura, 1977). Based on this theory of how behaviour develops, we may thus deduce that children in Lynedoch present with physical violence, because this behaviour is modeled to them and repeatedly reinforced by the adults in their environment (Fry, 1998). These adults include those with whom they have the closest and most frequent contact, namely their parents, teachers and neighbours. Physical violence is also rife and normative in the one place it should not happen; namely within the “safe domain” of the family. The child victims of this phenomenon consequently relate to others in this way (Dussish et al., 2007). They learn to mimic the behaviour to which they are regularly exposed and accept these behavioural patterns as normative.

4.3.3 Negative behaviours that children engage in

There is a range of negative behaviours that the children of Lynedoch reportedly engage in. These behaviours include a lack of self-respect, no respect for others, engaging in substance abuse, sexual activity resulting in teenage pregnancy, gangsterism, theft and assault.

“...Children do not respect their bodies...”
“...Kinders respekteer nie hulle liggame nie...” (DFT)

“...They do not respect older people...”
“...Hulle respekteer nie grootmense nie...” (TMK)

“...They smoke and drink heavily...”
“...Hulle rook en drink baie...” (CRW)

“...having babies before the time...”
“...kry voor die tyd babas...” (POK)

“...They want to be like gangsters...”
“...Hulle wil soos gangsters wees...” (WIM)

“...They steal their mothers’ stuff and sell it for drugs...rob each other over drugs and beat each other up over drugs.”
“...Hulle steel hulle ma se goeters en verkoop dit vir drugs..rob mekaar oor drugs en slat mekaar oor drugs.” (WIM)

“...The stabbed each other...they kicked and trampled on and smacked each other.”
“...Hulle stiek mekaar..hulle skop en trap en klap mekaar.” (KJD)

“...They beat one another with fists...stab the other with a knife...”
“...Hulle slat mekaar met die vuus...stiek mekaar met ’n mes...” (KBM)

The negative behaviour exhibited by the children of Lynedoch should be expected since they grow up in an environment where they experience ongoing abuse. When this is the case, children consequently identify with the behaviour of their abusers and present with the same behaviour (Dawes, 2004). Furthermore behaviour like the brute physical violence which transpires between the children of Lynedoch, is the result of ongoing chronic exposure to this behaviour (Richter, 1994)

4.3.4 Brutal nature and frequency of exposure to violence

Participants spoke about brutal acts of physical violence as if it was nothing unusual. It was described as an everyday occurrence that everyone engaged in. Everyone reportedly knew of or witnessed brutal assaults, stabbings with sharp objects, assaults with objects like bricks and spades, drunken brawls and people landing up in hospital as a result of physical violence. In spite of the potentially unsettling content of the interviews, the participants appeared at ease. At times certain participants were quite animated and even excited to share their experiences with the group, but there was a marked absence of awkwardness, suggesting some kind of desensitisation and normality to their accounts.

“...Physical violence is something that happens daily...”

“...Fisiese geweld is iets wat elke dag gebeur...” (DFT)

“...Everyone fights...”

“...Almal baklei...” (WIM)

“...They drink on Saturdays and then they fight...”

“...Hulle drink op ’n Saterdag en dan baklei hulle...” (CRW)

“...They kick, tramp on and smack each other...”

“...Hulle skop en trap en klap mekaar...” (KJD)

“...He beat the man with a spade...”

“...Hy het die man met ’n graf geslaan...” (POK)

“...threw bricks at each other...”

“...mekaar met bakstene gegooi...” (KBM)

“...stabbed each other with pens...”

“...mekaar met penne gesteek...” (QAM)

“...stabbed each other with knives”
“...mekaar met messe gesteek...” (WIM)

“...they hurt each other until they land up in hospital...”
“...Hulle het mekaar geslaan lat hulle in die hospital beland...” (KJD)

When violence is part of a child’s everyday life, as is the case in Lynedoch, it is easily learnt and adopted into their behavioural repertoire (Leach, 2003). Child observers of ongoing physical violence are gradually desensitised and participation in this behaviour is assimilated (Garbarino, 1992). Based on their personal developmental level, certain children have limited skills in dealing effectively with conflict and consequently they resort to behaviour like physical violence as a coping mechanism (Piaget, 1972). Frequent exposure to violence also decreases their pro-social behaviour (Garbarino, 2000), as illustrated in the preceding quotations.

4.3.5 Location of incidents of violence

Based on the participants’ responses to where physical violence happens, it was clear that they are exposed to it in every sphere of their lives. They reportedly observed violence in their homes, on their farms, in the neighbourhoods, in the streets, the areas that they live in and on television.

“...at school...in the neighbourhood...on the farm...in the streets...in the area...at their homes...on the television ...”

“...by die skool...in die woonbuurt, op die plaas, in die straat...in die area, by die huis...op die televisie...” (WIM, QAM , KJD, ILK, ZBT, and LCB)

Children who are directly exposed to physical violence where they reside, in their homes and where they attend school, they learn from an early age that their communities, homes and schools are not safe places (Lewis, 1995). All these social environments are characterised by varying violent behaviour. In reply to these experiences and as a survival and coping mechanism, they learn to engage in physical violence. The developmental theorist Patricia Hawley (1999) makes a case for what she calls socio-metric status, which explains how children assert themselves to establish social dominance over others and how physical violence may be a means to achieve this end.

4.3.6 Perceived cause of physical violence

A range of factors has been identified as causes of physical violence between children. These factors are intra-personal, interpersonal circumstantial and environmental. Children reportedly struggle with internal and inter-personal conflict that they are unable to process, challenging domestic circumstances and environmental threats. When asked the question, “What causes children to engage in physical violence with each other?” the following responses were offered:

“...They cannot solve their problems...”

“...Hulle kan nie hulle probleme oplos nie...” (ZBT)

“...Teachers hit children’s head against the board...and swear their mothers...”

“...onderwyser slaan die kinderse koppe teen die bord...hulle vloek hulle mas...” (KJD)

“...they are filled with anger...”

“...Hulle is vol woede...” (POK)

“...They argue about simple things and then they start fighting ...”

“...Hulle sry oor stupid goed en dan baklei hulle...” (WIM)

“...They are sad ...”

“...Hulle is hartseer...” (ZBT)

“...Their parents drink and then they assault each other fight...”

“ Hulle ouers drink en dan rand hulle mekaar aan...” (WIM)

“...They want to impress their friends...”

“...Hulle wil hulle vriende impress...” (TMK)

“...There is no respect in homes and parents do not communicate ...”

“...Daar is geen respek in huise nie en ouers komuniqueer nie...” (DFT)

“...They have problems at home...”

“...Hulle het probleme by die huis...” (ZBT)

“...a lack of attention...”

“...’n tekort aan aandag...” (KBM)

The causes of physical violence between children that have been put forward by the participants underscore the assertion that there is a generally accepted consensus of the positive relationship that exists between exposure to physical violence in the immediate environment during childhood and the host of violent behavioural and other problems later in life (Campbell et al., 1997).

4.3.7 Range of physically violent behaviours that children engage in

Children reportedly engage in a range of physically violent behaviours including fist-fights, stabbing, kicking, tramping, smacking, and using objects such as bottles, bricks and clubs with which to assault others.

“...kicked and trampled on and smacked each other.”

“...mekaar geskop en getrap en geklap...” (KJD)

“... *Beat one other with fists...*”
“...*Slat mekaar met die feis...*” (WIM)

“...*Hit each other with a bottle...*”
“...*Mekaar met bottles geslaan...*” (QAM)

“...*Throw bricks at each other...*”
“...*Mekaar met bakstene gegooi..*” (KBM)

“...*They stab each other with pens...*”
“...*Mekaar met penne steek...*” (QAM)

“...*hit the other with a golf-club against the head...*”
“...*die anne een met 'n golfstok geslaan teen die kop...*” (ILK)

“...*The fight with scissors...*”
“...*Hulle baklei met skêre...*” (CRW)

The multiple ways in which the behaviour of children from Lynedoch have been described by the participants underscore how important it is to understand these responses. This is especially so, since the tendency for victims of violence to become perpetrators is so pronounced (de Voe et al., 2002). There appears to be a clear overlap between the behaviour that adults from Lynedoch reportedly engage in, and that of the children.

4.3.8 Perceived effects of physical violence

A range of emotions was articulated by the participants as the perceived effects which physical violence has on children. This included the perceptions that child victims feel angry and hurt inside. Other participants were of the opinion that it made children feel vengeful and experience the desire to retaliate with violence. The view was also

expressed that repeatedly being impacted by physical violence hardens child victims and that it could result in them feeling depressed, which in turn could result in suicide.

“...makes you feel angry...”
“...dit maak jou kwaad...” (KJD)

“...It hardens you...”
“...Dit maak jou hard...” (DFT)

“...It makes you feel vengeful...”
“...Dit gee jou a grudge om dit ook te doen...” (ZBT)

“...everything builds up...you take your frustrations out on others...”
“...alles bou op ...jy vat jou frustrasies uit op ander mense...” (KBM)

“...It makes you feel that you could do the same thing...”
“...Dit maak dat jy die selfde ding aan ander wil doen...” (ZBT)

“...unhappy and heart-sore...”
“...ongelukkig en hardseer...” (LCB)

“... Depressed...”
“...Depressief...” (ZBT)

“...at the end of the day they commit suicide...”
“...aan die einde van die dag dan pleeg hulle selfmoord...” (WIM)

As expressed above, children who are exposed physical violence are vulnerable to developmental impairment (Jenkins et al., 1997). This is especially so since they lack the skills to deal effectively with it (Piaget, 1972). The negative impact of physical violence experienced in childhood as illustrated via the quotations above, reveals both the immediate and the long term effects of exposure to physical violence. It not only increases the risk of socio-emotional problems, but also the likelihood of criminal

behaviour (Maxted, 2003). When experienced as is reportedly the case in Lynedoch, a child's psychological development is impaired (Richter, 1994).

4.3.9 Views regarding the appropriateness of physical violence

None of the participants thought that physical violence was acceptable or beneficial. They displayed a clear understanding that it is violation of the human dignity of others and that it was an expression of disregard for their human rights. Also, they indicated that resorting to physical violence is unnecessary, given the range of alternatives. The view was expressed that those who engaged in such behaviour would be breaking the law and that they should therefore be punished by the law, or they should be compelled to attend courses where they could be taught how to work with children.

"...It's unacceptable because it violates our rights ..."
"...dit is onaanvaarbaar, omdat dit teen jou mense regte is..." (POK)

"...It's against the law..."
"...Dit is teen die wet..." (ZBM)

"...It's not acceptable...other people get hurt..."
"...Dit is onaanvaarbaar...ander mense kry seer..." (DFT)

"...You should not do unto others what you do not want done to you..."
"...Moet nie aan ander doen wat jy nie aan jouself gedoen wil hê nie..." (ZBM)

"...you end up in jail..."
"...jy beland in die tronk..." (LCB)

"...must attend a course where they learn how to work with children..."
"...moet 'n kurses bywoon waar hulle kan leer hoe om met kinders te werk..." (DFT)

When children have learnt to develop empathy during the cognitive operations stage, they develop the skills needed to reason in the ways illustrated above (Piaget, 1972).

Children who successfully overcome problems like chronic exposure to physical violence, are able to do so as a consequence of positive interpersonal experiences (Vygotsky, 1978).

4.3.10 Preventative and curative measures

There was consensus amongst the participants that interpersonal conflict could be resolved through dialogue. The view was also expressed that children who do not know how to resolve their problems should get professional, confidential help and guidance. Better facilities should be made available to deal with crises and also as an alternative to the activities that result in physical violence. Recreational facilities and activities like sport were recommended as well as programmes that provide children with learning opportunities and problem solving skills.

“...They can talk to someone to solve the problem...”
“...Hulle kan met iemand praat om die problem op te los.” (QAM)

“...Maybe...create a programme where children can talk confidentially about their problems...”
“...Miskien kan hulle ...program skep waar kinders vertroulik kan praat oor hul probleme...” (ZBT)

“...Speak to a Psychologist...”
“...Met ’n sielkundige praat...” (ILK)

“...attend workshops that will help you ...”
“...Hulle kan werksinkels bywoon...” (KBM)

“...Better facilities can be made available...”
“...Beter geriewe kan beskikbaar gestel word...” (ZBT)

“...Play sport, like soccer...”
“...Sport speel soos sokker ...” (KJD)

“...build rehabilitation centers...”
“...rehabilitasiesentrums kan gebou word...” (DFT)

“...Introduce stricter laws...”
“..bring sterker wette in...” (KBM)

The suggestions generated by the participants regarding curative and preventative interventions, demonstrate the extent to which physical violence and the dynamics surrounding this phenomenon have become a familiar part of our social landscape and why it must urgently be addressed (Cauffman, Feltman, Jensen, & Arnette, 2000). The participants' suggested interventions are supported by researchers like Loeschut (2006) who contend that there is a need for interventions that make a tangible difference in the lives of children.

4.4 Formulation and Contextualization of Research Findings

In the section that follows, Bronfenbrenner's 5 layered bio-ecological systems theory is used as a framework for formulating a discussion of the research findings. This discussion will be located within the research context of Lynedoch, South Africa.

4.4.1 The Micro-system

The first layer of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological framework is the micro-system, incorporating the child's experiences through its body and via face to face interactions with the micro-system structures which includes the family, care-givers, day-care, school and neighbourhood (Berk, 2000). *“Lynedoch has many problems”* (POK). *“Adults...set no example for children”* (DFT). *“It is not a positive influence”* (ZBT). *“Children follow the example of their parents”* (ILK). It is clear from the way, in which the participants described the Lynedoch community that the structures of the

micro-system are impaired, exposing them to range of risk factors. This will be explored in more detail, via the discussion of the micro-system structures, which follows.

4.4.1.1 The child's body

A child's body is its life support system and therefore it makes sense that every effort be made to protect it from harm and threat (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), especially in a community like Lynedoch where the threat of harm is reportedly pronounced.

The findings of the present study clearly indicate that children of Lynedoch constantly live with the threat of bodily and psychological harm, especially within the micro-system structures. These structures do not offer the safety that it ideally should. Instead, it is reportedly where a great deal of neglect, threat and harm occurs. *"The adults do not buy food for their children"* (POK). *"They use violence against their children"* (KBM). *"They hurt each other until they land in hospital"* (KJD).

Neglect of children and inflicting harm on them is, however, a common problem in the poorer communities in the Western Cape Province (Dawes et al., 2006). Surrounded by problems that threaten their physical well-being and safety, both in their immediate and extended community it follows logically that in their attempts to protect their bodies from harm, the children will engage in physical violence.

4.4.1.2 The family and care-givers

Family has an impact on every aspect of a child's life. Given the range of social problems experienced by families in Lynedoch, one should expect children to present

with as broad a spectrum of problems. Poverty, alcoholism, drug abuse, teenage pregnancy, assault and gangsterism were amongst the descriptors that participants used to describe what life is like in Lynedoch. The impact and effects of these issues on the children of Lynedoch is pronounced especially since most of these issues manifest within the direct relationships of the family structure (Berk, 2000). Furthermore, it predisposes these children to being desensitised, since the physical violence is ongoing, frequent and chronic in nature. According to WIM, “*everyone fights.*” The children reportedly experience this, “*...in their environment...in their homes...where they walk...at school...*” (DLR, ILK, WIM and QAM)

Relationships within the family are a bi-directional phenomenon. Whilst parents’ and caregivers’ behaviour significantly impacts their children’s lives, the behaviour of children could as profoundly impact the parents’ lives. Whilst children may present with problem behaviours that stems from their relationships with parents and caregivers, parents and care-givers also need to contend with their children’s problem behaviour and the other demands of being a parent or care-giver. Negative bi-directional experiences are severe in the poorer parts of South Africa (Ensink et al., 1997). Lynedoch is an example of this and the impact thereof is psychologically very damaging (Richter, 1994).

4.4.1.3 Day-care, school and the neighbourhood

Very important relationships are fostered at day-care centres, schools and in the neighbourhood, thus five propositions will be detailed below, highlighting the significance of these bi-directional relationships that the children have with adults. In the case of the Lynedoch community, participants were of the opinion that even in

these contexts the damage caused by impaired family structures, is perpetuated. People reportedly, “*fight, in the streets...on the farm...in the areas where children live...in schools and in the neighbourhood*” (WIM, KJD, ILK and LCB). This is expanded upon in the 5 propositions that are discussed below.

4.4.1.3.1 Proposition 1

Children require ongoing long term mutual interaction with adults (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In Lynedoch however, this is not the case, as indicated by the feedback from participants. “*The adults...do not buy food for their children*” (POK). “*They set no example for children*” WIM. “*Parents do not communicate*” (ILK). Furthermore, these adults must have the child’s best interest at heart and the child should know this (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Again this is not the case in Lynedoch, since parents reportedly neglect their children’s needs and instead, they satisfy their own addictions. The adults, “act like children,” they “don’t care” and “*they use their money to buy alcohol*” (KBM). The reported negative behaviour of the adults compromises the sense of security and wellbeing that the children should be receiving from them. Good social support would be a powerful deterrent in preventing many of the negative outcomes that derived from the environment (Logsdon & Gennaro, 2008)

4.4.1.3.2 Proposition 2

If the relational dyad is strong, it provides a pattern for how the children relate to others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Whilst the findings of the present study suggest that these dyads are strong, the modeled patterns of relating to others are problematic. Children in Lynedoch reportedly, “*do what adults do.*” (KBM) “*When parents physically assault each other, then they follow the same example at school*” (DFT).

The relational dyads with parents should foster the skills and confidence needed by children to effectively explore the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the Lynedoch context however, children learn anti-social behavioural patterns, which over a period of time, may result in desensitisation.

4.4.1.3.3 Proposition 3

Attachments and interactions within secondary relationships are very important. If these secondary relationships are compromised, it affects the primary relationships, since children transfer what they experience within these interactions, back onto their primary relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). This is particularly bothersome in a community like Lynedoch where the children reportedly experience violence and other anti-social behaviours in every sphere of their lives to the extent that they reportedly feel hardened by it and the desire to reply to the negative behaviour in the same way they experience it. *“Everyone fights”* (WIT). *“It hardens you”* (DFT). *“Sometimes it makes you feel that you could do the same thing”* (ZBT). Since the secondary relationships of these children are compromised, it compounds the problems in the primary relationships, rather than modelling alternatives. This implies that the children of Lynedoch are harmed more within their micro-system structures than they are helped

4.4.1.3.4 Proposition 4

Relational progress and positive growth requires repeated two-way exchanges and mutual compromise (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the Lynedoch community parents and children reportedly struggle to communicate respectfully. *“There is no respect in the homes...parents do not communicate”* (ILK). Achieving relational progress is

therefore difficult. As a result of this, negative behavioural patterns become more entrenched and are further perpetuated. If awareness of the need for change is not promoted through the various micro-system structures of these children's lives, change will not occur. To achieve this end, the participants recommend interventions by psychologists and social workers, workshops, rehabilitation clinics and other interventions, suggesting that they too perceive the situation as something that requires external intervention as part of a solution.

4.4.1.3.5 Proposition 5

Several role players need to be proactive in creating awareness and affirming the responsibility of parents to provide support for their children (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The participants felt that the laws which exist to protect people and to foster the proper attitudes need to be enforced. Educators, who struggle to deal with problem children, should reportedly "*attend a course to learn how to handle children*" (KBM) and if their wrongful interaction with children persists, "*they must be fired*" (KJD). Unfortunately, as Pretorius (2006) puts it, violence will continue happening within the safe domain of the family and at schools, in spite of South Africa's impressive constitution, based on a bill of human rights. This suggests that the problem has been internalised and normalised and that it must therefore be addressed at the micro and meso levels.

Schools should be places of safety where children are equipped with good relationship skills. Instead of this being the case, the participants report that the children of Lynedoch fight at school about trivial things and try to resolve problems through violence rather than through negotiation. In the past, physical violence at the school

has already resulted in police intervention. This problem has also resulted in community based organisations being institutionalised at the schools recognising that physical violence at schools is part of a family and community problem (Casella, 2002). In Lynedoch the family, day-care, school and neighbourhood structures of the micro-system have been compromised and are reportedly not havens of safety and stability for the children.

4.4.2 The Meso-system

The findings of the present study suggest that the micro-system structures are impaired and hence are not functioning as they should. It is not connecting and linking the structures of the micro-system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), instead the structure are operating in isolation of each other. The consequences of this are serious. According to Addison (1992), instability within, or an impaired connectivity between the different structures of the micro-system, is the most destructive force in a child's life. The crucially needed mutual interaction required for the child's development is consequently compromised, resulting in pronounced levels of physical violence in Lynedoch.

Participants indicated that the adults are indifferent towards each other and that there is very little communication between them and their children. They also indicated that the severity of the problem is such that special programmes are warranted to address it. Understanding the nature of the impairment between the micro-system's structures constitutes the issue of concern. The research findings suggest that the community's problems form the basis of these impaired connections.

People reportedly consume copious amounts of alcohol and/or drugs when they're together, often resulting in drunken brawls and physical assaults, which are perceived as immature and unnecessary, yet in spite of this, children "*do what the adults do*" (KJD). This also explains why children are not adequately equipped with the tools to effectively explore the necessary connections provided by the meso-system. As predicted by Pinnock (1997), physical violence is so entrenched in South Africa's poorer communities like Lynedoch that it will persist regardless of the political changes. It is also pervasive and therefore must constantly be addressed, if the severe lifelong traumatic physical, emotional and psychological effects are to be addressed (Erasmus & Mans, 2005).

Over many decades the Lynedoch community has been ravaged by problems such as physical violence, that the children have accepted this as normal behaviour. "*When they are in a group...they hurt each other*" (WIM). It is so severe that physical violence has reportedly become like any one of many pathological ways in which the micro-systems' structures connect. "*When they are in a group they use drugs and start to fight*" (QAM). This kind of dysfunctional connecting or relating to others has resulted in the meso-system being unable to provide the healthy links that the micro-system structures require to function effectively.

The provision of much needed support to the children of Lynedoch, through the connections between structures like the school and the parents, or the neighbours and the family exist, but instead of providing support to the child in dealing with the stress that they may experience, they rather create and perpetuate instability. These children are not being protected from psychological damage caused by certain micro-system

structures (Mc Loyd & Wilson, 1990). They are being further harmed by the way in which these structures connect. Paradoxically, it is this painful revelation that also provides the clues for where and how interventions are needed.

Exposure to the endemic, prevailing risk of violence has resulted in children adopting similar behaviour as a protective coping mechanism to survive in their unstable, hostile environments. Although it did not emerge as a theme, certain participants did refer to certain positive features social features on Lynedoch evidenced in the following quotations:

“...Lynedoch is what the people make it...”
“...Lynedoch is wat die mense dit maak ...” ZBT

This suggests awareness that people have choices, regardless of the many negative issues that surround their lives.

“...It is safe on our farm...”
“...Op ons plaas is dit veilig...” DFT

Not everyone engages in physical violence and other anti-social behaviour. There are those who understand the importance of creating a safe environment.

“...People respect children and they respect them selves...”
“...Mense respekteer die kinders en hulle respekteer hulle self...” QAM.

There are Lynedoch inhabitants who lead dignified and respectful lives.

These quotations provide hope, because it provides evidence of things being different to the norm of negative behaviour, like physical violence, in Lynedoch. This also explains why that in spite of what generally appears to be, there are children and adults who make a conscious effort to lead a better life. They are resilient and exercise their freedom and ability to make good choices

4.4.3 The Exo-system

This is the third layer of the bio-ecological framework and within the context of this study it would include, the wine farmers, the wine-making industry bosses, extended family members and the extended neighbourhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). These are the people and contexts with which the children of Lynedoch do not have direct contact, but which still have a significant impact on their lived experiences.

The experiences of parents and caregivers of the conditions under which they work, impact their wellbeing significantly and undermined their human dignity. This is especially so, when those conditions are harsh. Alcohol and drug abuse are reportedly rife on the farms where most of the parents and caregivers live and work. For many years farmers and bosses in the wine making industry have paid for labour with wine (Parry, Pluddemann, Steyn, Bradshaw, Norman, & Laubscher, 2005). This has a direct adverse effect on these adults, impairing their functioning and vicariously impacting their children in many negative ways.

The farms which constitute the Lynedoch community are located on the outskirts of the town. Many of the poorer inhabitants consequently don't have access to certain resources and are possibly cut-off from extended family members and other forms of basic social contact. Not having access to certain resources and being disconnected from extended family members increases the risks that the children of Lynedoch face, due to their circumstances (Garbarinao, 1995).

Parents' physical isolation from the broader societal context also makes the community more vulnerable to oppressive labour and social practices that would

further erode their sense of purpose, belonging and general wellbeing. This is even more so, since Lynedoch is reportedly not the kind of place where there is good social cohesion, thus further reducing the community's child-care capacities. The absence of support and the prevalence of these constraints constitute significant obstacles to positive change (Dawes et al., 2009).

The findings of this study support previous recent research findings regarding poorer communities in the Western Cape Province, which found that there are high incidence of child abuse and neglect within homes and the immediate environment. This suggests that at an exo-systems level the problem is not being dealt with effectively (Dawes et.al., 2006).

4.4.4 The Macro-system

The findings of this study suggest that the macro-system, which is comprised of cultural values, customs and laws, political and material influences (Berk, 2000), has a greatly impacted the current state of the broader bio-ecological system of Lynedoch. According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), whatever the prevailing values and practices are in a society, albeit legal or socially sanctioned, they filter down from the macro-system through the meso and exo-systems, into the micro-system. The clearest evidence of this phenomenon in South Africa is the structural violence such as oppressive indentured labour practices crafted by the apartheid system. These entrenched practices and values continue to have devastating effects on its victims, pervading social values, relationships and individual psyches (Bulhan, 1985). Over a number of decades the people of Lynedoch have become conditioned to seeing

themselves as being powerless to change their lot in life. This learnt helplessness has become internalised (De Saintonge, 1998).

Most of the adult inhabitants of Lynedoch are reportedly unable to care for themselves, let alone care adequately for their children. Furthermore, the pathological patterns of behaviour that have been learnt over any decades are now the norm, regardless of the laws that forbid it. The fact that these problems persist, suggests that mere political and policy reforms are insufficient.

New human-rights laws in South Africa have done little to change many people's lived experiences and such is the case in Lynedoch. Farm owners and employers are still predominantly white people and the owners of great wealth. Farm workers are people of "colour," or from one of the black population groups and dependent on the farmers to sustain their livelihoods. If the macro-system is to effect positive changes in Lynedoch, they also need to address the social injustices evident in the community.

Systems of payment for labour, such as the "dop" system, have been outlawed, but the alcohol dependency it created, is entrenched in behaviour patterns. It is in light hereof that so many community development organizations have emerged in recent year. Hands on interventions at the micro-level and at the interface of the meso and exo-systems are essential.

4.4.5 The Chrono-system

As is the case with all children, the children of Lynedoch have to contend with the demands exerted by internal and external dynamics that are part of the chrono-system.

Unfortunately good support and moral guidance is the exception to the norm in this community, therefore most of the children in Lynedoch have to cope on their own with the internal dynamics that stem from the physiological changes they experience. Dynamics like these could explain why so many children are, “having babies before their time” (ILK).

These children also have to contend with demands of the external dynamics of their developmental context. This includes the broader historical context. In the South Africa there has been a long history of socio-politically engineered violence, adversely affecting poor communities like Lynedoch (Barbarin et al., 2004). Poverty in all its forms flourishes in communities like this. It includes material poverty, social, intellectual and spiritual poverty.

As these children develop and mature physiologically, they increasingly become like the parents, or the care-givers that raised them. Over time they blend into the environment within which they are growing up. The reported neglect and abuse of self, family and others, and the indifference towards the plight of others was shaped by history. Currently this is being passed down from generation to generation, in spite of history changing. The chrono-system of the past, successfully effected change on micro-system, which has become stuck.

The fact that the historical changes in South African politics have not changed the lived experiences of people in communities like Lynedoch, suggests that the reasons may be of an intra-personal nature. Action is needed, not talk. Problems like

substance abuse and addiction require more than political and policy change. It requires practical intervention (Hargovan, 2007)

When considering how historical events such as apartheid influence and shape children's lives, it is important to remember the influence of the child's level of general developmental, since the way in which a child perceives events, are mediated through previously acquired skills and experience (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

4.4.6 Other components of Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory

4.4.6.1 Nature versus Nurture

In Lymedoch the economic growth of the wine farming industry is promoted at the expense of farm worker's families. Remediating the consequent deficiencies and stressors in family life is complicated even more by the fact that parents or caregivers are required to declare their deficiencies in order to receive support. The shame of doing so, or the fact that it may jeopardise employment, prevents many from seeking help and this causes the perpetuation of their problems. The opposite swing of the pendulum is also true, where people who are helped benefit from their victimhood and helplessness, which removes their incentives to change.

The prosperous wine making industry in Stellenbosch has been the primary economic activity for over a century. Historically it has been a highly exploitative enterprise, which thrived on the labour economy of the apartheid system and has done a great deal to advance the apartheid ideology's goals. The "dop" system created many generations of alcoholics, resulting in extremely high levels of fetal alcohol syndrome in children and a plethora of social problems

4.4.6.2 The Emotional System

Emotions have an adaptive function related to survival and there are different levels of emotional complexity (Plutchik, 1980). Participants in the present study report observing a great deal of frustration, anger, fear and similar incapacitating emotions. Whilst these emotions serve the purpose they are supposed to, they also fuel and maintain the status quo of physical violence as a means of coping with challenging situations.

Based on feedback from the participants many of the children from the Lynedoch community appear to be stuck in patterns of anti-social behaviour that is harmful to all. The view was expressed that this is a reaction to the children's inability to deal effectively with emotions such as anger, frustration and resentment. The for-stated emotions were perceived as part of a set of emotions that motivates perpetrators of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, but it could also be the emotions experienced by victims

4.4.6.3 The Cognitive System

In Lynedoch, the adults "*consume a lot of alcohol*" (ILK). "*They do not buy food; they use their money to buy alcohol*" (ZBT). This would explain why Lynedoch has such high incidents of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. The cognitive system which is one of the core systems of any individual's being is severely affected by such excessive consumption of alcohol. Prior to birth data is gathered from the developing infant's sensory faculties, which it learns to recognize and feel. Experiences are formed in this way and the brain which processes the data into a representation of the world (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Given the for-stated explanation and the Lynedoch

community's history of alcoholism, a clear picture develops of the children's vulnerabilities before and after birth.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), human beings have become increasingly complex over time and have moved from the position of needing to understand the world, to controlling it. One of the negative ways in which this was translated in the Lynedoch Community was through the practice of racial domination and control. The white land owners and employers dominated and controlled black tenants and workers over many decades. This created a perception of human value based on race, which black people subsequently identified with and internalised, losing their dignity and human worth in the process. "*People have no respect*" (ILK). "*They hurt each other*" (KFT). "*People do not help each other*" (KBM).

Unable to resist the system that labelled, oppressed and enslaved them, black people in Lynedoch learnt to vent their frustrations at each other. "*they drink ...and then they fight*" (CRW). "*They kick and tramp on each other*" (KJD). It became so common that children think that this pathological behaviour is normal. "*Physical violence happens daily*" (DFT). "*Everyone fights*" (WIM). This explains why it is such a pervasive problem.

Social learning theorists like Albert Bandura and developmental theorist like Jean Piaget write extensively about the stages of behavioural and cognitive development. Within bio-ecological systems theory however, these stages occur within nested environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which is a reference to the physical structures related to these stages. In Lynedoch all these structure have reportedly been affected

and impaired over time, as depicted in the following quotations; “*On the farms many people use alcohol*” (ZBT). “*Young boys are very bad. They steal their mothers’ home-stuff and sell it for drugs*” (WIM).

In Piagetian terms, the micro-system structures and most of the meso-system constitute the infant’s entire world during the sensory-motor stage of development. Deficits in the lives of parents and care-givers therefore have a direct impact on the learning and development of children during this stage. The social problems in Lynedoch alluded to by the participants in this study such as alcoholism and family violence more than adequately describe what these developing children are impacted by and what their early experiences of the world is.

Later in a child’s development when higher cognitive abilities are developing, the meso-system and the exo-system are more influential (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Different people handle knowledge and information in different ways. According to the information obtained from participants in the present study, children have been described as imitators of their parents’ behaviour. They were also described as being just like their parents. “*They do what their parents do*” (ZBT). It would thus appear that as children from Lynedoch grow older, their behavioural patterns increasingly become like those of parents. “*Later on parents will wonder why children are doing it, then they must think and remember that they used to do it*” (DFT). The reported physical violence and other pathological behaviour exhibited by the adults of Lynedoch is thus a good indicator of the kind of behaviour to expect from the maturing children.

4.4.6.4 The Behavioural System

Since the child-parent and inter-parent dyads in Lynedoch, are associated with the kind of physical violence which has been characterised by hospitalisations or even death, children presenting with problem behaviour should be expected. Many researchers and theorists have noted the correlation between environmental elements and behaviour. As asserted by Bandura (1977), man is a product of his environment.

Within the bio-ecological framework the mother-child, father-child and mother-father dyads are the most influential in a child's life. Lynedoch is no exception. Most of the child's behaviour is learnt from their parents. The children, "*are like the adults*" (ZBT). "*They want to do what the adults do,*" (QAM). Furthermore, the parental monitoring which is a crucial part of preventing negative behaviour (Lohman & Billings 2008) is non-existent. Pinnock (1997) predicted that the problem of physical violence between children in places like Lynedoch is so severe that it will continue regardless of political change.

4.4.7 Summary

The findings yielded by the present study reveal a range of factors perceived by children as being the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch.

The perceived causes of physical violence between children in Lynedoch include the inability to resolve personal problems, a struggle with emotions such as anger and sadness, the need to impress peers, poor conflict resolution skills, domestic problems,

their parents' struggles, a lack of respect, poor communication skills, the lack of attention and the modelling of physical violence by adults.

The perceived effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch include experiencing feelings of anger and sadness, being hardened by the experience, entertaining vengeful thoughts, displacing your frustrations onto others, wanting to retaliate with similar behaviour and becoming depressed, or suicidal

Lynedoch's history of structural violence and oppression, stemming from the previous political dispensation revealed how the values and practices within the chrono-system, filtered through the macro-system, exo-system and meso-system to the micro-system, creating a community of people who practice physical violence and thereby inadvertently sanction and transmit it to the children.

Physical violence happens in every sphere of children's lives and is modeled to them so frequently within their relationships that they have assimilated it into their own behaviour. This chronic exposure has also resulted in the children becoming desensitised to the inappropriateness of this behaviour and normalising it. Political and policy changes in isolation have proven to be ineffective in dealing with the problem and increasingly the demand is being made for practical interventions that make a visible difference in the children's lives and break the pernicious current cycle.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This study aimed to:

- gather information about the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, from 12 to 14 year old children who reside in Lynedoch
- formulate an understanding of the prescribed causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, based on the information gathered, and
- contribute towards the body of knowledge concerning violence between children in South Africa

This chapter will discuss the findings of the study and address the extent to which these aims were realised. The chapter will also discuss the limitations and significance of this study, followed by the implications of the research findings for future research and clinical practice.

5.1 Main findings

The young participants invariably described Lynedoch as a poor community fraught with social problems, including, indifference towards the plight of others, extremely high levels of alcoholism and substance abuse, self and child neglect, sexual promiscuity and teenage pregnancy, theft, assault and gangsterism, a high school dropout rate, and excessive physical violence between adults, children and within families.

The adults of Lynedoch were described as immature, irresponsible, aggressive, physically violent, alcoholics, drug addicts, possessing poor communication skills and a bad example to the community's children. On the other hand the children of Lynedoch were profiled by the participants as being rude and disrespectful, imitators of the adults' negative behaviour, gangsters, often guilty of substance abuse, theft and sexual promiscuity, leaving school before completing it and engaging in brute acts of physical violence.

At times there was a sense that certain participants described physical violence quite flippantly and as if it were normal. Participants expressed the view that it happened everywhere and that it is something everyone does. It was also established that the children of Lynedoch frequently encountered physical violence in different spheres of their lives, including in their homes, at school, in their neighbourhoods, on the farms they live and in many television programs that they watch.

The descriptions of physical violence were very graphic and the participants appeared animated and "excited" at times, when talking about it. The experiences that they've reportedly been exposed to included; smacking, boxing, beating, kicking, stabbing, assaulting with bricks, golf-clubs and spades. The victims of these incidents reportedly landed in hospital due to the injuries they sustained, or in certain instances, they lost their lives. When asked how speaking about these experiences made the participants feel, they replied that they felt fine.

The reasons put forward for the high incidence of physical violence included; drunkenness, drug intoxication, robbery, mugging and theft to support drug

addictions, the inability to resolve simple disagreements maturely or meaningfully, wanting to assert one's dominance in a group and to instil fear in others, to impress friends and gain social status, thoughtlessly imitating the adults in an attempt to be like them or wanting to be acknowledged as an adult and having no respect for the rights of others.

Participants felt that physical violence was wrong and knew that it is unlawful. They also felt that it was a violation of the human rights and dignity of others, adding that it was physically and psychologically harmful and that it had a very negative effect on everyone. Furthermore, the view was expressed that in reprisal for engaging in physical violence, perpetrators should be punished by the law. Surprisingly, they also suggested that perpetrators should attend clinics and workshops where they could learn to deal with the problems causing them to behave in this way. The participants' concern about the victims of physical violence included access to medical care and facilities. The rather sophisticated contributions made by the participants are indicative of the extent to which they've been exposed to research and clinical processes and to other support programmes at their school in the past.

Various solutions to the problem of physical violence between children were proposed, including preventative and curative interventions. Participants proposed that psychologists and social workers be approached for help and that workshops should be designed for victims and perpetrators. The view was also expressed that stricter laws need to be made and implemented and that medical and other facilities need to be improved and made more accessible. Improved, more assessable amenities

were part of the proposed solution for some, whilst others made a case for better sport and recreational facilities and activities for the community.

The theoretical frameworks that were reviewed as part of the present study offer different explanations for the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch. From a constructivist's perspective, the problem may be understood in terms of the children's level of development and the corresponding lack of conflict resolution skills that may accompany that level.

Social development theorists such as Lev Vygotsky would regard a problem such as physical violence between children as too complex to explain in terms of developmental stages. The physical violence that occurs between the children of Lynedoch would instead, be attributed directly to a combination of their social interactions and the events within the family. Based on the accounts provided by the participants in the present study, social interactions and interpersonal events within families in Lynedoch are fraught with physical violence, making a credible argument for locating the high prevalence of this phenomenon within this framework.

Certain developmental theorists such as Karen Horney make a case for socio-metric status, attributing the causes and effects of the physical violence between children to an experienced need to assert themselves and establish their social dominance in relation to their peers. This view was supported by certain participants who described the physical violence between children in Lynedoch as a means of improving the perpetrators' social status.

The social learning theorists, such as Albert Bandura would explain the children's physically violent behaviour as something that they have learnt through stimulus and response interactions within their social networks. Based on the information obtained from the participants, physical violence occurs frequently and in every social sphere in the Lynedoch community. These children therefore learn to use physical violence throughout their development and from most of the adults within their relationship network.

For the purpose of the present study, Urie Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory guided the researcher's formulation of the research findings. Within this framework, the children of Lynedoch were viewed as active participants in their development, interacting with and impacted by multiple layers of the bio-ecological system that they form part of. Accordingly, the causes and effects of their physically violent behaviour were viewed as bi-directional interactions with all the systems and sub-systems within this framework.

The children's bi-directional interaction with their micro-system structures including their bodies, families, care-givers, school and neighbours, was detailed to explain its part in the development of the physical violence inflicted on and/or by them. In Lynedoch the micro-system structures were found to be severely compromised and aids in explaining why the connections provided by the meso-system were also consequently impaired and unable to provide the necessary support.

This study revealed that exo-system which forms part of these children's lives serves to perpetuate psycho-pathological behaviour like physical violence that surrounds

their lives. It does so vicariously, via the impact it has on the lives of the adults who parent these children and those who form part of their micro-system structures. Instead of finding ways to deal with problems like the alcoholism, which the exo-system created, the status quo is maintained, because of the economic interests it serves. It could be construed that in the wine farming and wine making industries of Lynedoch, economic gains continues to be more important than the people employed in these industries.

When explored, the macro-system of wider political cultural and material influences surrounding the Lynedoch community, were exposed as having created the current social problems and perpetuating them. The apartheid system was extremely oppressive and violent, creating oppressive social contexts. While the new political dispensation has good ideals and policies, it is ineffective in procuring meaningful change at the micro-system level, leaving this community trapped. The chrono-system's envelope of time, provided to the Lynedoch community by history, has enslaved and oppressed the people. Over the years they've internalised the oppression that they've experienced and identified with the abuse. Breaking this cycle is therefore very difficult and requires carefully developed practical interventions at different levels of the system.

5.2 Limitations of the study

This study sought to obtain information from young children, hence an explorative qualitative frame work was purposefully chosen. Given the sensitive nature of the research topic and the developmental level of the participants, the participatory nature of the focus group interviews enabled the researcher to support the group throughout

the process. Whilst this was intended as a safety measure, it may also have contained the group, more than was required, thereby possibly preventing additional contributions. The fact that the researcher was familiar to the participants as a teacher at the school may also have impacted the interviewing process and dynamics.

The researcher included a small number of participants in the present study. Their backgrounds were very similar and they all hail from the same rural farming community. The research findings can therefore not be generalised beyond this context. Furthermore, the participants were all children from poor backgrounds and although they spoke with ease, their responses were brief. Whilst the information that they provided was sufficient for the purpose of this study, more detail could possibly have been provided if the participants were interviewed individually. Their meta-communication was therefore an important additional source of information. It could however, potentially be misinterpreted and was thus been very cautiously included.

Whilst the researcher's role as teacher at the school may have helped with establishing rapport and trust, it may also have impeded participation. The fact that the children know the researcher in his capacity as teacher may have caused them to interface with him in similar way to what they do in the classroom set-up.

5.3 Significance of the study

In spite of the limitations which have been mentioned, very meaningful information was obtained from the focus group interview comprised of a total of twelve 12 -14 year old male and female children and the findings make a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge regarding the researched phenomenon. Furthermore,

the information was obtained directly from the children whose lives it is about. This is a shift from the traditional sources of knowledge generation concerning the issue of physical violence between children.

This study revealed the perceived causes of physical violence between children in Lynedoch to include a lack of problem solving skills, difficulty dealing with painful emotions, low self-esteem, poor conflict resolution skills, difficulty communicating, a need for attention, and adults who model physical violence to children. The perceived effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch revealed by the study included painful emotions, desensitisation, displaced anger, vengefulness and suicidal ideation.

It is hoped that the information generated by this study will benefit those who intend developing and implementing preventative and curative intervention programmes in Lynedoch, other poor communities in South Africa and elsewhere, especially since it also highlights the problems that hinder change and it suggests possible solutions.

5.4 Implications of the research findings for future research and clinical practice

This study has illustrated the value of obtaining information from child participants, especially when researching issues concerning their lives. This ensures that the information about the phenomenon being explored is obtained directly from those it is about. Issues like the participants' social and material status, their level of maturity and intellectual ability, need not impede the process of obtaining information, especially if well-suited research instruments are skilfully used.

Whilst this study provides information about the perceived causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch and recommends ways of intervening, more research should be undertaken to track and monitor interventions in contexts like these and ensure its effectiveness. Research should also be conducted to establish the perceived causes and effects of laws, policies and programmes that fail to translate into practical interventions, or to visibly change the lives of those they are purposed to serve.

A theoretical framework like Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory enables researchers to obtain a more holistic understanding of problems like those explored in the present study. It also enables the researcher to identify the systemic strengths, weaknesses, obstacles and threats to proposed intervention. Future studies with children in very specific communities, would therefore do well to use a framework that will facilitate the contextualisation of the research findings.

Community workers and clinical practitioners working in the field of community development would do well to always work collaboratively with the community they intend to help. The target group, albeit children, must be included as the main role-players in all processes aimed at developing effective intervention strategies intended for them. They should never be excluded from decisions concerning their lives and wellbeing. This is ethical, empowering and it will strengthen community ownership.

Excluding the community from the process of working out the solutions to their problems, particularly in the South African context with its apartheid legacy, will perpetuate their problems. Practical, sustained change is essential to the process of

ending the cycle of physical violence that has been entrenched in individual and collective psyche over many decades. Reparative and corrective experiences which stand apart from what the community is accustomed to, is crucial. In communities such as Lynedoch, that have reportedly been very resistant to change, owning the process of change, experiencing its benefits and believing in its worth is imperative. If the community is to address the concerns expressed by its children, its resources, strengths and skills need to be identified and mobilisation.

“Life in Lynedoch is what you make it” (ZBT, 2009).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

"Exploring children's perceptions of the causes and effects of physical violence between children: A Lynedoch case study"

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Grant Demas. He holds an HDE (Arts), BA and BA Honours degree. He is currently studying towards the completion of an MA degree in Psychology. His thesis is being supervised by Professor Anthony V. Naidoo of the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. The results of his research study will contribute towards the completion of his MA degree. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a child between the ages of 12 to 14 years old and this study will focus on learning about the views of children your age.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

- To gather information about the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch, from children who reside in Lynedoch
- To use the gathered information to formulate an understanding of the causes and effects of physical violence between children in Lynedoch
- To contribute towards the body of knowledge regarding violence between children, in South Africa

2. PROCEDURES

- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- Once the researcher has explained the nature and purpose of the study to you, you will have an opportunity to ask any questions that will provide greater clarity.
- Only 12 of the potential participants will be invited to participate in this study
- There is the possibility that you may not be selected as one of 12 participants.
- Interviews will be conducted in Afrikaans.
- The group interview will only take 60 minutes.
- You are only asked to participate in one interview.
- Your participation requires informed written consent from the participants and their parents.
- Your identity will remain anonymous.
- The group interviews will be conducted at the Lynedoch youth project, after obtaining informed written consent to do so.
- The information will be safely stored and kept confidential.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The researcher does not foresee any risks to participants. The following cautionary steps will however be taken:

- There will be a debriefing and recovery session immediately after the interview.
- Should it become apparent at any point in the process that a participant is in need of counselling, it will be arranged by the researcher.

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefit of participating in this research process is that it will provide the information needed to formulate an understanding of the dynamics of physical violence between

children in Lynedoch. This information will then be available to other researchers and may be used to design interventions tailored to the needs of children in Lynedoch.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

There will be no financial remuneration for participation in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of the following measures:

- No names will be used in the study
- Only themes will be extrapolated from responses
- Audio recording will be erased upon the completion of this thesis

Once the results of study are published your identity will remain anonymous, since no names will be used

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and still remain in the study. The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact [Mr. Grant Demas on his cellular telephone at 083 5616263 Or Professor A.V. Naidoo The Supervisor of this study, at the University of Stellenbosch. His telephone Number is:

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Maryke Hunter-Hüsselmann (mh3@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4623) at the Division for Research Development.

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT OR LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

The information above was described to [me/the subject/the participant] by **[Grant Demas]** in [Afrikaans/English/Xhosa/other] and [I am/the subject is/the participant is] in command of this language or it was satisfactorily translated to [me/him/her]. [I/the participant/the subject] was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to [my/his/her] satisfaction.

[I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study/I hereby consent that the subject/participant may participate in this study.] I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Subject/Participant

Name of Legal Representative (if applicable)

Signature of Subject/Participant or Legal Representative

Date

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____
[name of the subject/participant] and/or [his/her] representative _____
[name of the representative]. [He/she] was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in [Afrikaans/*English/*Xhosa/*Other] and [no translator was used/this conversation was translated into _____] by

Signature of Investigator

Date

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Section A: Contextualization

- Describe Lynedoch as you see it.
- Describe the adults who live in Lynedoch.
- Describe the children who live in Lynedoch.
- Describe what life is like in Lynedoch.
- Describe what life is like where you live.
- Tell me anything else that you think I should know about Lynedoch, or the people who live here.

Section B: Perceptions of and exposure to physical violence

- What is physical violence?
- Have any of you seen adults being physical violent?
- Where have you seen adults being physical violent?
- Will you describe the physical violence that you saw between adults?

- Have you seen children being physically violent with each other?
- Where have you seen children being physical violent with each other?
- Will you describe the physical violence that you saw between children?

- What are the things that cause children to be physically violent with each other?
- Where do children learn to be physically violent with each other?

- How does physical violence affect children?
- How did the physical violence that you saw, affect you?

Section C: Additional Questions

- Is it okay to do violent things? Explain your answer.
- Can anything be done about children who are physically violent?
- Please give some ideas about what can be done for children who are physically violent with other children?
- Please give some ideas about what can be done for children who are victims of physical violence committed by other children?
- Who do you think should help children involved in physical violence?
- Will the physical violence between in Lynedoch end? (explain your answer)
- Is there anything-else you wish to share?

Conclusion

Thank you for taking part in this interview.

Appendix 3

ONDERHOUD SKEDULE

Afdeling A: Konteks

- Beskryf Lynedoch soos jy dit sien.
- Beskryf die volwassenes wat in Lynedoch woon.
- Beskryf die kinders wat in Lynedoch woon.
- Beskryf hoe dit is om in Lynedoch te woon.
- Beskryf hoe die lewe is waar jy woon.
- Vertel my enige iets wat jy dink ek moet weet omtrent Lynedoch en die mense wat hier woon.
-

Afdeling B: Persepsies van en blootstelling aan fisiese geweld

- Verduidelik wat is fisiese geweld
- Het u volwassenes gesien wat fisies gewelddadig was?
- Waar het u hierdie fisies gewelddadige volwassenes gesien?
- Sal u asseblief dit wat u gesien het tussen die volwassenes, beskryf?
- Het u enige kinders gewaar wat fisies gewelddadig is met mekaar?
- Waar het jy kinders gewaar wat fisies gewelddadig is met mekaar?
- Sal jy die fisiese geweld wat jy tussen die kinders gewaar het beskryf?
- Wat veroorsaak dat kinders fisies gewelddadig is met mekaar?
- Waar leer kinders om fisies gewelddadig te wees met mekaar?
- Hoe word kinders deur fisiese geweld geaffekteer?
- Hoe was u geaffekteer deur die fisiese geweld wat u gawaar het?

Section C: Addisionele Vrae

- Is dit aanvaarbaar om fisies gewelddadig op te tree? Verduidelik u antwoord.
- Is daar enige iets wat gedoen kan word om die fisiese geweld tussen kinders te bekamp?
- Wat is u idees omtrent stappe wat gedoen kan word om fisiese geweld tussen kinders te bekamp?
- Wat sal u voorstel, moet gedoen word om kinders te help wat slagoffers was van fisiese geweld?
- Wie sal u voorstel, moet kinders help, wat fisiese geweld ervaar?
- Sal die fisiese geweld tussen kinders in Lynedoch eindig? (Verduidelik u antwoord)
- Is daar enige iets wat u nog wil byvoeg?

Dankie vir u bydrae.