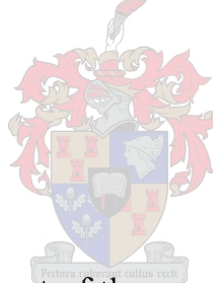


**EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND INTERPERSONAL
CONFLICT RESOLUTION TACTICS DISPLAYED
AMONG A GROUP OF HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS IN
THE STELLENBOSCH DISTRICT**

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Thesis presented in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Psychology) at Stellenbosch University

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STATEMENT

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

28/02/2006..

Date

ABSTRACT

The consequences of violence on South African youth are of major concern for the country's future. The purpose of this research was to study adolescents from disadvantaged communities' exposure to violence and their use of conflict resolution tactics. The role of gender in mediating the type and the setting of violence exposure and conflict resolution tactics is also investigated. The sample consisted of 426 adolescent learners from three schools in the Stellenbosch district. The questionnaire comprised of the Screen for Adolescent Violence Exposure (SAVE) (Hastings & Kelley, 1997) and the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Straus, 1979), which were administered to 187 male and 239 female adolescents with a mean age of 15.9 years. The sample reported being exposed to moderately high levels of indirect violence in the community. This exposure to violence was significantly correlated with their use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics. Significant negative correlations were found between exposure to violence at school and reasoning tactics. Results from the Analyses of Variance indicated that males were more exposed to traumatic violence at school and in the community, while females were exposed to more physical/verbal abuse at home. Gender differences further showed that males displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to indirect violence, especially in the community, and verbal aggression. Females displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse, especially at home, and the use of violent conflict resolution tactics. The study shows that adolescents exposed to high levels of violence are more likely to display aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics.

Gender differences for the high exposure group showed that males displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to indirect violence especially in the community and the use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics. Females displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse and violent conflict resolution tactics, especially at home. It is suggested that interventions and programmes for adolescents be implemented that address more prosocial skills for resolving conflict.

OPSOMMING

Die gevolge van die hoë voorkoms van geweld op die Suid-Afrikaanse jeug is kommerwekkend vir die land se toekoms. Die doel van hierdie navorsing was om adolessente van minderbevooregte gemeenskappe se blootstelling aan geweld en hulle gebruik van konflikoplossings-strategieë te bestudeer. Die rol wat geslag in die blootstelling aan geweld asook dié van konflikoplossings-strategie speel is ook ondersoek. Die steekproef het bestaan uit 426 adolessente leerders uit drie skole van die Stellenbosch distrik. 'n Vraelys wat die "Screen for Adolescent Violence Exposure (SAVE)" (Hastings & Kelley, 1997) en die "Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS)" (Straus, 1979) ingesluit het is deur 187 manlike en 239 vroulike adolessente met 'n gemiddelde ouderdom van 15.9 jaar voltooi. Daar is gevind dat die adolessente aan hoë vlakke van indirekte geweld in die gemeenskap blootgestel was, wat beduidend gekorreleer het met die gebruik van aggressiewe en gewelddadige konflikoplossings-strategieë. Beduidende negatiewe korrelasies is ook tussen blootstelling aan geweld in die skoolomgewing en die gebruik van beredeneeringstrategieë gevind. Resultate van die variansie-ontleding toon dat seuns meer blootgestel was aan traumatiese geweld by die skool en in die gemeenskap, terwyl meisies meer blootgestel was aan fisiese/verbale geweld by die huis. Geslagsverskille dui verder aan dat seuns hoër positiewe korrelasies toon tussen verbale aggressie en blootstelling aan indirekte geweld, veral in die gemeenskap. Meisies het hoër positiewe korrelasies getoon tussen gewelddadige konflikoplossings-strategieë en blootstelling aan traumatiese en fisiese/verbale geweld by die huis. Die studie toon aan dat adolessente wat blootgestel is aan hoë vlakke van geweld meer geneig is tot aggressiewe en

gewelddadige konfliktoplossings-strategieë. Geslagsverskille vir die hoë blootstellingsgroep dui aan dat seuns hoër positiewe korrelasies toon tussen aggressiewe en gewelddadige konfliktoplossings-strategieë en blootstelling aan indirekte geweld, veral in die gemeenskap. Meisies het hoër positiewe korrelasies getoon tussen aggressiewe en gewelddadige konfliktoplossings-strategieë en blootstelling aan traumatiese en fisiese/verbale geweld, veral by die huis. Daar word aanbeveel dat die adolessente meer prososiale vaardighede geleer moet word om konfliktsituasies beter te kan hanteer.

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of violence presents one of the most pervasive global problems that has become entrenched within many societies around the world and, as such, is regarded as a major public health concern (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, & Lozano, 2002). The extent of violence in contemporary South Africa, especially in disadvantaged communities, has led to the reputation as a country with a 'culture of violence'. Violence in South Africa is part of a dynamic and systemic cycle that appears to have its origin in the apartheid years when institutionalised violence became a way of life in homes, schools, and communities. With the legacy of oppression and violence of the past together with the present prevailing high levels of violence sustained by unemployment, poverty and inequality, there is a major concern of South Africa's youth's socialisation into violent lifestyles (Sathiparsad, 2003).

Research indicates that direct exposure to and observation of violence has a negative impact on adolescent's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Stevens, Wyngaard, & Van Niekerk, 2001). It was found that youth especially internalise these negative experiences and this could diminish their ability to acquire the psychosocial competencies required to deal with problem or conflict situations (Sathiparsad, 2003). Adolescents are thus socialised into maintaining the prevailing culture of violence by using violence to manage problems or conflicts. In this manner, the cycle of violence is compounded. Due to the high levels of violence experienced in South Africa, youth are exposed to violence either as direct victims, witnesses or perpetrators. The pervasiveness of this exposure means that violence does not only take place in the community but also impacts on other settings such as the home and school environments.

Recent South African research shows that the most common crime and violence problems manifested by adolescents were found in the context of high schools, which involved vandalism, intimidation, drug abuse, fighting, verbal abuse, theft and gang activities (Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Sathiparsad, 2003). In a similar vein, South African research conducted by Govender and Killian (2001) indicates that 73% of male and female disadvantaged high school learners in KwaZulu-Natal reported that they had witnessed violence at school in the previous 12 months, with 10% of males reporting that they had been part of a group that had killed a person at school. A further 4% of the males indicated that they had killed a person without being part of a group at school. According to Meyer and Frean (2003), the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation of Offenders (NICRO) further indicate that the number of youths in South Africa involved in serious and violent crimes has increased from 9% in 2001 to more than 15% in 2003. NICRO reportedly contends that in any given year, more than 800 000 incidents of serious and violent crimes are committed by adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18 years.

Many South African studies focus on the role of the family and the school in fostering violence (Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Le Roux, 2000; Olivier, 2000; Van der Hoven, 2001). Other South African literature explored the negative effects on youth's development of exposure to community violence (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Barbarin, Richter, & De Wet, 2001; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). The damaging consequences of violence on adolescents in South Africa are emphasised throughout the literature. Research studies conducted in South Africa also centre on exposure to violence and emotional disorders (Govender & Killian, 2001; Seedat, Van Nood, Vythilingum, Stein, & Kaminer, 2000). The present study attempts to move away from such a focus and concentrates specifically on exposure to

violence and its effect on the manner in which conflict situations are handled. The importance of managing conflict needs to be better understood in an attempt to halt the negative socialisation of youth.

The main aim of this study thus was to examine the relationship between exposure to violence within the settings of the home, school and community and the nature of problem-solving strategies among adolescents. The specific focus was on the consequences of exposure to violence and the conflict resolution tactics used by high school learners from the disadvantaged coloured¹ communities of Stellenbosch.

1.1 Description of constructs

The constructs of aggression, violence and development will be defined with regard to their use in the context of this study.

Defining aggression and violence can be a complicated matter because these terms overlap and can have so many different meanings (Krahé, 2001). According to Krahé (2001) societies differ in how they conceptualise aggressive and violent behaviour. Certain societies view aggression and violence in a more positive manner as a means to gain and/or display power and status. Most societies conversely view aggression and violence more negatively. For the purpose of this study the following working definitions of aggression may be appropriate. Aggression is defined as “any form of behaviour directed toward the goal of harming or injuring another person who is motivated to avoid such treatment” (Baron & Richardson, 1994, p. 7). Aggression can also be defined as “any form of behaviour that is intended to injure someone physically or psychologically” (Berkowitz, 1993, p. 3). Expanding on this definition,

¹ The defining of this group as coloured is not intended to support the apartheid system of racial classification. The use of this term merely represents the population group to which the participants belong.

to injure someone psychologically may further involve acts of verbal or symbolic aggression. Verbal or symbolic aggression can be defined as “a communication intended to cause psychological pain to another person, or a communication perceived as having that intent” (Vissing, Straus, Gelles, & Harrop, 1991, p. 224). The communicative act may be active or passive, and verbal or nonverbal.

Bandura (1973) postulates that aggression can be observed through two broad distinctions that are based on the motives of the behaviour. These two distinctions, namely affective (or reactive) and instrumental (or proactive) aggression are present in most postulations of aggression. According to Geen (2001), affective aggression is an angry or defensive response to frustration or provocation. This type of aggression results from perceived or actual frustrations encountered in different circumstances. The motive behind affective aggression is the intent to harm the victim. Instrumental aggression can be viewed as a deliberate behaviour, which is controlled by external reinforcements. It is performed in order to gain access to a diverse selection of perceived rewards ranging from the tangible to the non-tangible gains. Instrumental aggression is thus motivated by other concerns, such as goal attainment.

Within the framework of aggression, the present study focuses on violence as a form of aggression, which is experienced by individuals both through the intent and actions of others in their environment. The World Health Organisation (2002) defines violence as:

The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation (p. 4).

Stemming from this definition, violence as a construct focuses on direct overt and intentional behaviour. While the consequences and types of violence are represented within the construct of violence, violence can be viewed as existing free from causality. The definition further correctly ascribes two roles to the act of violence; those perpetrating the act and those victimised through the act. It does however neglect to emphasise the role of a third party that may be involved in such acts such as the witness of a violent event.

According to Degenaar (1980), the term violence refers to a physical act that is destructive in nature and which is performed by someone for the purpose of either hurting or morally degrading (“diminishing”) another human being. In the context of the present research, exposure to violence, as measured by the relevant questionnaire, encompasses several forms. These include direct or traumatic violence (severe victimisation experiences), indirect violence (witnessing less severe interpersonal violence), and physical or verbal abuse (actual or threatened violent harm) (Hastings & Kelley, 1997). According to Barbarin and Richter (2001), proximal violence such as direct victimisation is no more adverse in consequences than distal or indirect victimisation. As such, the distinction between being a witness or a victim of violence was not made in the present study.

The present research focused on the relationship between exposure to violence and the social competencies required to resolve conflict. The focus was on the conflict resolution tactics of adolescents, which form a part of their interpersonal social skills and competencies and may involve prosocial behaviours such as co-operation but also antisocial behaviours, for example, aggression (Straus, 1979).

Conflict is defined as “a dyadic interpersonal event involving overt, behavioural opposition” (Laursen, Finkelstein, & Townsend Betts, 2001, p. 428). According to

Laursen et al. (2001) an oppositional definition offers several advantages. One is that instances of disagreement can be examined independent of negative affect, which may or may not be present. A second advantage of defining conflict in terms of opposition is to distinguish it from competition and aggression. The constructs of competition and aggression do not by themselves constitute conflict although they may arise within conflicts. These constructs are distinct forms but may overlap with conflict. A third advantage of an oppositional definition is that it emphasises readily observable and quantifiable events. Conflict may therefore be characterised as a state of incompatible behaviours. Conflicts are also seen as normal events that occur within a sequence of interpersonal behaviours (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Differences among South African adolescents in sex, ethnicity, and age can be important sources of variance for perceptions of conflict. Background variables, such as poverty, inequality and exposure to violence among South African adolescents are also considered to be important contributors to a better understanding of conflict. These characteristics and variables may influence the types of conflict tactics (constructive or destructive) utilised (Jensen-Campbell, Graziano, & Hair, 1996).

The term “conflict” thus also refers to the manner in which persons pursue their own interests. This encompasses the “conflict tactics” or overt actions used by persons in response to a conflict of interests (Straus, 1979). In the present study, Straus’ (1979) classification based on three modes of dealing with conflict was utilised. These include prosocial actions like reasoning (use of rational discussion), and antisocial actions like verbal aggression (verbal and nonverbal acts that threaten to harm another) and violence (physical force that threatens or harms another) (Straus, 1979).

An age group identified to be particularly at risk for the negative consequences of exposure to violence are adolescents. As the participants of the present study

consisted of male and female learners who are adolescents, it is important that consideration of their developmental stage be made.

In terms of age, adolescents consist of individuals between the age of 13 and 18 years (Donald, Dawes, & Louw, 2000).

According to Aber, Gephart, Brooks-Gunn, and Connel (1997), human development can be defined as “the acquisition and growth of the physical, cognitive, social and emotional competencies required to engage fully in family and society” (p. 47). While this definition was formulated in the United States, it is applicable to youth worldwide (Donald et al., 2000). According to Donald et al. (2000), a general definition of this nature is valuable and applicable to a region such as Southern Africa where the importance of particular developmental competencies may be seen differently in different cultures and contexts. Development cannot be fully understood outside the historical and cultural context. What is encouraged and approved in youth’s development differs from one culture to another. What may be considered to be satisfactory development differs from one child to another, at different ages, and in different circumstances.

According to Wynchank (2000), in her study on the effects of exposure to violence on coloured adolescents in the Western Cape, adolescence, which is also the focus of the present study, appears to be a critical developmental transition period as it contains a number of developmental tasks that are likely to be affected by exposure to violence. During this period an individual’s physiological differences become more pronounced and differentiated. Individuals are also deemed to be going through the important psychological process when personality formation is strengthened. Adolescence is a delicate and often-turbulent period characterised by a process of individuation and the development of a separate and unique personal identity. The adolescent is growing

into a mature person and must establish his or her own self-concept and identity, in some cases through the demonstration of opposition or strength. Adolescence is also accompanied by changes in relationships and the exploration of new roles. Influences from outside the family become more significant. Peer interactions during this period are an important source of social learning as adolescents seek recognition within these groups (Pietersen, 2002).

Huesmann and Guerra (1997) state that characteristic patterns of social behaviour, and in particular aggressive behaviour, emerge early in life. For example, by age 8, aggressiveness has become a relatively stable trait. Olivier (2003) further states that the developmental pattern of aggression peaks during the stages of puberty and adolescence. It is therefore difficult to find any other factor that predicts more of the variation in adult aggression than does aggression during adolescence (Olivier, 2003).

It is therefore also important to weigh how much past adversity influenced the development of youth in South Africa. Youth growing up in South Africa may be exposed to a number of social risks, including apartheid's legacy of social inequality and deprivation (Donald et al., 2000). With other contributing factors from their environment such as poverty, marginalisation of youth and high crime levels, adolescence can become a platform for tension and frustration, which can eventually be expressed as some form of aggression (Olivier, 2003).

Associated with these stresses are varied forms of violence, which include community and familial. These detrimental social conditions in the lives of disadvantaged youth may obstruct their emotional and psychosocial development resulting in impaired functioning of the individual as he or she is confronted with other developmental challenges associated with adolescence (Barbarin & Richter, 2001). Unlike latency-age or prepubescent children, adolescents are capable of conceptualising more

accurately the impact of actions they did or did not take while witnessing or experiencing a violent event. Thus adolescents exposed to violence may often experience social and behavioural problems that can impact on their ability to function effectively in the wider social environment (Olivier, 2003).

Therefore, exposure to violence holds serious implications for the psychosocial development of adolescents in South Africa and the well being of our society in future (Reddy et al., 2003).

1.2 Context of study

1.2.1 Violence in the South African Context

South Africa has acquired a reputation for being among the world's most violent societies as violence has reached epidemic proportions (Cock, 2001; Jordan, 1999; Wynchank, 2000). Donald et al. (2000) and Jordan (1999) also indicate that violence in South Africa has become commonplace and endorsed as a socially acceptable and legitimate means to resolve conflict and achieve goals. This high prevalence of violence, according to Cock (2001) and Stevens et al. (2001), is strongly associated with apartheid and its consequences of oppression and marginalisation. Jewkes, Levin, and Penn-Kekana (2002) contend that decades of apartheid state-sponsored violence and reactive community insurrection, have contributed to a situation in which for many people physical violence is a leading tactic for resolving conflict and gaining ascendancy. South African society has thus become more desensitised towards violence, which may lead to an increasing dehumanisation of people.

According to Barbarin and Richter (2001) as well as Wynchank (2000), apartheid was a system in which the state imposed control over the majority of the South African population by means of segregation, underdevelopment, and oppression. Apartheid

forcefully removed previously existing social structures of communities and introduced restrictive regulations by violent means. The people within these oppressed communities responded to their strained living conditions by creating a culture of resistance in which violent oppression was met by violent resistance. Political violence was thus based on the struggle to recognise basic human rights in order to gain political acknowledgment and ascendancy.

Wynchank (2000) posits that at the point when society was moving toward a democracy, political and criminal violence escalated. This was created by a vacuum in state authority and heightened competition among political parties. Since the first democratic election in 1994, political violence, which stemmed from an imbalance of power, has decreased. In contemporary South Africa, the high levels of violent crime, which arose due to the unequal distribution of resources or economic inequality, overshadow political violence (Legget, 2004). This uneven distribution of resources was a further consequence of the oppressive measures exercised by the system of apartheid. Although the end of apartheid promoted the recognition of equal rights, freedom and autonomy as well as the encouragement of social justice, the continued inequality in the distribution of resources was a major factor in fostering criminality and violence and continues to be a remnant of apartheid (Glanz & Spiegel, 1996).

Glanz and Spiegel (1996) as well as Barbarin and Richter (2001) explain that in South Africa, both political and criminal violence are deeply embedded in social conflict. This shift in the form of violence after democracy has required a shift in the focus of violence and conflict research. Research presently specifically focuses more on the effects and extent of violence on children and youth (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Donald et al., 2000; Glanz & Spiegel, 1996; Pietersen, 2002; Stevens et al., 2001; Van Wyk, 2001; Wynchank, 2000).

main or in essay

psych applied
theoretical 11
explanation

Theories such as the Ecological Model contend that violence taking place within one setting of the ecosystem filters through and potentially impacts on other settings. With the high levels of violence in South Africa it could be argued that violence has become embedded in the fabric of society. Congruent with Social Learning Theory it seems that individuals have learnt these violent ways of interacting through mechanisms of social learning. Many authors have thus referred to individuals' positive regard for violence as a main contributor to violence in South African society (Cock, 2001; Donald et al., 2000; Jordan, 1999; Maree, 2000; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000; Wynchank, 2000).

victim
perpetrator
offender

Although the scope of ingrained violence in South Africa is diverse and complex, it is possible to determine the extent of this violence through the examination of how it is manifested. The occurrence of violence and its direct effects on children and adolescents can be estimated by monitoring police records. These statistics do give an overall indication of the incidence of criminal and/or severe violence within certain areas. The less direct incidence and effects of violence are more difficult to observe. For example, domestic violence and violence against children and adolescents is especially inundated with inspection problems. In a study using a representative sample on partner violence and corporal punishment, Dawes, Kafaar, de Sas Kropiwnicki, Pather, and Richter (2004) indicate that almost 20% of South African men and women have experienced violent physical assaults in their domestic relationships, as perpetrators, victims, or both. These researchers also add that the prevalence of violence against children in the form of corporal punishment was as high as 57%. Such exposure to direct or indirect violence may socialise children and adolescents into violent lifestyles.

No comparison to
other countries

According to Stevens et al. (2001) within the context of school violence in South Africa, several socio-historical factors need to be considered. The historical segregation within education that was based on a racial polarisation stemming from apartheid policy has continued to result in inequities in resource distribution and in levels of institutional instability. In addition, whereas violence was initially expressed within schools in the politically directed form of anti-apartheid protests among learners and educators, it is far less politically directed at present and has contributed to the endemic nature of violence in society.

Recent crime statistics indicate a decrease in most violent crimes. According to the South African Police Services (2004), the murder rate dropped from 47 to 43 persons per 100 000 people. In the Western Cape, the decrease in the murder rate was 22.5% in the last two years. Legget (2004) cautioned that a decrease in the frequency of reported crime does not ultimately point to a decrease in the crime rate and that many South African citizens continue to feel unsafe. The prevailing high levels of violence within the South African communities and the consequences thereof necessitate further research to monitor and gain a better understanding of this phenomenon.

1.2.2 The Western Cape

The participants for this study were drawn from the coloured communities in the Stellenbosch district. Stellenbosch is a peri-urban town with a rural agricultural district in the Western Cape Province of South Africa. The Western Cape Province has a population of roughly 4.5 million people, a large number of which (approximately 2.9 million) live in and around the Cape Metropole (Statistics South Africa, 2004). The South African Police services (2004) report on violent crime statistics for the province presented 2 839 reported cases of murder, 3 633 cases of attempted murder, 6 834 cases of rape, 13 855 cases of robbery with aggravating

circumstances, 36 912 cases of assault with grievous bodily harm, 52 339 reported cases of common assault, and 268 incidents of public violence for the 2003/2004 financial year. Many of these mentioned incidents of violence occur in the disadvantaged communities in and around the Cape Metropole (South African Police Services, 2004).

South African history of apartheid led to the forced displacement of a quarter of all coloured families in the Western Cape (Van Wyk, 2001). Under the Group Areas Act, people designated 'coloured' in the Western Cape were forced to move from their urban Cape Town homes and to relocate in new socially constructed single-class communities on the Cape Flats. Although the Cape Flats represents the largest of such communities, towns and villages all over the province were subject to similar segregation. One of the greatest complaints about the Group Areas Act was that individual people and families were removed and not whole neighbourhoods. These residents lost their businesses and properties and had to start all over again with minimum access to income opportunities. This forced displacement resulted in stress related psychological difficulties and skewed coping behaviour among many families (Van Wyk, 2001).

Although the new constitution ended the overt segregation enforced by the apartheid regime, the vast majority of coloured residents today still continue to live under marginalised conditions in the residential areas that were formerly designated as 'coloured' under the Group Areas Act (Legget, 2004). These communities are characterised by symptoms of their social exclusion that include social problems, like high unemployment, poverty, overcrowding, substance abuse and high levels of criminal and domestic violence (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

According to Legget (2004), juvenile misconduct can be related to marginalisation of youth from their families, schools and communities. This state of disconnectedness from primary sources of support means that youth have been conditioned to look out for themselves. With lack of parental control, supervision and attention from adults as a result of poverty, youth from the same neighbourhood group together to form a gang and become involved in antisocial behaviour (Van Wyk, 2001). Gang functions offer the youth a substitute for what society cannot give. In the Western Cape gangs thrive in these areas where family structures have been broken down as a result of the legacy of apartheid (Van Wyk, 2001). The collapse of social control over the youth was and is one of the major problems facing the people of these communities because the subculture of gangs has replaced the family by providing companionship, loyalty, identity and status to its members. It is therefore not surprising that the number of street gang membership has increased over the years. The impact of gangs within these communities is however not only limited to increased crime and violence. Gangsterism also promotes patriarchal male constructs on which boys tend to model their behaviour. Luyt and Foster's (2001) study focusing on masculine constructs among male adolescents in Western Cape co-educational schools, found that these patriarchal traits were more evident in communities where gangs operated. In such areas, male adolescents identified traits of status, toughness and control as acceptable and required concepts to define masculinity.

✱✱ The evidence therefore indicates that socio-economically deprived communities and groups bear most of the brunt of violence in South African society (Wynchank, 2000). Legget (2004) presents further evidence that highlights the high levels of violence and criminality in these communities. He indicates that Coloureds only represent 9% of the national population, yet they make up 18% of the national prison population. A

recent study on exposure to traumatic events by Seedat, Nyamai, Njenga, Vythilignum, and Stein (2004) show that the prevalence of violence exposure for a sample of black youth in an impoverished Cape Town suburb was found to be at 58% in the neighbourhood or school contexts. In this sample, 60% of male and 55% of female adolescents were exposed to this high level of violence in the different contexts. Legget (2004) and Salzinger, Feldman, Stockhammer, and Hood (2002) emphasised that communities such as these, characterised by social disorder, provide a context in which children and adolescents are more likely to be exposed to serious violence.

Wynchank's (2000) study in the peri-urban disadvantaged coloured community of Manenberg indicated that a large percentage of the adolescent sample had witnessed gangsters shooting and fighting, had been chased by gangsters and had been forced to participate in gang activities. Also, many of them had experienced or witnessed people shooting one another or stabbed either in their home or in the broader community of Manenberg. Research conducted by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) in Lavender Hill, a settlement with high incidences of violence, found that children and adolescents were most likely to be exposed to severe violence near their homes and in the community. Pietersen's (2002) study on the low-income peri-urban coloured community of Macassar, also found that a significant proportion of the adolescent sample had been exposed to interpersonal violence as witnesses, victims or both. A relatively equal amount of exposure to violence took place at school, at home and in the community. It could thus be surmised that children and adolescents growing up in deprived communities characterised by severe inequities are more prone to negative social and cognitive development (Wynchank, 2000).

1.2.3 The Stellenbosch district

In spite of the new democracy, many coloured urban residents still live under marginalised conditions in the communities that were previously designated as 'coloured' (Legget, 2004). At present, the Stellenbosch district confirms these economic disparities whereby there is a distinct contrast between poverty-stricken lower class living conditions and those of the wealthy upper class.

The present study is located in the communities of Jamestown, Cloetesville and Idas Valley, which developed when coloured people under the system of apartheid were forced to relocate to the outskirts of Stellenbosch. The Bureau of Market Research (2004) indicates that the strongest population growth rates and increases in housing problems have in the past years occurred in the northern part of Stellenbosch, in particular in the areas of Cloetesville and Idas Valley. In common with many unplanned development, these areas have rapidly extended outwardly rather than through in-fills. Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) stated that one feature of such contexts that increases the strength of this relation is the high density of housing facilities typifying economically disadvantaged communities. Therefore, overcrowding in Cloetesville and Idas Valley has reached unacceptable levels (Bureau of Market Research, 2004). Extended periods of time spent in a confined space has the capacity to contribute to increased levels of restlessness, agitation and aggression in youth who are subjected to limited opportunities to channel their energy constructively. The coloured communities of Stellenbosch also show these wide socio-economic disparities with particularly high levels of poverty and unemployment in Cloetesville, Idas Valley, and Jamestown. Unemployment is estimated to be between 40% and 60%. These figures are comparable with recent national statistics, which indicate that approximately 43% of the population are unemployed or not

economically active (Y. Mngqinya, personal communication, August 13, 2004). Burnett (1998) indicates that one of the most far-reaching manifestations of poverty in disadvantaged areas is violence, which, in turn, results in violent social relations (domestic and public violence) and institutions (school violence).

According to Van Wyk (2001), gang activities and the violence that accompanies it also expanded from the Cape Flats to the rural areas such as the Boland, which include Stellenbosch as the gangs sought to extend their drug market. Cloetesville, Idas Valley and Jamestown are thus also characterised by gangs and accompanying high rates of violent crime. Recent statistics obtained from the Stellenbosch police station on violent crimes in Jamestown and the surrounding farming areas, indicate 175 reported cases of common assault, 161 cases of assault with the intention to inflict grievous bodily harm, 108 cases of robbery with aggravating circumstances, 45 cases of rape, and 20 reported cases of murder and attempted murder for the 2002/2003 period. Statistics for the Cloetesville and Idas Valley communities, during the four months of March through to June 2003, presented 108 reported cases of common assault, 73 cases of assault with the intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, and 5 reported cases of murder (Inspector Vorster, personal communication, April 19, 2004). Although these statistics do not present the specific behaviours ascribed to children or adolescents, they do give a general impression of the amount of violence that they might be exposed to.

The Stellenbosch district comprises of a large community of coloured farm workers whose children also attend the three schools that were focused on in the present study. The history of the wine industry's 'dop system' has contributed to alcohol abuse within these farm communities. In this system, a portion of the farm workers' wages

was given in the form of alcohol. That resulted in an alcohol dependent and impoverished workforce (Maree, 2000).

According to Van der Hoven (2001), family environments are usually disrupted by parental alcohol abuse. Children of alcoholics are at increased risk for various stressors such as abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence or growing up with other forms of family dysfunction. Alcohol abuse (Inspector Vorster, personal communication, April 19, 2004) and domestic violence (Pietersen, 2002) was found to be prevalent within these communities of farm workers. With their dependence on alcohol and subsequent social problems these communities of farm workers have further become increasingly marginalised (Maree, 2000).

It is evident from the abovementioned literature and statistics that individuals in the Cloetesville, Idas Valley, and Jamestown areas are at risk of being exposed to multiple and often serious forms of violence and crime. The effects of this exposure on children and adolescents are therefore a major concern with regard to their own well being and healthy functioning as well as for the future of this country.

2. Theoretical perspectives

The following brief discussion includes theories relevant to the present study that focus on aggression and violent behaviour. There are numerous theoretical explanations for the causes of human aggression and violence, which include, among others, Instinct theories, Biological theories, and Drive theories, for example, Frustration-Aggression Hypotheses (Geen, 2001). For the present research however, some other influential theories were chosen because they provide a more logical theoretical link between the manifestation of aggressive conflict resolution tactics and exposure to violence.

Social cognitive theories suggest that exposure to violence increases the likelihood that adolescents will engage in future aggression and violence (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Research studies in the United States of America and South Africa have found that previous exposure to violence was the strongest predictor of current use of violence (Collings & Magojo, 2003; DuRant et al., 2000; DuRant, Cadenhead, Pendergrast, Slavens, & Linder, 1994; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Miller, Wasserman, Neugebauer, Gorman-Smith, & Kamboukas, 1999; Schwab-Stone et al., 1999). These findings are consistent with Albert Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, which explains that any behaviour is learned through a process of modelling. According to Bandura (1986) social learning specifically consists of the acquisition of responses through observation and the maintenance of behaviours through reinforcement. Therefore, by observing aggression and the consequences of aggression, a child gradually acquires knowledge of certain rules of conduct. Krahé (2001) posits that in predicting whether or not learned aggressive and violent behaviour will actually be performed by children, the perceived consequences of the model does play an important role. For example, if the consequence of the model's

aggressive behaviour is perceived as positive then the greater the likelihood that it will be imitated by the observer. The observer's normative standards regarding the adequacy of the observed behaviour serve as internal mechanisms, which regulate aggressive and violent behaviour. Within a high-violence community, different patterns of aggressive behaviour are thus passed from one generation to the next as children and adolescents model adult modes of conflict resolution (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). In this manner, exposure to violence can lead to violent and aggressive behaviours among youth as they internalise these experiences, which weakens their disinhibition about behaving aggressively. The basic premise is that aggressive behaviour is acquired and maintained through observational learning, direct experience, and self-regulative influences.

A theory, emphasising the role of cognition in maintaining the stability of aggressive behaviour over time and situations is Huesmann's (1988) Social Cognitive Approach. It proposes that aggressive behaviour is controlled by behavioural repertoires that are acquired in the early stages of socialisation. From these behavioural experiences, abstract internal cognitive representations (scripts) develop. These contain the characteristic features of the situation, expectations regarding the behaviour of the participants involved and the consequences of different behavioural choices. More specifically, adolescents use information regarding the consequences of aggression to develop internal standards of right and wrong. In this manner their behaviour is regulated according to such standards. Over time, the standards, the situational stimuli that activate them and the behaviours that result become encoded in cognitive scripts that determine behaviour under appropriate conditions (Huesmann, 1988). Frequent engagement in aggressive behaviour, under conditions involving conflict or provocation, is likely to increase the probability of similar engagements under those

conditions in the future. Each engagement thus results in a more detailed script. If, for example, adolescents have repeatedly used aggressive and violent behaviours successfully during interpersonal conflict situations, they are then likely to develop a generalised cognitive representation in which conflict, aggression and violence are closely linked. In future conflict situations, this representation is likely to be triggered, leading to further aggressive and violent responses (Huesmann, 1988). Also central in aggressive scripts are normative beliefs that direct the individual's decision about whether or not a specific response is suitable under certain circumstances. Huesmann and Guerra (1997) found a significant correlation between children's support of normative beliefs approving of aggressive behaviour and their actual aggressive behaviour. The inability of children to learn the normative restrictions placed on the expression of overt aggression will lead to the repeated performance of inappropriate aggression that may cause long-term adjustment problems (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). South African youth exposed to violence regularly may thus come to view aggression and/or violence as an acceptable behavioural strategy, following a shift in their normative beliefs regarding the appropriateness of using aggressive and violent behaviour (Govender & Killian, 2001).

A related and more recent theory, namely, the Social Information-processing Model (Crick & Dodge, 1994) proposes that individuals who are lacking in the ability to process and respond to social cues may display reactions to social information that are inappropriate or maladaptive. Behaviour in situations of interpersonal conflict is determined by an individual's cognitive representations of events. Among the consequences of this acquired potential for aggression are those that have to do with how people understand and interpret social interactions. The model identifies several

stages in which faulty processing may be predicted. In the most recent version of the model, Crick and Dodge (1994) describe the six stages:

(1) encoding of cues stemming from the actions of oneself and others, (2) interpretation of those cues, (3) clarification of the goals of the interaction after the relevant information has been assimilated, (4) the search for, and gaining access to, responses to the situation as defined, (5) the decision to select one of the available responses for the present situation and, (6) behaviour enactment of the chosen response (p.76).

When social information is produced by an interpersonal exchange that involves provocation, any bias that the person brings to the situation can influence the cognitive construction of the exchange and the response made (Crick & Dodge, 1994). Vogel, Seaberry, Barnes, and Kelley (2003) also indicate that violence exposure enhances South African children and adolescent's perceptions of threat in the world. It affects their assessment of the social environment and the interpretation of the behaviour of others. Such adolescents, for instance, process information differently and are more likely to attribute hostile intent to others in ambiguous situations as well as emphasise aggressive cues in their environment, rather than focus on a wider variety of information. Actions that are not hostile may also be misinterpreted because of this deficit in cognitive processing. In addition to this hostile attribution bias, other cognitive limitations have been shown to be characteristic of such adolescents when faced with conflict situations. These include difficulties in remembering the details of conflict scenarios as well as an inability to elicit socially constructive and non-confrontational solutions to those conflicts (Vogel et al., 2003).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological-Transactional Model offers an approach to human development that focuses on the progressive accommodation throughout the life span between the human organism and the changing environment in which it lives. Bronfenbrenner (1979) introduced four interacting dimensions that need to be considered when attempting to understand adolescents' development in context. They include person factors (temperament of adolescent or parent), process factors (forms of the interaction process that occur in the family), contexts (families or neighbourhoods), and time (changes over time in the characteristics of the individual or the environment). He further demonstrated that it is the proximal interaction processes that are the most important in shaping stable aspects of development. Proximal processes refer to direct interactions between adolescents and other people. Proximal interactions are affected by the characteristics of the adolescent and other people involved in the interaction, as well as by the nature of the contexts within which they occur (home, school or community). Within an ecological framework, the developing adolescent is considered to be an active participant in his or her development, interacting with multiple levels of the ecological system in which he or she is embedded. This model presents ecological contexts (microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem) that interact and transact with each other over time to shape individual development and adaptation. The microsystem contains the family environment and other interactive situations in which the adolescent is in direct contact with other persons. The mesosystem is a set of associated microsystems. It links the different microsystems in which the adolescent is involved. The exosystem consists of community settings that do not involve the adolescent directly but include the interactions of those that have a relationship with the adolescent. These are contexts that directly affect persons who have proximal

relationships with the adolescent. The macrosystem includes cultural beliefs and values that influence other levels of the system within which the adolescent is a participant. Each context or level is nested within the previous level whereby the proximity to the individual increases as one moves from the cultural to the family context. Differences in neighbourhood social organisation and processes may therefore affect the way families function or how that functioning, in turn, affects their children (Salzinger et al., 2002; Sheidow, Gorman-Smith, Tolan, & Henry, 2001). It is therefore likely that family influences are not independent of neighbourhood influences. Litrownik, Newton, Hunter, English, and Everson (2003) as well as Lynch and Cicchetti (1998) present results supportive of this notion by indicating that violence occurring in the community is related to violence that occurs within the family. Adolescents growing up in a dangerous or violent ecological context are thus at-risk to display aggressive behaviour, negative affects, and relationship disturbances in other contexts. Salzinger et al. (2002) indicate that the more direct the exposure to violence is in any of these ecological contexts, the more severe the consequences will be on children and adolescents. The model is utilised because in most South African contexts, violence is a multilevel phenomenon. In the context of the present study, the ecological-transactional model is especially appropriate, as an examination of exposure to violence in different settings and the effect thereof on adolescents is the focus.

The theoretical roots of conflict behaviour lie in Cognitive Theories (Berlyne, 1966; Kohlberg, 1969; Piaget, 1950), the Social Psychological Balance Theory (Heider, 1958), and Conflict Theories (Hammond, 1965; Johnson & Johnson, 1979; Maier, 1970). There are other popular theories that attempt to explain the complexities of conflict behaviour such as psychoanalytic, sociobiological, and cognitive-

developmental models. The following theories are however more applicable because they specifically focus on different modes of conflict resolution in conflict situations.

According to the Conflict Theory of Dahrendorf (1968), conflict is a normal and inevitable part of human interactions and relationships. It is not conflict per se that is problematic but rather the maladaptive ways with which people tend to respond to conflict. From this perspective, aggression or violence can be viewed as a maladaptive mode of resolving conflict when other means of resolution fail or break down. This failure or break down may occur due to faulty conflict management processes, lack of conflict resolution skills, or lack of perceived options. Several South African research studies support this notion (Barbarin et al., 2001; Olivier, 2000; Sathiparsad, 2003; Vogel, 2002; Vogel et al., 2003). They indicate that many disadvantaged South African youth use ineffective methods of conflict resolution, such as violence and aggression, due to a lack of conflict management skills.

According to the Conflict-Spiral Model (North, Brody, & Holsti, 1964), conflict leads participants into an upward spiral of conflict. One person's action may elicit increasingly severe retaliatory actions from the opponent thereby generating continuously escalating attacks and counterattacks. The model assumes that no person by themselves can be responsible for the conflict. Conflict rather develops and is heightened through the actions and reactions of the opposing parties. Increasing conflict is the vicious cycle that results from each person's view that the other is the aggressor. The action of either party can be traced back to a previous and milder action, until one finally arrives at actions that were neither intended nor viewed as aggressive (North et al., 1964). These actions may have started the vicious cycle but the conflict-spiral model does not focus on possible first causes. It rather focuses on the dynamic, interactive process of conflict and its outcome. This model is therefore

applicable to the South African context because it also views violence and conflict as a dynamic and systemic cycle. Due to the legacy of violence and oppression in the past together with the current high rates of criminal violence, certain disadvantaged communities may provide this context in which youth are socialised to combat violence with violence. A disadvantage of this model is however the assumption that conflict can end only through the decrease of retaliation by one of the parties. For example, one person might be tired of the conflict and may want to end the fighting, or one of the persons may be so weakened by the conflict that he or she is unable to continue the fight (Gergen, 1974). It thus fails to take into account other more acceptable modes of conflict resolution, such as negotiation, reasoning or compromise.

The Social Relational Model (Laursen & Collins, 1994) emphasises developmental continuity resulting from the inherent stability of close relationships. This model indicates, as is the focus of this study that South African adolescent's behaviour may differ as a function of the relationship in which conflict occurs and the setting in which it arises, rather than as a function of their age or maturation level. For adolescents in general, relationships with parents and friends are characterised by the greatest degree of closeness and interdependence. They provide a foundation from which adolescents explore the world. Adolescent perceptions of relationships are viewed as significant mechanisms that act as protection against continuous physical, social, and cognitive changes. Although some relationship changes are required for adaptation, gradual transformation best describes this process. A greater variation in conflict behaviour is therefore expected among different types of relationships. Further variation in conflict behaviour should be evident depending on the ease with which an interdependent relationship may be ended. According to Laursen and

Collins (1994), closed relationships (parent-child and sibling bonds) are restricted by kinship and family norms. They change slowly and are not easily disrupted. Open relationships (romantic partners and friends) are voluntary. The fluidity of these relationships allows them to be formed and transformed with more regularity. The characteristics of closeness and relationship stability interact with each other in order to determine adolescent conflict behaviour. In close peer relationships, adolescents might reduce the frequency of their disagreements and compromise more, to prevent disrupting the relationship. In family relationships, it is not necessary to preserve family ties because maintaining such a relationship requires that participants integrate their goals and behaviours, which inevitably may produce conflict. It is therefore expected that conflict will be greater between family members. Relationships with others in the community are not generally characterised by closeness and should thus involve relatively little conflict. When conflicts however do arise, more aggressive behaviour can be expected, as individuals are not restricted by either closeness or kinship (Laursen & Collins, 1994).

3. Literature review

A selective review of the context of study, theory and literature pertaining to the social, emotional, and cognitive impact of adolescents' exposure to various types of violence in different settings will be presented. It is however important to note that although it is necessary to include evidence from international research, it is essential to consider the differences between international and South African situations in which conflict and violence occurs and therefore not to make concrete statements about South African youth based on findings obtained in other very different cultural and racial circumstances.

Exposure to violence is shown to have multiple effects on individuals. These effects consist of behaviour problems such as psychopathology and personality disorders (Barlow & Durand, 1999). Exposure to violence among poverty-stricken South African youth was found to be associated with a number of maladaptive problems such as gossiping, bullying, exclusion, physical attacks and antisocial acts like stealing and rape (Maree, 2003; Pietersen, 2002; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

The focus of the present study is however on adolescents' exposure to violence and the relationship thereof with certain interpersonal social competencies, with specific reference to conflict resolution tactics. Kuther (1999) indicates that exposure to violence is associated with lowered levels of cognitive functioning, which may be reflected, in poorer social functioning. Thus, adolescents' might lack the social cognition required to handle interpersonal problems in an effective and prosocial manner.

According to DuRant, Barkin, and Krowchuck (2001) as well as DuRant, Treiber, Goodman, and Woods (1996) the social skills necessary to resolve interpersonal

conflict are learned during childhood, but the mastering of these skills normally occurs during adolescence. These skills are mainly learned in primary social groups such as the family, school and community. It is imperative that adolescents acquire these social skills, in order to have a positive impact on a transformed South African society, as its future leaders. Exposure to continuing and escalating violence may however hinder their ability to acquire these necessary prosocial skills.

The impact of exposure to different types of violence in different settings and its influence on adolescents' social skills will be presented in more detail in the following sections.

3.1 Violence exposure at home

While the home environment is supposed to provide warmth, responsiveness, structure, guidance and the availability of suitable models for youth, it often lacks these key protective factors. Violence experienced by youth in the home setting is mostly caused by the displacement of parental aggression and is usually strongly associated with factors such as poverty, alcohol and substance abuse as well as parental exposure to violence (Glanz & Spiegel, 1996). Barbarin and Richter (2001) suggest that family violence is much more common in poor and disorganised communities, and in which violence in the broader community itself is relatively high. Olivier (2000) also confirms that aggressive behaviour can be interpreted in terms of the socio-economic status of youth, and views economic inequality as a good predictor of aggression.

Van der Hoven (2001) explains that in the impoverished communities of South Africa, alcohol induced domestic violence is prevalent. Youth finding themselves in such family environments disrupted by parental alcohol abuse are at increased risk for

experiencing or witnessing various stressors such as abuse and neglect. Vogel (2002) further argues that the alcoholic parent is so ineffective in parental skills that the child is at risk of imitating antisocial behaviour.

Wynchank (2000) further explains that the present generation of coloured disadvantaged adolescents succeeded the often-violent forced removals and fragmentation of many coloured families and communities in the Western Cape. In addition to their current personal experience of violence in general, it is likely that these adolescents also have to absorb an intergenerational transmission of trauma from parents, as a result of their parents' experience of brutality and violence during apartheid. Thus at the macrosystem, a widespread acknowledgement of and desensitisation to actual violence may reproduce and legitimise violent means of interacting (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

South African research by Jordan (1999) and Vogel (2002) among disadvantaged youth identifies intrafamilial factors that affect the probability of adolescent violence and their inability to handle conflict situations in general. These include ways of parenting, family communication style as well as conflict and violence within the family, which may be characterised by violence between parents and/or violence directed at adolescents. Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) explains that harsh treatment by parents as well as observation of inter-parental aggression provides examples of aggression that the adolescent internalises. Through witnessing violence in the home or being abused by the family, the adolescent may be conditioned to regard violence as a legitimate and acceptable means to obtain a goal, establish authority and satisfactorily resolve disputes in one's favour. Vogel (2002) further indicates neglect or a lack of supervision as one of the strongest predictors of the development of delinquency and violence in youth as they are drawn into the street

and a subsequent breakdown in family life. Child abuse also, as previously mentioned, increases the probability of various forms of youth violence and aggression, as it serves as an expression of the rage and helplessness experienced by the victims of maltreatment. Vogel (2002) also indicates that the level of aggressiveness used by parents when disciplining their children predicts violent behaviour at a later stage. Inconsistent and aversive punishment strategies thus also contribute to violent behaviour and difficulties in developing empathic and prosocial response patterns in youth. Therefore if parents lack these skills, it may have profound effects on the development of youth and their ability to deal with problem situations. Osofsky (1995) explains that the dysfunctional family unit does not provide adolescents with an opportunity to develop appropriate schema around issues of problem solving and social interactions.

Maree's (2000) qualitative analysis of disadvantaged South African adolescents' exposure to violence in the home supports these assertions. He postulates that adolescents exposed to parental physical or verbal abuse are at risk of displaying conduct problems, including violent and aggressive behaviour. Barbarin and Richter (2001) as well as Olivier (2000) also indicate that family violence in South Africa is directly associated with higher levels of aggression in disadvantaged youth. In addition, violence that occurs in the family appears to be more detrimental to the development of youth's emotional functioning and social competence. The more commonplace violence becomes, the more it becomes legitimised as a method for managing problems or conflicts. Olivier's (2000) results, based on Dahrendorf's (1968) Conflict Theory, specifically suggests that when individuals within the family strive to enhance their own interests rather than seeking a consensus-equilibrium

system, violence may occur as a mode of conflict resolution when other modes of pursuing individual interests break down.

Jewkes et al. (2002) indicate that gender socialisation practices in South African communities increase the vulnerability of females to be exposed to violence. Males and females are socialised in ways that promote submissive roles for females and dominant roles for males whereby ideas of masculinity are linked to aggression. In addition, the risk of domestic violence for females is further heightened by gender socialisations that encourage females to spend more time in the home, while males exercise greater autonomy to spend more time in other contexts. As a consequence of this socialisation, South Africa has one of the highest reported rates of female partner abuse in the world (Dawes et al., 2004). Jewkes et al. (2002) in their cross-sectional South African study of domestic violence found that child abuse and the witnessing inter-parental aggression and violence were significantly related to experiences of violence among girls. The risks of domestic violence increased for girls because of the acceptance of male ownership of women, physical chastisement, and male violence directed more at females due to the male preference for the boy-child. Further research by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) on a sample of coloured youth living in a suburb of Cape Town (Lavender Hill) with a high incidence of violence also stresses the role of socialisation practices in male's development of antisocial behaviour and problematic conflict resolution skills. These are characterised, as also explained by Krahé (2001), by the reinforcement of communal prescriptions and norms that value male activity and power-assertion as well as female passivity and restraint.

North American research findings on gender differences are presented in a meta-analysis of male and female youths' exposure to violence conducted by Salzinger et

al. (2002). They link physical abuse by parents with aggressive behaviour during play with peers, with higher peer ratings of aggression, fighting, meanness, and antisocial behaviour, as well as with higher parent and teacher ratings on aggression and externalising scales for males. On the other hand, Herrera and McCloskey's (2001) research on gender differences utilising a multiethnic urban sample of disadvantaged male and female youth, indicate that girls with a history of physical and verbal abuse were arrested for more violent offences than boys with similar histories. They also found that girls in general, when involved in familial conflict, are far more likely to fight with a parent or sibling, whereas boys are more likely to fight with peers or strangers. In closer peer relationships however, male and female adolescents may avoid conflict in order to maintain the relationship (Laursen & Collins, 1994).

International research studies, which included male and female youth from low-income, violent neighbourhoods, indicate that youth witnessing violence between parents as well as being victims of physical abuse causes them to display decreased empathic and prosocial competencies, poor social problem-solving skills, a lesser understanding of social perspectives and social roles, and increased aggressive and violent behaviours (Haj-Yahia, 2001; Malinosky-Rummell & Hansen, 1993; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Miller et al., 1999; Richters & Martinez, 1993; Rosario, Salzinger, Feldman, & Ng-Mak, 2003; Salzinger, Feldman, Hammer, & Rosario, 1993). The study by Rosario et al. (2003) also showed that exposure to violence was related for both genders to the use of more self-defence and confrontational coping strategies involving verbal aggression such as shouting and swearing.

Garret (1997) as well as Howard, Feigelman, Li, Cross, and Rachuba (2002) focused on African American adolescent's methods of resolving conflicts with intimate family members. Their findings are similar to the mentioned South African research (Jordan,

1999; Vogel, 2002) in that youth exposed to violence at home tend to use aggression to solve interpersonal conflicts with family members. This occurs because they copy violent family models in the face of conflict situations. Disadvantaged youth, for example, exhibited more common forms of conflict resolution at home, such as screaming, arguing, hitting, and threatening with a weapon. Findings by Garret (1997) and Howard et al. (2002) are supported by the Social Relational Model (Laursen & Collins, 1994), which states that conflict will be greater between family members because it is not necessary to take precautions in order to preserve family ties. Such a close relationship is already constrained by kinship and norms and therefore changes slowly and is not easily disrupted.

From the above International research findings, it seems that positive family socialisation influences in disadvantaged communities are lacking or absent. Disadvantaged male and female adolescents have no one who teaches them constructive conflict management skills and they therefore resort to more destructive and violent resolutions. Several South African research outcomes (Barbarin et al., 2001; Sathiparsad, 2003; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000; Vogel, 2002) support international findings that disadvantaged adolescents use ineffective methods of conflict resolution. These adolescents use aggression and violence due to a lack of conflict management skills, which has been passed from one generation to the next.

3.2 Violence exposure at school

Children and adolescents spend large parts of their day in the school environment where they are supposed to learn effectively and develop intellectually and emotionally with minimal environmental constraints. The school environment is a place where young people are taught constructive social skills, which are considered

important for their healthy functioning in society. The school is therefore a place in which prevailing social norms from external settings are highlighted in order to promote the learning of constructive interactions (Sathisparsad, 2003). The school is a powerful positive influence when the lessons being learned are constructive. In disadvantaged communities it is however not always the case where social problems from the home and community often disrupt this positive process and are connected with fostering a poor school environment in which antisocial behaviour prevails. The Ecological-Transactional Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) proposes that violence occurring in the microsystem (home) and the exosystem (community) is related to violence that occurs in the mesosystem (school). The source of school violence may therefore also lie in contexts outside the school, which interact and transact with each other over time to shape individual antisocial behaviour (Collings & Magojo, 2003; Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Pietersen, 2002; Wynchank, 2000).

Sathiparsad (2003) indicates that the political, social and economic policies of the apartheid era, have led to the denial of basic rights to education and a dysfunctional education system within the disadvantaged communities of South Africa. The violence that is encountered in South African schools today must be seen against the backdrop of the legacy of a violent South African society. Although democracy in 1994 brought about a general decrease in violence, South Africa is still considered as one of the most violent countries in the world. The heavy burden that this violent legacy places on schools has made it imperative to create projects such as the Violence Prevention Project (Sathiparsad, 2003) and Safe Schools Project (Stevens et al., 2001) to curb violence in schools and equip young people with more effective prosocial strategies for conflict resolution.

Research by De Wet (2003) identifies both internal causes such as low self-image, frustration caused by learning, emotional problems, truancy and the influence of gangs as well as external causes such as poverty, unemployment and community disorganisation, that promote aggression and violence in schools. All of these conditions are implicitly linked to the problem of violence in the learners' environment. In many schools educators and learners (male and female) have been identified among the perpetrators of school-based violence but outsiders who find their way onto school property, for example gangs, also initiate some incidents of school-based violence (Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Maree, 2000; Stevens et al., 2001).

One of the main objectives of teachers in schools is to exercise supervision over the learners. In this way teachers become the primary source of not only formal learning but also of social learning for learners. According to Social Learning Theory, the establishment of teachers as an authority increases the likelihood of learners using them as models. In strained school and social environments, teachers often resort to violence as a means of exercising their authority (Gaillard-Thurston, 2003). This could lead to learners being socialised to accept the use of violence as a functional tool. One form of teacher-to-learner violence is corporal punishment. Maree's (2000) research supports the postulation that corporal punishment at school correlates significantly positively with violent behaviour and criminal activity in youth.

Research by Eliasov and Frank (2000) on 20 schools in the Western Cape peninsula found that most crime and violence problems were found in the context of high schools, which involved vandalism, intimidation, drug abuse, fighting, verbal abuse, theft and gang activities. They indicate that youth are at risk of developing psychological and social distress, disturbances of interpersonal behaviours, acting out

and antisocial behaviours, as well as an inability to handle conflict situations when exposed to violence at school. Seedat et al. (2000) and Vogel et al. (2003) show a related finding by indicating that violence in general in South African schools can have a significant impact on youth, affecting their mental health as well as overall socialisation and adaptation. In ambiguous situations, as also explained by the Social Information-processing Model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), adolescents tend to be hyper vigilant and expect the worst, whereby they respond aggressively to perceived hostility from their peers. They may be capable of generating socially constructive solutions, but they react to problem situations rapidly and impulsively, and without taking the time necessary to process all available information. These feelings often lead to a renewed, revolving cycle of interpersonal conflict. This is a notion similar to the Conflict-Spiral Model (North et al., 1964), which assumes that conflict is the vicious cycle that results from each person's view that the other is the aggressor. Burnett (1998) found in a study involving disadvantaged coloured adolescents from Gauteng that the cycle of pro- and reactive violence taking place within the school, led to the acceptance of violence as an instrument of empowerment directed at fellow learners and educators. She further states that these adolescents were dehumanised and socialised to accept violence as a functional tool to obtain social control. Violence was deemed a justifiable means to dominate others in search of gratification and control in the context of their chronic poverty, which rendered them powerless. These adolescents, who already had a high tendency of aggression and were then exposed to constant violence, were more likely to develop and maintain cognitive scripts that emphasise aggressive and violent solutions to social problems.

Research by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) however present contradictory evidence to some of the South African studies (Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-

Thurston, 2003; Maree, 2000; Olivier, 2003; Sathiparsad, 2003; Stevens et al., 2001) mentioned above. They found that the school was not a major source of violence because schools are likely to be places of high adult supervision whereas areas on the street and around the home are not. Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) however suggested that anti-violence programmes, which focused on safety in that specific school, were effective in curbing high levels of violence. De Wet (2003) however cautions that schools are not inaccessible fortresses but rather relatively open spaces where children and adults are often vulnerable to violence from gang acquaintances, family members or strangers.

Many research studies conducted in the United States of America also indicated that inner-city high school students' perceptions of school danger as well as their self-reports of exposure to school-related violence predicted antisocial behaviours and conduct problems (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1979; O'Keefe, 1997; Schwartz, McFadyen-Ketchum, Dodge, Pettit, & Bates, 1998). An ethnographic study conducted by Lockwood (1997) focusing on violent incidents among middle and high school students in schools with high violence rates, revealed that the largest number of violent incidents occurred between students who knew each other. The incidents generally escalated from trivial offences to more serious incidents where violence was excused as a justifiable means for retribution. Their use of violence, as posited by social cognitive theories (Bandura, 1986; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1988), was based on a well-developed value system in which violent behaviour was considered acceptable.

Outsiders involved in gang activities, such as drug and alcohol dealing have seemingly found their way onto school property and through such activity have initiated some incidents of school-based violence. As such, certain learners from

Cloeteville Senior Secondary School in the Stellenbosch district have also been identified as active gang members (Van Wyk, 2001). Maree (2000) further identifies other forms of violence, such as partner violence and peer rivalry, which also occur in South African schools. According to Maree (2000), partner violence is considered to be a persistent type of violence perpetrated by both male and female youths. Partner violence however appears to have more severe physical consequences for females. Bullying in schools is another chronic form of violence whereby mostly older male school children victimise younger or smaller children (Stevens et al., 2001).

Explanations of gender differences with regard to aggression at school can fundamentally be derived from social postulations. Geen (2001) indicates that general research on male-female differences in aggression have shown that:

- (a) boys use direct physical and verbal aggression more than girls until late adolescence, when both genders show a decrease to equal low levels of physical aggressiveness and girls become more verbally aggressive than boys;
- (b) in early adolescence, boys are more physically aggressive girls; and (c) from childhood to late adolescence, girls use indirect and relational aggression more than boys (p. 78).

Björkqvist and Niemelä (1992), similar to Geen (2001), found that girls in general are more likely to engage in indirect forms of aggression, such as relational aggression. This involves excluding others and spreading gossip. According to Crick and Dodge (1994) youth who typically use relational aggression to control or hurt others are more prone to form hostile attribution biases in situations involving relational conflicts than youth who are not aggressive in this way.

Bettencourt and Miller (1996) further found adolescent females to be as aggressive as their male counterparts during situations involving provocation when role constraints prohibiting aggression were removed. In addition, they found that although provocation reduces sex differences in general, specific types of provocation differentially affect the degree to which this attenuation occurs. For example, threats to self-esteem have little effect on female's aggression whereas insults or physical attacks lead to relatively high aggressiveness. Threats to self-esteem provoke males as much as physical attack and are more provocative than insult. They further report that males are more aggressive than females when physical aggression is the method made available, but are no more aggressive than females when verbal aggression is involved.

De Wet (2003) posits that males' initiation of more aggressive and violent acts than females can be attributed to the rigid South African gender socialisation factors, which prescribe men's authority and power over women as well as the view that violent actions by boys are synonymous with toughness and manliness. A study conducted by Olivier (2003), which elicited teachers perceptions of aggression among adolescent learners in a South African school found that the learners engaged in physical, verbal, and emotional forms of aggression whereby boys resorted to more physical aggression and girls to more emotional forms such as social exclusion.

South African research by Gaillard-Thurston (2003) found that male and female learners engage in violence of both a physical and verbal nature. An empirical investigation conducted in the Eastern Cape by De Wet (2003), which elicited educator's perceptions of school safety in disadvantaged areas, presents a similar finding. South African educators indicated that most acts of aggression are committed by boys but they also found that girls are becoming increasingly more

aggressive, with some girls even going to school armed with firearms and knives. The increased aggression by girls was viewed by the educators as a means to combat against peer criminal violence such as rape, sexual assault and physical violence from fellow male learners (De Wet, 2003).

3.3 Community violence exposure

Barbarin et al. (2001) indicate that favourable social development takes place under community conditions in which youth are neither oblivious to, nor preoccupied with issues of safety. Youth learn about themselves and about how to negotiate their environments through social exchanges. This essential developmental experience is often denied or severely reduced for youth living in unsafe neighbourhoods (Kuther, 1999; Overstreet, 2000; Osofsky, 1995). According to Salzinger et al. (2002) neighbourhoods that exhibit a breakdown in social processes, usually characterised by poverty and residential instability, are likely to be places where social control over behaviour is reduced. Such neighbourhoods generally give rise to the highest rates of exposure to violence and aggressive behaviour among youth.

Research studies conducted by Pietersen (2002) and Wynchank (2000) on samples of disadvantaged coloured adolescents in Macassar and Manenberg in the Western Cape indicate that exposure to community violence impacts negatively on adolescents' social development and their ability to deal with conflict situations in an effective manner. Problems include diminished social competence, aggression and violence, as well as adjustment problems, which impaired relationships with peers and family.

Barbarin et al. (2001), Govender and Killian (2001) as well as Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) also found that the desensitising effects of community violence exposure among South African adolescents from disadvantaged communities is likely

to be significant in the development of helplessness, reduced impulse control, aggressive behaviour and violent ways of interacting during conflict situations. Similar findings are presented by American research studies on disadvantaged youth (Attar, Guerra, & Tolan, 1994; DuRant et al., 2000; DuRant et al., 2001; Schwartz & Proctor, 2000; Singer, Miller, Guo, Flannery, Frierson, & Slovak, 1999).

Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986) may provide a logical theoretical link between such violence exposure and the development of aggressive behaviour. Repeated exposure to community violence may cause South African youth to become uncaring towards others and desensitised to aggression, which could lead to increased aggression and acting out. These youth may also believe that aggressive and violent responses to conflict situations are acceptable and effective thus increasing their levels of aggression and violence. The result is that they may have a limited repertoire of social skills that is required to adopt alternative conflict resolution or problem-solving strategies (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

A study by Du Plooy (2002) on deprived African youth from rural areas in the North West Province, further found that the stress, anxiety and fear associated with community violence exposure interfered with the accomplishment of normal developmental tasks, for example, emotional regulation, mastery over the environment, and the ability to form relationships. Indirect exposure to community violence appears to be linked to aggression while direct exposure to violence leads to emotional disturbances associated with posttraumatic stress disorder (Seedat et al., 2000). Kuther (1999) also found that exposure to community violence may impact areas of development that represent the integration of emotion, cognition and behaviour, such as social cognition, or individuals' understanding of the social world, moral development, and health-related beliefs.

With regard to emotional regulation, Osofsky (1995) indicates that it is an important developmental task with respect to learning how to regulate aggressive impulses, differentiating between various emotional states of others, and learning prosocial behaviour and competence. Intense negative emotions generated by the experience of community violence may interfere with the development of emotional regulation capacities. This, in turn, may hinder the development of other-oriented concern and prosocial behaviour. A young person must also struggle with the related developmental task of establishing relationships. This requires an adolescent to acquire the ability to show empathy and solve problems effectively. Adolescents exposed to community violence and suffering with hypervigilance to aggressive external stimuli may however misinterpret environmental cues (Crick & Dodge, 1994). This may lead to deficits in these development tasks thus creating social consequences whereby the adolescent has a limited, and more often negative, repertoire of interactional responses (Osofsky, 1995). According to Maughan and Cicchetti (2002), exposure to community violence results in an adolescent's decreased sense of emotional security. When feelings of emotional insecurity predominate, environmental stressors can overwhelm an individual's self-regulatory abilities, which result in dysregulation. Dysregulation hinders the development of optimal patterns of adjustment and may serve as adaptive functions in helping adolescents maintain their safety and meet their contextual demands by withdrawing. Adolescents' hyper vigilance to potential threats and/or overregulation of distress responses may thereby assist them to engage in less aggressive and oppositional behaviours to reduce further victimisation.

Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) postulated that boys were more likely than girls to be exposed to community violence as well as participate in aggressive acts due to the

differential socialisation of males and females. This assertion is congruent with Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1986), which posits that this process takes place through modelling, expectations, reinforcement and punishment of gender-appropriate and -inappropriate behaviours and of differential treatment of these boys and girls. Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) further state that exposure to community violence also has the potential to disrupt successful negotiation resolution strategies. The majority of their sample of disadvantaged youth was exposed to violence near the vicinity of the home and elsewhere in the community. The main problem areas were neither in the home nor the school. Several International studies using different research designs and multiethnic disadvantaged samples have also highlighted the influence of exposure to community violence on aggression and violent behaviour for disadvantaged males (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Farrel & Bruce, 1997; Freudenberg, Roberts, Richie, Taylor, McGillicuddy, & Greene, 1999; Gorman-Smith & Tolan, 1998; Schwab-Stone et al., 1999). These studies further indicate that males are more likely than females to be exposed to community violence. Berkowitz (1993) explains that males in the American patriarchal dominant society are frequently rewarded for aggressive behaviour as they grow up and they subsequently approve more readily of the use of aggression in situations involving conflict.

Hill and Madhere's (1996) research further found that inner-city African American adolescent perceptions of community violence predicted negative cognitive and behavioural outcomes. Exposure to community violence was associated with apprehension of violence, an increased need for retaliation, and higher rates of confrontational behaviour during conflict situations for girls. With regards to violence exposure in South Africa in the home, school, and community, Pietersen (2002) however reported no statistically significant difference between adolescent

coloured boys and girls. The researcher suggested that a larger number of girls than boys may have been exposed to less severe forms of violence and/or that girls were more likely to report such less severe forms of violence exposure in the different settings than boys. This implied that boys might have been more inclined to report only exposure to more severe forms of violence and that those girls might be more sensitive to less severe forms of violence and thus notice, remember and report them more readily than boys.

Research conducted by Luyt and Foster (2001) as well as Van Wyk (2001) indicate that gangsterism is a big social problem within the disadvantaged communities of the Western Cape because of the history of apartheid and the consequences thereof, which include poverty, dysfunctional family structures and the marginalisation of youth. Youth, especially males spend most of their time on the street due to the lack of supervision or the breakdown of family life. They are now more exposed to violence on the streets, which may socialise them into violent lifestyles. Gangs and gangsterism in these areas have thus become a troubling manifestation of this trend. Barbarin & Richter, 2001 and Wynchank (2000) show that gang violence, which spills out into the community is one of the main problems within these deprived neighbourhoods.

The Ecological-Transactional Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) is also useful in explaining the effects of community violence on youth. Exposure to community violence is considered an enduring vulnerability factor that has the potential for both direct effects on the adolescent's development and indirect effects through increasing risks within environments more proximal to the adolescent, such as the family and school. Exposure to community violence is also thought to indirectly impact adaptation of the adolescent by acting as a potentiating factor for disturbances within

other contexts, such as the family. In the absence of adequate compensatory factors this can have direct negative effects on the adolescent and intensify the negative effects of exposure to community violence. For example, living in a violent community may cause heightened stress for some families, creating an increased probability of violent responses of adolescents to familial conflict. According to O'Keefe (1997), exposure to various forms of violence in multiple settings (home, school, and community) thus appears to have a cumulative influence on adolescents. Adolescents who experience or witness violence in all three settings is at the highest risk for developing aggressive acting-out behaviours.

3.4 Conflict resolution tactics

The relationship between conflict and violence is apparent if one considers that violence is one of the consequences of the inability to resolve conflict effectively. Young people in South Africa are exposed to high levels of violence and Sathiparsad (2003) maintains that a thin line exists between being a victim of violence and beginning to commit violent acts oneself. The real tragedy is that South African youth are not born to be violent. They have been systematically socialised by society to perceive violence as being the only practical means of asserting themselves or of resolving conflict. Furthermore, when exposure to violence in the home, school and community is combined with a lack of modelling of non-violent conflict resolution skills within the family and other primary social groups, many South African youth do not learn the appropriate conflict management skills or perceive the need to avoid the use of violence (Sathiparsad, 2003).

Laursen and Collins (1994) suggest that interpersonal conflict should be distinguished from aggression, competition and anger. Although the constructs of aggression, competition and anger are distinct from, they do overlap with, conflict.

Interpersonal conflict may be characterised as a state of incompatible behaviours, disagreement, and opposition with several distinct features. These include incidence and intensity (frequency and level of affect of conflict), the issue (conflict topic), initiation and opposition (behaviours that start a conflict), the resolution (behaviours that conclude a conflict), and the outcome of a conflict episode (Laursen & Collins, 1994). Laursen and Collins (1994) as well as Laursen and Koplas (1996) contend that such a temporal framework indicates that the individual significance of conflict depends more on participant behaviour (individual factors), characteristics of the relationship in which the conflict episode arises and the compounding environmental factors rather than on the frequency of conflict episodes. Two conflict management components, namely resolution and affect, are particularly powerful predictors of conflict outcomes.

According to Laursen et al. (2001), resolution strategies may include coercion, negotiation (reasoning) and disengagement. Coercion describes a process whereby one party submits or capitulates to the demands of the other. Assertive tactics include commands, and physical or verbal aggression. Coercion and negative affect have been associated with a variety of unpleasant outcomes, including discontinued social interaction and damaged interpersonal relationships. Negotiation or reasoning describes compromise, which involves achieving middle ground between two opposing positions. Reasoning and negotiation, in contrast, avoid negative outcomes and relationship disruption. Disengagement describes dropping a conflict without achieving a resolution.

Jensen-Campbell et al. (1996) further identify two types of conflicts, namely constructive and destructive. Destructive conflicts are those that escalate beyond the initial issues and use tactics and strategies such as aggression and violence. Constructive conflicts remain on the initial issue and include negotiation and problem solving. The researchers found that negotiation and problem-solving lead to constructive outcomes whereas tactics such as power assertion lead to destructive outcomes. Destructive conflicts can lead to the termination of otherwise positive relationships and the opportunity for further development. More specifically, destructive tactics such as power assertion tend to aggravate conflict and often lead to inequitable solutions and discontinued interactions between individuals. On the other hand, constructive tactics such as negotiation and disengagement often alleviates conflict and allow for continued social interaction and the possibility of reaching equitable solutions.

Laursen and Koplas (1996) indicate that conflict resolution refers to behaviours that bring disagreement to a close. The researchers identified five distinct forms of conflict resolution:

- (a) submission includes capitulation, (b) compromise implies negotiation, (c) standoff concludes with distraction, (d) withdrawal reflects a refusal to continue and, (e) third-party intervention indicates a solution imposed by a previously uninvolved individual (p. 87).

Disengagement encompasses resolutions that involve either standoff or withdrawal (Laursen & Koplas, 1996).

Unger, Sussman and Dent (2003) found several responses to interpersonal conflict that tend to cluster into several categories, including severe physical aggression, mild

physical aggression, verbal or psychological aggression and reasoning. The present study utilises similar categories based on Straus' (1979) classification of conflict resolution tactics. These include prosocial tactics such as reasoning (use of rational discussion), and antisocial tactics such as verbal aggression (verbal and nonverbal acts that threaten to harm another) and violence (physical force that threatens or harms another) (Straus, 1979).

Research by Garret (1997) focused on disadvantaged African American adolescents' inability to resolve interpersonal conflicts with family members. The researcher suggested that adolescents exposed to violence at home were more prone to use verbal and physical aggression to solve interpersonal conflicts with family members because they had a diminished ability to cope with stress in a practical way. Such aggressive means to resolve disputes were usually displayed without empathy or guilt.

Research by Unger et al. (2003) examined the interpersonal conflict resolution tactics used by disadvantaged high school learners. It was found that adolescents who responded to interpersonal conflicts in a physical or verbally aggressive manner lacked the coping or social skills necessary to avoid or manage interpersonal conflicts effectively. Adolescents who used more adaptive, non-violent tactics for handling interpersonal conflict had a well developed repertoire of adaptive coping or social skills and were able to use these skills to cope with many stressful situations.

Laursen and Koplas' (1996) research study, which focused on disadvantaged adolescents' perceptions of their daily conflicts, found that frequent exposure to conflict situations was linked to maladaptive outcomes, including psychosocial difficulties and dysfunctional relationships. A meta-analytic research study by Laursen et al. (2001) also found that exposure to recurrent and intense conflict lead to negative developmental implications among adolescents such as delinquency.

DuRant et al (2001) evaluated the effectiveness of a programme centred on conflict resolution and violence prevention for disadvantaged youth exposed to high levels of violence. The researchers found that youth tended to use more aggressive and violent behaviours to resolve conflict. The aim of the programme was to teach disadvantaged youth who were exposed to high levels of violence alternative ways to resolve conflict. The programme emphasised prosocial behaviours such as avoidance, problem-solving, communication skills and conflict resolution skills. It was found that the programme had positive short-term effects on self-reported violence or intentions to use violence by these youth.

Multiple factors such as exposure to violence may thus be accountable in the determination of conflict and can also be responsible in the distinction of the type of conflict resolution tactics employed.

3.5 Conclusion

South African and international research studies show that exposure to violence is of great concern and affects the healthy functioning and well being of individuals. In homes, schools and communities plagued by high levels of exposure to violence, young people are especially at risk of displaying aggressive and violent tendencies themselves. This socialisation of youth into violent lifestyles is dependent on both their levels of exposure to violence and their socialised gender roles. Due to the high levels of violence in South Africa, it is of vital importance to understand how this violence affects the lives of youth in this country especially how they conduct themselves when facing conflict situations. Therefore, the objective of the present study was to examine the relationship between exposure to different types of violence

in different settings (home, school, and community) and the conflict resolution tactics of male and female high school learners.

4. Hypotheses

The study examined the following hypotheses:

1. Exposure to violence will significantly influence the conflict resolution tactics used.
2. Exposure to different types of violence (traumatic, physical/verbal abuse, indirect) will significantly influence the type of conflict resolution tactics (reasoning, verbal aggression, minor violence, severe violence) used.
3. Exposure to violence in the different settings (home, school, community) will significantly influence the type of conflict resolution tactics (reasoning, verbal aggression, minor violence, severe violence) used.
4. Males will be significantly more exposed to different types of violence in the different settings than females.
5. There will be significant gender differences in the type of conflict resolution tactics displayed.
6. There will be significant gender differences regarding the strength of the correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics displayed.
7. Exposure to different types of violence in the different settings will significantly influence the type of conflict resolution tactics displayed by the high exposure group.
8. There will be significant gender differences regarding the strength of the correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics displayed by the high exposure group.

5. Method

A quantitative study involving a cross-sectional research design was utilised to determine a correlation between levels of exposure to violence and the conflict resolution tactics of adolescents. The design was used in order to gain access to a large sample. Collecting data from a large sample was considered necessary to increase the validity and reliability of the observations in the sample. This would allow the observations to be more readily generalised to the population from which the sample was drawn.

5.1 Participants

This study focused on coloured adolescents from mid-to-low socio-economic, peri-urban communities in the Stellenbosch district. Participants were selected by means of a convenience sample. The total sampling frame ($N = 426$) consisted of 187 (43.9%) males and 239 (56.1%) females. They were Afrikaans-speaking, high school learners between the ages of 13 and 18 years (grades 8-11) with a mean age of 15.9 years. This age group was targeted because it is an important period associated with social identity formation and gender socialisation. Access to grade 12 learners was not possible due to their preparations for their final exams. The learners were attending three co-educational schools in the Stellenbosch district, namely, Stellenzicht Senior Secondary School in Jamestown ($n = 111$), Cloeteville Senior Secondary School in Cloeteville ($n = 127$) and Lückhoff High School in Idas Valley ($n = 188$).

The sample was large enough to be considered representative of the population of coloured school-going adolescents within the Stellenbosch district. Demographic variables considered being the most important in determining the representativeness

of the sample are those that can be linked with existing data for the population, or similar populations. Data on the specific population was difficult to find but the variable of gender-ratio within the sample could be compared to the estimates of this variable in other studies.

In the present sample, the ratio of females to males (1.23:1) was comparable to the ratio found in the Survey for Youth Risk Behaviour in Western Cape schools (1.28:1) (Reddy et al., 2003). The sample was therefore deemed to be representative of the population of coloured school-going adolescents with regard to the variable of gender. This indicates that the statistical results of the present study may yield high external validity that can be generalised to the population.

The following descriptions are only included as background information and thus not investigated by the present study. Regarding reported family composition, 62.7% ($n = 267$) of the respondents lived with both biological parents, 22.3% ($n = 95$) lived with their mothers, 1.9% ($n = 8$) lived with their fathers, and 13.1% ($n = 56$) lived in other family arrangements. Most of the participants' parents or guardians 93% ($n = 396$) were employed and only 7% ($n = 30$) were unemployed. The majority of the participants, 89.4% ($n = 381$) lived in a house. With regards to the number of people living in a single dwelling, 30.5% ($n = 130$) of respondents indicated five persons as the most frequent number living in one home. Almost half of the respondents, 48.6% ($n = 207$), reported that they did not participate in extra mural activities.

With regard to the variable of unemployment, only 7% of the sample reported that their parents or guardians were unemployed. This is much lower than and contrary to the 2001 Census of the District findings that indicated an unemployment rate of between 15.2% and 19.1% within the coloured communities in the Stellenbosch district (Statistics South Africa, 2004). This difference may be attributed to the

stigma and consequent shame related to unemployment, which could have facilitated participants' high level of under-reporting. Rather than completing their schooling, it is also possible that these participants may be trying to support themselves and their unemployed family members. Finally, parents or guardians may not be classified as being formally employed because they could be involved in informal economic activities.

5.2 Questionnaire

Data was gathered through the administration of a structured questionnaire. The demographic section, which elicited categorical information, was included in order to describe the sample. The main questionnaire consisted of two previously developed measures that assessed participants' self-reported exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics.

5.2.1 Exposure to violence

The revised version of the self-report Screen for Adolescent Violence Exposure (SAVE) (Hastings & Kelley, 1997) (See Appendix C) was utilised. The SAVE was used for this study because it was designed to offer a socially valid measure of violent events experienced by adolescents within the three settings of the home, school and community. The original SAVE was empirically developed and standardised on urban African American adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Other measures of adolescent violence exposure were not considered as they fail to distinguish between different settings of violence exposure and lack both validity and test-retest reliability data. The SAVE's psychometric properties are more appropriate to the adolescents in this sample because they were generated from participants living in high-crime neighbourhoods. It was also developed so that it could be easily

administered and be suitable for poor readers, a facet that increases its validity in low socio-economic communities (Hastings & Kelley, 1997).

The revised SAVE is a 32 item scale describing a range of violent events, to which the participant responds by indicating the frequency of his or her exposure on a five point Likert-scale (1-5) (never, hardly ever, often, very often, almost always). The questionnaire comprises of three subscale scores of exposure to Traumatic violence (12 items) (severe victimisation experiences), Physical or Verbal abuse (6 items) (actual or threatened violent harm directed at the participant), and Indirect violence (14 items) (witnessing of or being informed of less severe interpersonal violence). The extent of the adolescents' exposure to violence was determined on three corresponding setting scales, namely, in the home, school and neighbourhood. Total exposure to violence scores range from 32 to 160 whereby higher scores reflect greater violence exposure.

To distinguish between high and low scores for this study, a cut-off point based on the responses to the items in the questionnaire was used for each of the subscales. These cut-off points were determined through the inspection of the response options. Individuals responding to the majority of the items with "often", "very often" or "almost always" were classified as being exposed to high levels of violence. Individuals who thus scored 3, 4 or 5 for the majority of the items in each of the subscales were deemed as being exposed to high levels of violence.

In its administration amongst urban African American adolescents, the original SAVE obtained acceptable reliability and validity figures. Alpha coefficients, relating to the questionnaire's internal consistency, ranged from .65 to .95. Cronbach's Alpha calculated for the setting scales ranged from .90 to .94. Intercorrelations between subscales ranged from .19 to .93. Acceptable test-retest coefficients have been

obtained for the frequency subscales, ranging from .53 to .92. Discriminate analyses also demonstrated utility in classifying high- and low-violence participants (Hastings & Kelley, 1997).

In conducting this study, it was important to measure the suitability of the use of the SAVE in collecting data from the present sample. The discriminatory power of the scale for this sample was found to be questionable through the inspection of the low means. Measures of internal consistency were calculated in order to further evaluate the scale (see Table 1).

5.2.2 Conflict resolution tactics

The original 19 item self-report Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (Straus, 1979) (See Appendix C) was used to determine adolescents' handling of conflict situations. It was originally designed to assess violent intra-family and marital partners conflict resolution tactics on four dimensions, namely, Reasoning (3 items) (the use of rational discussion and debate), Verbal Aggression (7 items) (verbal and nonverbal acts that symbolically threaten to harm another), as well as Minor and Severe Violence (9 items) (physical force that actually threatens or harms another). The CTS classified items in the Violence subscale into minor and severe due to the recognition that the aetiology and treatment of occasional minor violence may be different than the aetiology of repeated severe assaults (Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996).

The CTS was utilised for this study because it has been used in multiple studies involving participants from diverse cultural backgrounds and age groups (Cascardi, Avery-Leaf, O'Leary, & Smith Slep, 1999; Haj-Yahia, 2001; O'Keefe, 1997; Unger et al., 2003). A further strength of the CTS is that it does not measure attitudes about

conflict or violence nor the causes or consequences of using different tactics but focuses only on the specific acts or events that are utilised (Straus, 1979). Straus et al. (1996) stated that adolescent relationships, including those with same sex peers, could also be investigated by the CTS by making certain modifications to the instructions. For the present study, the instructions were altered to accommodate this specific sample of adolescents. This was achieved with the aid of a lecturer in the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University familiar with questionnaire development, thus ensuring that the now modified instrument retained face validity. Evidence of similar modifications can be found in previous research focusing on adolescent relationships (Cascardi et al., 1999; Haj-Yahia, 2001; O’Keefe, 1997; Unger et al., 2003).

The frequency of these tactics displayed was assessed on a four point Likert-scale (0-3) (never, often, very often, always). Total scores for the CTS are obtained by adding the response category code values for the items making up each subscale. The Reasoning scores range from 0 to 9, Verbal Aggression scores range from 0 to 16, Minor Violence scores range from 0 to 9, and Severe Violence scores range from 0 to 14. Higher scores on each subscale thus reflect greater reasoning, verbal aggression, and minor or severe violence. To distinguish between high and low scores for this study, a cut-off point based on the responses to the items in the questionnaire was used for each of the subscales. These cut-off points were determined through the inspection of the response options. Individuals responding to the majority of the items with “very often” and “always” were regarded to be using high levels of different types of conflict resolution tactics. Individuals considered having high scores were those who scored 2 or 3 for the majority of the items in each of the subscales.

The original Conflict Tactics Scale obtained acceptable reliability, as indicated by the coefficients of internal consistency, which ranged from .79 to .94 (Kashani, Deuser, & Reid, 1991; Straus, 1979). Latent correlations calculated by confirmatory factor analysis, ranged from .71 for females to .83 for males (Moffitt et al., 1997). Kaiser's Measure of Sampling Adequacy (MSA) ranged from .86 for males to .88 for females (Caulfield & Riggs, 1992).

In conducting this study, it was important to measure the suitability of the use of the CTS in collecting data from the present sample. The discriminatory power of the scale for this sample was also found to be questionable through the inspection of the low means. Measures of internal consistency were taken in order to further evaluate the scale (See Table 2).

5.2.3 Structure of questionnaire

The questionnaire was compiled from the aforementioned two scales and the biographical information. The questionnaire provided important instructions to inform participants of the anonymity of the data gathered and how to answer the items correctly.

The questionnaire was translated into Afrikaans to meet the needs of the predominantly Afrikaans-speaking participants. The translated questionnaire was then presented to a teacher at Stellenzicht Senior Secondary School to proofread it to confirm that the instructions, items and response formats would be sufficiently understood by the participants. In addition, the questionnaire was then administered to four learners from Stellenzicht Senior Secondary School to determine if there were any problems with the instructions, sensitivity of items and response formats. No problems were experienced. This pilot sample also served as an informal standard

that provided an estimate of how long it would take learners to complete the questionnaire.

5.3 Procedure

In order to access and collect data from the sample, certain considerate and ethical procedures needed to be followed. A letter of permission for the initiation of this study at schools in the Stellenbosch district was drafted to the Western Cape Education Department (See Appendix A). The Head of Education Research at the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), subsequently granted permission to approach the schools (See Appendix B). Meetings were conducted with the relevant school headmasters to discuss the study, its aims and the logistics of administration. The headmasters granted permission for the research to be conducted during the second academic term. Arrangements were then made to conduct the research at a time convenient for the teachers and the learners. The final level of permission to conduct the research came from the learners themselves when they were informed that participation was voluntary. Data collection was thus scheduled to take place on consecutive weeks at Stellenzicht Senior Secondary School, Cloetesville Senior Secondary School, and Lückhoff High School.

Research assistants were used to help administer the questionnaire. Due to the sensitive nature of the study, the researcher briefed the assistants on the importance of the study and the protocol to be followed during the questionnaire administration session, which ensured standardisation of the administration process. When the questionnaires were administered, the researcher and assistants first described the purpose and the aims of the study. The instructions were then clearly explained to the participants prior to handing out the questionnaires. Participants were also assured

that all information would be treated in a confidential manner. The researcher and assistants then answered any questions that the respondents had regarding the questionnaires, their instructions and response formats. The teachers were requested to remain absent and unaffiliated to the research to ensure that the task was not construed as either an evaluation of themselves, nor work that would be scrutinised by members of the teaching staff.

It took approximately 45 minutes for respondents to complete the questionnaires. Once the questionnaires were completed, participants were encouraged to check over their questionnaires to ensure that all the items were answered. An informal discussion then took place with the participants as a form of debriefing for them to understand the context of their experiences more clearly.

5.3.1 Statistical procedures

Statistica package 6 was utilised to conduct all statistical analyses. The results from the demographic section were categorically totalled up in order to describe the demographic variables present in the sample. Internal consistency estimates were calculated for the SAVE and CTS respectively.

Descriptive statistics were calculated to summarise the distribution and variance of data around the mean and the median for violence exposure and conflict resolution tactics. A further descriptive procedure was devised to explain the levels of violence exposure and conflict resolution tactics using scores that described the sample in groups according to their scores being considered either high or low for each of the subscales on the SAVE and CTS.

Due to the technique utilised in this study of gathering data by means of a questionnaire, it was argued that the data might not have a normal distribution. It was

therefore reasoned that the non-parametric Spearman rank order correlation coefficient (r_s) should be used (Daniel, 1978). This technique was utilised to determine a relationship between violence exposure and conflict resolution tactics, two variables of an ordinal scale. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) based on the F-test was used to determine mean differences between genders on violence exposure and conflict resolution tactics.

6. Results

This section presenting the results of the study will begin with an examination of the internal consistency estimates for the SAVE and CTS. It will then be followed by the descriptive statistics of the data pertaining to exposure to different forms of violence in different settings and conflict resolution tactics. The results of the correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics as well as gender differences are presented according to the hypotheses. Levels of 5% ($p < .05$) and 1% ($p < .01$) were used as parameters to determine significant correlations and differences.

6.1 Internal consistency of questionnaires

For this study, the psychometric properties of the SAVE and CTS were further investigated.

6.1.1 Screen for Adolescent Violence Exposure (SAVE)

The internal consistency of the SAVE and its subscales were determined by the calculation of the scales' Cronbach's Alphas. For the subscales of the SAVE with more than 10 items, Guttman's split-half reliability tests were conducted. For the subscales with fewer items, the correlation between all the items was calculated. The SAVE's total internal consistency and those of the types of violence exposure were calculated from the correlations between the settings. Results of the Cronbach's Alpha and split-half analyses for the SAVE are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Internal Consistency Estimates for the SAVE and its Subscales

Types of Exposure	Setting	Alphas
Traumatic Violence	Home	.74
	School	.65
	Community	.86
	Total	.76
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	.54
	School	.52
	Community	.70
	Total	.75
Indirect Violence	Home	.86
	School	.83
	Community	.90
	Total	.78
Total Exposure	Home	.64
	School	.62
	Community	.67
	Total	.83

As shown in Table 1, acceptable estimates of internal consistency were calculated for the present study with higher scores being associated with more reliable subscales. Daniel (1978) provides the necessary confirmation, as he indicates that Cronbach's alphas greater than 0.50 indicate acceptable and reliable levels of internal consistency. Reliability estimates obtained for this coloured South African sample are therefore acceptable. This indicates that it is an appropriate assessment tool for the present study.

6.1.2 Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS)

Cronbach's Alphas were also calculated for the full scale and subscales of the CTS to determine its internal consistency. The total internal consistency estimate for the CTS

was calculated from the correlations between the subscales. The estimates of internal consistency are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Internal Consistency Estimates for the CTS and its Subscales

Conflict Tactics	Cronbach's Alpha
Reasoning	.31
Verbal Aggression	.68
Minor Violence	.68
Severe Violence	.75
Total Score	.64

As shown in Table 2, the full scale, including the Verbal Aggression, Minor Violence, and Severe Violence subscales, present acceptable reliability estimates in the context of this study. The Reasoning subscale alternately produced a poor coefficient of internal consistency (.31). It seems that the Reasoning subscale may contain too few items in comparison with the other subscales and therefore needs further refinement. The sample may not have understood the significance of these items within the framework of the overall questionnaire (Dr M. Kidd, personal communication, August 18, 2004).

6.2 Descriptive statistics

6.2.1 Exposure to violence

Table 3 shows the minimum, maximum, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of the subscales of the SAVE in order to determine the prevalence of exposure to violence within the total sample (N = 426).

Table 3

Descriptive Analysis of Exposure to Different Types of Violence in Different Settings

Types of exposure	Setting	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Traumatic Violence	Home	12	34	15.03	4.24
	School	12	36	14.19	3.16
	Community	12	54	18.39	6.82
	Total	36	97	47.61	12.23
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	6	19	8.23	2.19
	School	6	18	7.68	1.94
	Community	6	26	7.78	2.71
	Total	18	57	23.69	5.69
Indirect Violence	Home	14	66	26.92	11.02
	School	14	57	24.35	7.72
	Community	14	69	36.65	13.57
	Total	44	189	87.92	27.63
Total Exposure	Home	32	105.76	50.18	15.83
	School	32	98	46.22	11.18
	Community	32	139	62.83	20.75
	Total	99	286	159.22	41.33

According to Table 3, the mean scores for the Indirect Violence subscale and its corresponding setting scales were relatively higher when compared to the other subscales on the SAVE. For example, the total score of the Indirect Violence subscale (87.92) was higher than the total score of the Traumatic Violence subscale (47.61) and Physical/Verbal Abuse subscale (23.69). This indicates that the sample was in total exposed to higher levels of indirect violence in those different settings. The highest exposure to total violence was found in the community (62.83), followed by the home (50.18) and then the school (46.22).

Table 4 shows the percentage of scores for the total group above and below what is considered to be the cut-off score for describing the individual cases of exposure to

violence. The top three response categories (3 often, 4 very often and 5, almost always) were regarded as indicative of high scores.

Table 4

Percentage of High and Low Scores obtained on the SAVE

Types of exposure	Setting	Cut-off	% Low	% High
Traumatic Violence	Home	24	94.8	5.2
	School	24	98.4	1.6
	Community	24	85.2	14.8
	Total	82	98.1	1.9
Physical and Verbal Abuse	Home	12	95.1	4.9
	School	12	96.5	3.5
	Community	12	94.1	5.9
	Total	36	95.8	4.2
Indirect Violence	Home	28	62.7	37.3
	School	28	76.5	23.5
	Community	28	32.6	67.4
	Total	84	52.8	47.2
Total Exposure	Home	64	83.8	16.2
	School	64	92.0	8.0
	Community	64	59.9	40.1
	Total	192	79.8	20.2

According to Table 4 the adolescents appeared to be exposed to low levels of violence in general. The lowest being traumatic violence (1.9%) and physical/verbal abuse (4.2%). However, a large number of the sample (47.2%) experienced high levels of indirect violence, especially in the community (67.4%) and the home (37.3%). A relatively high level (compared to other settings) of exposure to traumatic violence also occurred in the community (14.8%).

6.2.2 Conflict resolution tactics

Table 5 shows the minimum, maximum, mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) of the subscales of the CTS in order to determine the prevalence of these different conflict resolution tactics within the total sample (N = 426).

Table 5

Descriptive Analysis of the Scores on the Conflict Tactics Scales

Conflict Tactics	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Reasoning	0	9	3.61	1.80
Verbal Aggression	0	16	5.47	3.15
Minor Violence	0	9	2.56	1.99
Severe Violence	0	14	2.06	2.54

As shown in Table 5, the mean scores for the Reasoning subscale (3.61) and especially the Verbal Aggression subscale (5.47) were relatively higher than those on the other subscales. This indicates that the sample displayed moderately higher levels of reasoning and more specifically verbal aggression during a conflict situation.

Table 6 shows the percentage of scores for the total group above and below what is considered to be the cut-off score for describing the individual cases of different conflict tactics reported by the individuals in the sample. The top two response categories (2 very often and 3 always) were regarded as indicative of high scores.

Table 6

Percentage of High and Low Scores obtained on the CTS

Conflict Tactics	Cut-off	%Low	%High
Reasoning	3	53.3	46.7
Verbal Aggression	6	58.2	41.8
Minor Violence	3	70.7	29.3
Severe Violence	6	93.4	6.6

According to Table 6 almost half of the sample (46.7%) scored high on the Reasoning subscale, which indicates that many of them prefer to use reasoning tactics in conflict situations. A relatively high proportion of the sample favoured the use of verbal aggression (41.8%). Although only a small percentage of participants (29.3%) resort to minor violence it is still alarming.

6.3 Correlations: Total group

Table 7 presents Spearman's Rank Order correlation coefficients between exposure to different types of violence in different settings and conflict resolution tactics for the total sample (N = 426).

Table 7

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients (r_s) between Exposure to Violence Scores and Conflict Tactics Scores

Types of exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics			
		Reasoning	Verbal Aggression	Minor Violence	Severe Violence
Traumatic Violence	Home	-.03	.26**	.34**	.38**
	School	-.12*	.29**	.27**	.32**
	Community	-.08	.29**	.33**	.38**
	Total	-.08	.33**	.36**	.42**
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	-.05	.34**	.26**	.21**
	School	-.14**	.24**	.25**	.27**
	Community	-.01	.35**	.34**	.36**
	Total	-.07	.41**	.36**	.34**
Indirect Violence	Home	.00	.31**	.34**	.34**
	School	-.17**	.31**	.29**	.30**
	Community	-.07	.31**	.32**	.31**
	Total	-.09	.35**	.36**	.37**
Total Exposure	Home	-.01	.34**	.36**	.37**
	School	-.17**	.33**	.32**	.35**
	Community	-.08	.33**	.35**	.36**
	Total	-.09	.38**	.39**	.41**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

According to Table 7, highly significant positive correlations were found in all instances between exposure to types and settings of violence and aggressive and violent conflict tactics. The results of the significant positive correlations indicated that r_s varied between $r_s = .21, p < .01$ and $r_s = .45, p < .01$. Significant negative correlations were found between exposure to all types of violence in the school setting and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic (traumatic violence, $r_s = -.12, p < .05$; physical/verbal abuse, $r_s = -.14, p < .01$; indirect violence, $r_s = -.17, p < .01$; total exposure to violence, $r_s = -.17, p < .01$). No significant correlations were found between reasoning and any other setting where exposure to violence occurred.

6.4 Gender differences: Total group

Table 8 presents gender differences with regard to exposure to different types of violence in different settings calculated by using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Scores obtained by male participants ($n = 187$) on the SAVE were compared to the corresponding scores obtained by female participants ($n = 239$).

Table 8

ANOVA for Gender Differences on Exposure to Violence Scores

Types of exposure	Setting	Mean Score		F	p
		Males	Females		
Traumatic Violence	Home	15.32	14.80	1.58	.21
	School	14.79	13.72	12.26	.01**
	Community	19.63	17.42	11.35	.01**
	Total	49.74	45.94	10.36	.01**
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	7.96	8.44	5.01	.03*
	School	7.84	7.55	2.20	.14
	Community	8.04	7.58	3.07	.08
	Total	23.84	23.57	0.23	.63
Indirect Violence	Home	26.90	26.93	0.00	.98
	School	25.06	23.79	2.86	.09
	Community	36.84	36.51	0.62	.80
	Total	88.80	87.23	0.34	.56
Total Exposure	Home	50.19	50.17	0.00	.99
	School	47.69	45.07	5.82	.02*
	Community	64.51	61.51	2.21	.14
	Total	162.39	156.74	1.96	.16

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

According to Table 8 gender differences were found in the following instances:

- Males were exposed to significantly higher levels of traumatic violence in general than females ($F(1,42) = 10.36, p = .01$)
- Males were exposed to significantly higher levels of traumatic violence at school than females ($F(1,42) = 12.26, p = .01$)
- Males were exposed to significantly higher levels of traumatic violence in the community than females ($F(1,42) = 11.35, p = .01$).
- Females were exposed to significantly higher levels of physical and verbal abuse at home than males ($F(1,42) = 5.01, p = .03$).

- Males were exposed to significantly higher levels of total violence in the school than females ($F(1,42) = 5.82, p = .02$).

Table 9 presents gender differences on conflict resolution tactics calculated by using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Scores obtained by male participants ($n = 187$) on the CTS were compared to the corresponding scores from the female participants ($n = 239$).

Table 9

ANOVA for Gender Differences on Conflict Tactics Scores ($N = 426$)

Conflict Tactics	Mean Score		F	p
	Males	Females		
Reasoning	3.67	3.57	0.30	.59
Verbal Aggression	5.26	5.63	1.49	.22
Minor Violence	2.70	2.45	1.63	.20
Severe Violence	2.56	1.67	13.16	.01**

** $p < .01$

According to Table 9, males, compared to females, displayed a significantly higher incidence of severe violence as a conflict tactic ($F(1,42) = 13.16, p = .01$).

With regards to the other conflict resolution tactics, no statistically significant gender differences were found.

Table 10 presents differences between correlation scores for male ($n = 187$) and female ($n = 239$) participants on exposure to all types of violence in different settings and conflict resolution tactics. These correlations were calculated in order to determine whether gender had an effect on the relationship between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics. The sample was divided into males and females and two separate correlation results were calculated for each gender.

The two correlations were further analysed in Statistica to determine whether or not they were significantly different (Dr M. Kidd, personal communication, August 18, 2004). A significant result indicated that gender had an impact on the relationship. The size of the difference between the correlation scores as well as the sample sizes was taken into consideration. The significance of the differences was measured at the 5% level. The cases in which there was a significant gender effect are presented in Table 11.

Table 10

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (r_s) between Exposure to Violence Scores and Conflict Tactics Scores for Gender Groups

Types of exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics							
		Reasoning		Verbal Aggression		Minor Violence		Severe Violence	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Traumatic Violence	Home	.03	-.07	.26**	.28**	.22**	.42**	.28**	.45**
	School	.14	.09	.37**	.22**	.30**	.22**	.28**	.32**
	Community	.11	.06	.36**	.27**	.28**	.34**	.33**	.38**
	Total	.13	.04	.39**	.31**	.31**	.39**	.34**	.46**
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	.17*	-.06	.27**	.37**	.18*	.31**	.16*	.28**
	School	.10	.17*	.30**	.24**	.22**	.24**	.28**	.23**
	Community	.05	-.02	.39**	.36**	.32**	.35**	.30**	.38**
	Total	.10	.04	.42**	.46**	.31**	.41**	.29**	.38**
Indirect Violence	Home	.09	-.05	.36**	.30**	.30**	.38**	.27**	.40**
	School	.19*	.14*	.38**	.26**	.28**	.28**	.24**	.32**
	Community	.10	.05	.42**	.23**	.32**	.32**	.32**	.32**
	Total	.15*	.04	.46**	.29**	.36**	.37**	.34**	.39**
Total Exposure	Home	.11	-.05	.37**	.34**	.31**	.41**	.29**	.44**
	School	.18*	.15*	.42**	.28**	.31**	.30**	.29**	.35**
	Community	.10	.05	.44**	.27**	.34**	.36**	.35**	.36**
	Total	.15*	.04	.48**	.33**	.38**	.41**	.37**	.44**

* p<.05

**p<.01

Table 11 presents the significant results from the analysis of the impact of gender on the correlation between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics.

Table 11

Significant Results obtained from Comparisons of Correlation Coefficients (r_s) between Gender Groups

Types of Exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics	Male	Female	p
Traumatic Violence	Home	Minor Violence	.22	.42	< .05
	Home	Severe Violence	.28	.45	< .05
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	Reasoning	.17	-.06	< .05
	Home	Minor Violence	.18	.31	< .05
	Home	Severe Violence	.16	.28	< .05
	School	Reasoning	.10	.17	< .05
Indirect Violence	School	Reasoning	.19	.14	< .05
	Community	Verbal Aggression	.42	.23	< .05
	Total	Reasoning	.15	.04	< .05
	Total	Verbal Aggression	.46	.29	< .05
Total Exposure	Community	Verbal Aggression	.44	.27	< .05
	Total	Reasoning	.15	.04	< .05

According to Table 11, the males displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to violence and reasoning and also when violence occurred in the community and verbal aggression. When exposed to indirect violence, males displayed stronger positive relationships with reasoning and verbal aggression with special reference to the school setting and reasoning as well as the community and verbal aggression.

Females displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse especially at home and minor and severe violent conflict resolution tactics. When exposed to physical/verbal abuse at school, females displayed a stronger positive relationship with reasoning.

In one case (exposure to physical/verbal abuse at home and reasoning) the males displayed a positive correlation and the females a negative one.

6.5 High exposure group

6.5.1 Correlations

Table 12 presents Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients between exposure to all types of violence in different settings and the conflict resolution tactics for the high exposure group. Participants who scored above what is considered to be the cut-off for the SAVE in each of the cases (see Table 4) were deemed the high exposure group. It was striking to observe that 67.1% of the total group were exposed to high levels of violence.

Table 12

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients (r_s) between Exposure to Violence Scores and Conflict Tactics Scores for High Exposure Group (N = 286)

Types of Exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics			
		Reasoning	Verbal Aggression	Minor Violence	Severe Violence
Traumatic Violence	Home	-.08	-.04	.21	.08
	School	-.83*	-.15	.27	-.17
	Community	.12	.09	-.07	.17
	Total	.25	-.52**	-.40	-.37
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	.06	.09	.11	.21
	School	-.46	.20	.43	.24
	Community	.07	-.30	-.39	-.18
	Total	-.25	-.67**	.05	-.28
Indirect Violence	Home	.08	.10	.06	.13
	School	.14	.19	.02	.04
	Community	-.05	.20**	.20**	.29**
	Total	.03	.25**	.21**	.20**
Total Exposure	Home	.07	.30*	.11	.13
	School	-.43*	.18	-.10	.23
	Community	-.06	.18*	.18*	.35**
	Total	.02	.12	-.01	.22*

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

As displayed in Table 12, significant positive correlations were found between exposure to all types of violence in the community and verbal aggression ($r_s = .18$, $p < .05$), minor violence ($r_s = .18$, $p < .05$) and severe violence ($r_s = .35$, $p < .01$) as conflict resolution tactics. Indirect violence in the community correlated highly significant with verbal aggression ($r_s = .20$, $p < .01$), minor violence ($r_s = .20$, $p < .01$) and severe violence ($r_s = .29$, $p < .01$) as conflict resolution tactics. Conclusively, exposure to all types of violence at home was significantly positively correlated with verbal aggression ($r_s = .30$, $p < .05$) as a conflict resolution tactic.

Significant negative correlations were found between exposure to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse and verbal aggression ($r_s = -.52, p < .01$; $r_s = -.67, p < .01$). Significant negative correlations were also found between exposure to all types of violence at school and reasoning tactics ($r_s = -.43, p < .05$) especially when confronted with traumatic violence ($r_s = -.83, p < .05$).

The results indicate that the high exposure group mostly utilised aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics when exposed to violence in the community. The sample also used less verbal aggression when exposed to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse. When exposed to different types of violence especially traumatic violence in the school setting, the high exposure group also elicited less prosocial (reasoning) conflict resolution tactics.

6.5.2 Gender differences

Table 13 displays the correlation results calculated in order to determine whether gender had an impact on the relationship between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics for the high exposure group. The sample was again divided into males ($n = 133$) and females ($n = 153$) to assess the influence of this variable. Table 14 indicates the cases in which there was a significant gender effect on the 5% level.

Table 13

Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (r_s) between Exposure to Violence Scores and Conflict Tactics Scores for Gender Groups

Types of Exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics							
		Reasoning		Verbal Aggression		Minor Violence		Severe Violence	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Traumatic Violence	Home	-.01	-.11	.28	.27	-.38	.29	-.07	.39*
	School	-.47	-.32	.20	.22	.13	.33	.13	.39
	Community	.03	-.04	.19	.14	.12	.25*	.37**	.43**
	Total	.19	.26	-.38	-.73*	-.39	-.37	-.26	-.68*
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	.15	-.00	.20	.39*	.01	.25	-.05	.18
	School	.27	-.10	-.16	.27	-.10	.11	.13	.25
	Community	.04	-.06	.34**	.37**	.19	.28**	.25*	.37**
	Total	-.24	-.15	-.49	-.68*	-.18	.25	-.58	.15
Indirect Violence	Home	.04	.28	.18	.18	-.09	.22	-.27	.23
	School	-.33	-.12	.03	.27	-.30	-.11	-.34	.48
	Community	-.09	-.07	.22*	.01	.07	.13	.27*	.20
	Total	-.08	.14	.26*	.25**	.15	.31**	.14	.31**
Total Exposure	Home	.09	.13	.24	.36*	-.25	.34*	-.22	.39*
	School	-.60*	-.23	.04	.37	-.24	.05	-.12	.57*
	Community	-.05	-.07	.24*	.13	.12	-.26*	.36**	.37**
	Total	.13	-.07	.19	.07	-.10	.08	.17	.26

* p<.05

**p<.01

Table 14 presents the significant results from the analysis of the impact of gender on the correlation between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics for the high exposure group.

Table 14

Significant Results obtained from Comparisons of Spearman's Rank Order Correlation Coefficients (r_s) between Gender Groups for the High Exposure Group

Types of Exposure	Setting	Conflict Tactics	Male	Female	p
Traumatic Violence	Home	Severe Violence	-.07	.39	< .05
	Community	Minor Violence	.12	.25	< .05
	Total	Verbal Aggression	-.38	-.73	< .05
	Total	Severe Violence	-.26	-.68	< .05
Physical/Verbal Abuse	Home	Verbal Aggression	.20	.39	< .05
	Community	Minor Violence	.19	.28	< .05
	Community	Severe Violence	.25	.37	< .05
	Total	Verbal Aggression	-.49	-.68	< .05
Indirect Violence	Community	Verbal Aggression	.22	.01	< .05
	Community	Severe Violence	.27	.20	< .05
	Total	Verbal Aggression	.26	.25	< .05
	Total	Minor Violence	.15	.31	< .05
	Total	Severe Violence	.14	.31	< .05
Total Exposure	Home	Verbal Aggression	.24	.36	< .05
	Home	Minor Violence	-.25	.34	< .05
	Home	Severe Violence	-.22	.39	< .05
	School	Reasoning	-.60	-.23	< .05
	School	Severe Violence	-.12	.57	< .05
	Community	Verbal Aggression	.24	.13	< .05
	Community	Minor Violence	.12	-.26	< .05

According to Table 14, it was striking to note that females displayed stronger correlations between exposure to violence and aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics than males in most instances with exception to indirect violence in the community.

Males displayed stronger correlations between verbal aggression and severe violence when exposed to indirect violence especially in the community. Males also showed a

stronger negative correlation between exposure to violence at school and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic.

When exposed to traumatic violence females showed stronger negative correlations with the use of verbal aggression and severe violence. They also showed a stronger positive correlation when traumatic violence occurred in the community and the use of minor violence.

Females displayed a stronger negative correlation between physical/verbal abuse and the use of verbal aggression. They also displayed stronger positive correlations between physical/verbal abuse at home and verbal aggression as well as the use of minor and severe violent conflict resolution tactics in the community.

When exposed to indirect violence females showed stronger positive correlations with the use of verbal aggression, minor violence and severe violence.

In some comparisons, females displayed a positive and males displayed a negative correlation such as exposure to traumatic violence at home and severe violence, exposure to all types of violence at home and at school and minor and severe violence.

In one case the females showed a negative and the males a positive correlation between exposure to all types of violence in the community and minor violence as a conflict resolution tactic.

All significant results imply that there was a gender effect on the relationship between the variables.

7. Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine the nature and levels of exposure to different types of violence in different settings and the impact of this violence on the conflict resolution tactics used by coloured adolescents from peri-urban communities in the Stellenbosch district. A convenience sample was drawn from three schools in this area in order to gain access to a large enough sample for the purpose of representivity.

The findings of this study are reported in several categories. A brief discussion of the descriptive findings for this sample of peri-urban high school learners is presented firstly. The study further reports findings on exposure to different types of violence in different settings and the impact of this violence on their self-reported use of conflict resolution tactics. Gender differences with regard to violence exposure as well as gender differences regarding conflict resolution tactics used are discussed. The mediatory influence of gender on exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics used is presented. A discussion on exposure to violence and the impact of this exposure on the self-reported conflict resolution tactics used by a high exposure group is also presented. Finally, the mediatory influence of gender on exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics used by the high exposure group is discussed.

The results do indicate that other variables may further influence the extent of this relationship between exposure to violence and conflict tactics used but the strength of these influences was not examined in this study. It is however important to be aware of the influences of these variables when discussing the results.

7.1 Levels of exposure to violence

The overall impression is that the adolescents were exposed to low levels of violence in general with the lowest scores being reported for traumatic violence and

physical/verbal abuse (see Table 4). However, the high prevalence of exposure to indirect violence reflects a worrying cycle of violence in these disadvantaged communities. More specifically, 67.4% of the sample reported that they had been exposed to a high level of indirect violence in these communities (see Table 4). This result shows that most of the sample were not directly exposed to violence but had heard about or witnessed violence occurring in their communities. This result was expected as literature on the Stellenbosch district indicates that the present overcrowding, poverty and unemployment rate found in these communities are likely to increase the risk, especially among youth, of being exposed to indirect violence (Bureau of Market Research, 2004). This finding also concurs with the police statistics, which present a high prevalence of serious crime and violence in the disadvantaged communities of the Stellenbosch district (Inspector Vorster, personal communication, April 19, 2004). It is likely that the presence of, and competition between gangs within these communities of Stellenbosch could also be responsible for some of the witnessed violence (Van Wyk, 2001). Congruent with the present results the findings of Van Wyk (2001) in Cloeteville, Wynchank's (2000) study in Manenberg and Pietersen's (2002) in Macassar, all peri-urban coloured communities, indicated that a large proportion of the adolescent samples witnessed interpersonal violence in their communities especially gangsters fighting each other. Although less than in the community, the relatively high levels of indirect violence experienced in the home (37.3%) and at school (23.5%) are of great concern (see Table 4). Although the percentages are not that high it is still much more exposure than what they experienced from other types of violence. The finding is congruent with Van der Merwe and Dawes' (2000) research on coloured youth in the Western Cape, which indicated that the problem areas for indirect violence were less in the home and school

settings but in the vicinity of their homes and wider community. The results on exposure to indirect violence found are also consistent with American research by Salzinger et al. (2002). They indicate that disadvantaged neighbourhoods such as those focused on in the present study, which exhibit a breakdown in social processes and characterised by poverty and residential instability, are likely to be places where social control over behaviour is reduced. Such neighbourhoods give rise to the highest rates of exposure to all types of violence among youth.

Low levels of overt violence were reported in the home and school settings. These findings are contradictory to other South African research studies in similar communities that found high levels of direct violence occurring in the home and school settings (de Wet, 2003; Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Jordan, 1999; Maree, 2000; Olivier, 2003; Pietersen, 2002; Van der Hoven, 2001; Vogel, 2002; Vogel et al., 2003; Wynchank, 2000). The finding of lower levels of traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse experienced at school in the present study could be attributed to the introduction of stringent laws against corporal punishment (Maree, 2000; Maree, 2003). The lower levels of traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse found in the home environment, on the other hand, may stem from macro-level interventions involving stricter legislation to curb violence against women and children in South Africa (Jordan, 1999; Maree, 2003; Krug et al., 2002). There might be other protective factors present in these communities, which could account for the low levels of violence found in these settings. Future research should include other demographic variables for investigation in order to ascertain what other moderating factors may be functioning to negate violence in these settings. It may also be necessary to examine the nature of the relationship between extra- and intrafamilial violence as well as to explore factors influencing both.

Due to the levels of direct exposure to violence being low, it would be expected that adolescents might be protected from the effects of trauma associated with exposure to direct violence. Kuther (1999) however indicated that indirect exposure to violence could have similar psychological and behavioural consequences for adolescents as direct exposure.

The findings of the present study is consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological-Transactional Model, which indicates that violence experienced in a single context such as the community increases the likelihood of exposure to violence in other contexts.

7.2 Levels of conflict resolution tactics

The self-reported moderately high levels of verbal aggression (41.8%) and minor violent (29.3%) conflict tactics (see Table 6), indicates that the adolescents in question hold aggressiveness with positive regard. Huesman (1988) contends that individual normative beliefs are governed by social learning. The beliefs held by individuals are congruent with the levels of acceptance of the particular behaviour within the society. Rosario et al. (2003) thus argue that the use of verbal aggression may be an indication of the acceptance of violence within a society by means of modelling the subjective aggressive responses of individuals in their immediate environment.

The moderately high levels of verbal aggression and more violent conflict resolution tactics displayed by the present sample could also predict future violent trends within these adolescents. This may also contribute to the already existing cycle of violence found in these communities.

The self-reported moderately high level of reasoning tactics (46.7%) however shows that almost half of the sample favoured the use of prosocial responses during a conflict situation. Despite the increased levels of aggression and violence in their communities, the participants did display a capacity for the expression of socially competent behaviours. This finding suggests the possible presence of protective factors in the society resulting in an unexpectedly developed capacity for expressing a range of prosocial behaviours. Their use of a more prosocial behaviour like reasoning in conflict situations rather than aggression and violence may be accounted for by the violence prevention projects piloted in their schools that do address violence in schools and equip young people with effective non-violent strategies for conflict resolution.

7.3 Correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics

The expectation that exposure to violence would significantly influence the conflict resolution tactics displayed was supported (see Hypothesis 1). The participants exposed to violence strongly favoured the use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics during a conflict situation. Evidence of this was provided by the highly significant positive correlations found (see Table 7).

The significant positive correlations found are in accordance with several American and South African research studies (Kuther, 1999; O'Keefe, 1997; Pietersen, 2002; Wynchank, 2000). It has been found, as is suggested by the present study, that exposure to violence and abuse in multiple settings may have an additive influence. Thus, adolescents exposed to violence in the home, school, and community are at risk for developing more aggressive and antisocial behaviours (O'Keefe, 1997). Similar research by Kuther (1999) shows that such exposure to violence may have detrimental

consequences on adolescents' overall social skills development where negative outcomes are associated with an increased need for retaliation and higher rates of confrontational behaviour during conflict situations. Research done in disadvantaged coloured communities in the Western Cape by Pietersen (2002), Van Wyk (2001) and Wynchank (2000) also found that high exposure to violence impacted negatively on adolescents' social development. Problems found included diminished social competence and adjustment problems, which impaired their relationships with peers and family.

An observation of great concern is that the adolescents also indicated that they in general might not possess or choose to use the social skills required to handle interpersonal conflict situations in an effective manner. Significant negative correlations were found between exposure to violence and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic in the school setting. Suggestions for this observed relationship can be ascribed to factors such as lack of social skills, lack of supervision, peer group expectations and trauma related factors that inhibit prosocial behaviour. According to Vogel (2002), the results of his South African study showed that whenever violence exists in disadvantaged schools, it causes frustration and feelings of rage and aggression among learners. It was found that these feelings often lead to aggression and violence that significantly decreased the capacity for learners to express constructive ways to solve interpersonal problems. Within the framework of the Social Learning Theory one would expect that individuals who are often exposed to violence may learn to accept more aggressive and violent responses to conflict situations as normal and effective. They thereby also increase their susceptibility for more aggressive and violent behaviour.

The present study revealed highly significant positive correlations between exposure to traumatic violence and the sample's use of more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics. Hypothesis 2 was therefore supported. The strongest relationship was found between exposure to traumatic violence and the use of severe violent conflict resolution tactics (see Table 7). A significant negative correlation was found between exposure to traumatic violence at school and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic.

The findings of the present study are in accordance with previous South African research, which indicate that being exposed to traumatic forms of violence is related to the use of severe violence. The studies by Du Plooy (2002), Pietersen (2002) and Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) done in disadvantaged communities specifically showed that exposure of adolescents to traumatic violence was associated with severe violent retaliative behaviour, impulsivity and deficits in emotional regulation. This inability to regulate emotional behaviour through being impulsive is seen as one of the factors that lead to the initiation of violent responses. Osofsky (1995) also found that negative emotions generated by the experience of intense violence hindered the development of empathy and prosocial behaviour among disadvantaged youth in America. She contends that antisocial and severe violent behaviour is an appropriate response to traumatic violence because it serves as a retaliatory expression of that traumatic experience.

According to Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1973), the adolescents who utilised aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics only express their modelled behaviour that corresponds with the norms and attitudes of their community. The Conflict Spiral Model (North et al., 1964) indicates that conflict is the vicious cycle that results from each person's view that the other is the aggressor. Other variables

that can also contribute to more violent responses to conflict are the lack of prosocial skills, socioeconomic stressors and peer group victimisation (Berkowitz, 1993).

The expectation that the exposure to physical/verbal abuse would significantly influence the type of conflict resolution tactics used was supported (see Hypothesis 2). The results indicated that exposure to abuse is significantly positively associated with more aggressive and violent ways of dealing with conflict. The strongest positive relationship in this regard was found between exposure to abuse in general and verbal aggression. Again, a significant negative correlation was found between exposure to physical/verbal abuse at school and reasoning to resolve conflicts.

These findings support South African research by Maree (2000) and Olivier (2003). They postulate that adolescents exposed to specific physical or verbal abuse are at risk of displaying conduct problems and a range of aggressive behaviours including verbal aggression. Le Roux (2000) and Vogel (2002) also found that abuse increases the probability of various forms of youth aggression, as it serves as an expression of the rage and helplessness experienced by the victim. Research by Olivier (2000) in South Africa based on Dahrendorf's (1968) Conflict Theory, states that an individual exposed to physical and verbal abuse by parents may be compelled to react aggressively or violently. This negative reaction is caused by the anger and shame within the individual, which has not been acknowledged and is therefore projected onto others as a means to relieve these feelings.

Research conducted in the United States of America supports the South African research and indicates that youth who are victims of physical or verbal abuse may display decreased empathic and prosocial competencies, poor social problem-solving skills, and increased aggressive and violent behaviours (Haj-Yahia, 2001; Malinosky-

Rummell & Hansen, 1993; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Maughan & Cicchetti, 2002; Miller et al., 1999; Richters & Martinez, 1993; Rosario et al., 2003; Salzinger et al., 1993). The study by Rosario et al. (2003) showed that exposure to abuse was related to more self-defence and confrontational coping strategies involving verbal aggression such as shouting and swearing. The research conducted by Salzinger et al. (1993) found that exposure to physical/verbal abuse resulted in maladaptive social problem-solving strategies, which generalised to social relationships with peers. Within the framework of the Social Learning Model (Bandura, 1986), it is expected that through the exposure to models that engage in physical and verbal abuse, adolescents would learn that verbal aggression and violence is an acceptable means of interaction, which can be generalised to social relationships with others. It is therefore of great concern that the present adolescents used more aggressive tactics and significantly less reasoning to solve their problems, especially at school.

Significant positive correlations were found between exposure to indirect violence and aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics that supports the hypothesis stated (see Table 7). A significant negative relationship was found between exposure to indirect violence at school and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic. This may be indicative of the inability of these adolescents to cope with conflict in a more prosocial manner.

The highly significant positive relationships found between exposure to indirect violence and more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics support the social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1973) that with the increased witnessing or hearing of violence, adolescents' vulnerability to aggressive behaviour also increases.

The present result is inconsistent with research by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000). The authors found that coloured adolescents exposure to different forms of indirect violence was not significantly related to acts of aggression and violence. The authors proposed that through the witnessing or hearing of violence the adolescent is able to empathise with the victim, thus decreasing their probability of engaging in antisocial behaviour. This expression of prosocial behaviour suggested the presence of individual variations in the response to indirect violence, which may have been attributed to the presence of a range of protective factors. The observations in the present study however, suggest that this is not the case with regard to the present samples' behaviour. It is likely that the present adolescents' experience of indirect violence occurring within their specific ecosystem promoted more views approving of violence and less favourable views on prosocial behaviour to resolve conflicts.

International research studies indicated that youth exposed to witnessed violence were found to be more socially incompetent, less empathetic, displayed poorer problem-solving and conflict resolution skills, and showed a greater tendency toward the acceptance and legitimization of violence (Haj-Yahia, 2001; Howard et al., 2002; Miller et al., 1999).

The above findings also indicate that there seems to be little difference between the witnessing or hearing of violence and direct exposure. Barbarin et al. (2001) explain that the cognitive processes of adolescents, which reduce expectations about control and vulnerability, may arise just as easily from indirect as from direct violence exposure. This result concurs with another study (Hastings & Kelley, 1997), which demonstrated that items pertaining to life-threatening situations load together regardless of witness or victim status. Thus far there has been little evidence to show that these categories lead to unique developmental outcomes. Future research efforts

could however focus on the assessment of the adolescents' proximity to the event or their relationship to the victim, two factors that could certainly influence the impact and outcome of their experience.

The present study revealed significant positive correlations between participants' exposure to violence in the home and their use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics that supported hypothesis 3.

In the present study, exposure to violence in the home setting (37.3%) was found to be relatively high (see Table 4). This result is not surprising since it has been suggested that family violence, especially with women and children as the victims, may be more common in communities that maintain a strong patriarchal system (Jewkes et al., 2002). Communities that are characterised as poor and socially disorganised (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Olivier, 2000; Bureau of Market Research, 2004) also give rise to the highest rates of exposure to violence in the home. In the socio-economic context of the farm communities represented in the present study one could also surmise that this sample may be exposed to parental substance abuse (Inspector Vorster, personal communication, April 19, 2004). This places them at further risk for various stressors at home such as neglect, witnessing violence or growing up with other forms of family dysfunction (Van der Hoven, 2001). The Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1973) postulates that through regular exposure to violent models in the home environment, the individual imitates their behaviour. The models in the home environment are usually parents or caregivers who have the strongest impact on the individual's development and accompanied behaviour.

Inconsistent and aversive punishment strategies of parents or caregivers also contribute to violent behaviour and difficulties in developing empathic and prosocial

response patterns in youth. Therefore if parents lack these skills, it may have profound effects on the development of youth and their ability to deal with problem situations. Consistent with the findings of the present study, South African researchers found that the more commonplace violence in the home becomes, the more it becomes legitimised as a method for establishing authority, obtaining goals, and managing conflict (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Jewkes et al., 2002; le Roux, 2000; Olivier, 2000). This is congruent with Dahrendorf's (1968) Conflict Theory, which states that violence can be viewed as a maladaptive mode of resolving conflict when other means of resolution fail or break down. The theory is further supported by other South African research (Barbarin et al., 2001; Sathiparsad, 2003; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000; Vogel, 2002). They indicate that disadvantaged South African youth utilise ineffective methods of conflict resolution, such as violence and aggression, due to a lack of appropriate conflict management skills.

An international study by Howard et al. (2002) also show that intrafamily conflict resolution tactics, characterised by hitting, beating, threatening with, or use of, a weapon, have been related to both violence and externalising problems among youth. Garret's (1997) findings with an African American sample are similar in that disadvantaged youth exposed to violence in the home tend to use antisocial methods to resolve interpersonal conflicts. Other international studies also indicate that physical abuse by parents is associated with long-term impairments regarding children's well-being, their functioning in social relationships, and their social behaviour in general (Haj-Yahia, 2001; Krahé 2001; Litrownik et al., 2003; Margolin & Gordis, 2000).

A similar significant relationship was found between violence exposure at school and the use of more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics, which supported Hypothesis 3. Interestingly, the only significant negative relationships were found between exposure to violence at school and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic. This result indicates that the sample used significantly less reasoning when faced with violence at school than in any other setting.

Previous South African studies found that a relative amount of the violence that disadvantaged adolescents experience takes place within the school setting (De Wet, 2003; Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Maree, 2000; Olivier, 2003; Sathiparsad, 2003; Stevens et al., 2001). As a safe environment designed for constructive learning, in disadvantaged South African communities however, the school has also been found to be a setting in which the cycle of violence is maintained (Sathiparsad, 2003). Gaillard-Thurston (2003) found that violence taking place within South African schools, led to the acceptance of violence as a means to impose authority by both educators and learners. For learners, this involved both the acceptance of teacher-on-learner violence as a means employed by teachers to enforce discipline and learner-on-learner violence as a means to institute social ranks among the learners. It has been suggested that the previous practice of corporal punishment in South African schools has played a major part in the present-day climate of violence experienced at schools. Corporal punishment has been shown to lead to increased aggressive behaviour, disturbances of interpersonal relationships and psychological maladjustment in youth exposed to it (Maree, 2000). As educators are considered role models for learners, their use of violence to establish authority thus increases the likelihood that learners will model their behaviour (Maree, 2000). This

could lead to learners being socialised to accept the use of violence rather than reasoning as a functional tool to obtain social control (Burnett, 1998).

Research by Eliasov and Frank (2000), Gaillard-Thurston (2003), Stevens et al. (2001) and Vogel et al. (2003) further indicate that learners who are exposed to violence in general at school are at risk of developing psychological and social distress, acting out in antisocial behaviours, as well as an inability to handle conflict situations. Vogel et al. (2003) show a related finding by indicating that violence in general in South African schools has a significant impact on youths' socialisation and adaptation. Consistent with the Social Information-Processing Model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), Vogel et al. (2003) proposed that youth exposed to severe violence at school and suffering with hypervigilance to aggressive stimuli might misinterpret environmental cues and thus manifest reactions that are inappropriate and maladaptive. This may lead to deficits in emotional regulation creating social consequences whereby the adolescent has a limited, and more often negative, repertoire of interactional responses to handle conflicts at school.

Many research studies conducted in the United States of America also indicated that inner-city high school students' perceptions of school danger as well as their self-reports of exposure to school-related violence predicted antisocial behaviours and conduct problems (Bowen & Bowen, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1979; O'Keefe, 1997; Schwartz et al., 1998).

According to educators, the continuation of school-based violence in South Africa however, and to a large extent within this sample, may stem from both internal causes such as low self-image, frustration caused by learning, emotional problems, truancy and other related external factors such as poverty, unemployment, dysfunctional family life, marginalisation of the youth, gangs, drug and alcohol abuse, as well as

crime (DeWet, 2003). Van Wyk (2001) also indicated in his research at Cloetesville Senior Secondary School that outsiders involved in gang activities, such as drug and alcohol dealing have seemingly found their way onto school property and through such activities have initiated some incidents of school-based violence. As such, some learners from schools in the Stellenbosch district have been identified as active gang members (Maree, 2000; Van Wyk, 2001). Maree (2000) further identifies other forms of violence, such as partner violence and peer rivalry, which also occur in South African schools. According to Maree (2000), partner violence is considered to be a persistent type of violence perpetrated by both male and female youths. Partner violence however appears to have more severe physical consequences for females. Bullying in schools is another chronic form of violence whereby mostly older male school children victimise younger or smaller children (Stevens et al., 2001).

An important and alarming finding of the present study is adolescents' use of significantly less prosocial behaviours (such as reasoning) to deal with problem situations at school. Vogel et al. (2003) suggests that family and school supports required to help socialise young people effectively may be lacking or absent so that the adolescents lack constructive social skills. With no shared understanding of procedures for resolving conflicts, they often resort to destructive, violent resolutions. As the school is the primary area where young people socialise they may be confronted with more opportunities than at home or in the community to use appropriate skills during conflict situations. If they do not possess the necessary negotiation skills to resolve conflict, it will thus clearly manifest in the school environment.

The expectation that exposure to community violence would significantly influence the conflict resolution tactics used was also supported (see Hypothesis 3). The

present study found strong significant positive relationships between exposure to violence in the community and adolescents' use of more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics during a conflict situation (see Table 7).

The result is congruent with previous South African research utilising similar samples of disadvantaged youth. Govender and Killian (2001) indicate that exposure to violence in the community is associated with expressions of aggression and violent ways of interacting among youth. A similar study conducted by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) reported the repeated occurrence of feelings of anger, helplessness and reduced impulse control when exposed to community violence, which potentially inhibited successful negotiation strategies. Social cognitive theories (Bandura, 1986; Crick & Dodge, 1994; Huesmann, 1988) explain the link between such violence exposure and the development of aggressive behaviour. Repeated exposure to community violence may result in cognitive representations (scripts), which contain features of the situation, behaviour and consequences thereof. The adolescents therefore act out with aggression in congruence with what they perceive as normal behaviour. This may further contribute to the development of characteristics closely associated with affect dysregulation and expressions of retaliatory aggression and violence during conflicts. Studies conducted in the United States of America present similar findings to the present study and to the South African research mentioned above. They also found that frequent exposure to community violence highly influenced aggressive and violent behaviour among youth (Attar et al., 1994; DuRant et al., 2000; DuRant et al., 2001; Margolin & Gordis, 2000; Miller et al., 1999; O'Keefe, 1997; Overstreet, 2000; Salzinger et al., 2002; Schwartz & Proctor, 2000; Singer et al., 1999).

Certain negative social factors could exacerbate the use of more violent conflict resolution tactics. The mediating capacity of a dysfunctional family environment may undermine the development of adolescents' prosocial strategies to manage conflicts effectively (Le Roux, 2000; Van der Hoven, 2001). Jordan (1999) and Vogel (2000) also proposed that the development of antisocial tendencies is facilitated by the lack of caregiver involvement, monitoring and supervision. These risk factors may be compounded by the inadequate housing conditions that typify the economically stressed communities in the Stellenbosch district. This overcrowding can increase the probability of these high school learners spending more time on the streets (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000). It is outside the home where they are most likely to be exposed to other forms of indirect violence and crime such as gang activities, which may have a detrimental effect on their social development (Barbarin & Richter, 2001; Luyt & Foster, 2001; Van Wyk, 2001; Wynchank, 2000).

Conclusively, irrespective of where the exposure to violence occurred (home, school or community,) the highly significant positive correlations between exposure to violence and self-reported more aggressive conflict resolution tactics indicates that the setting was not an influencing factor. These results correspond with the relatively high prevalence of aggression and violence found in all social settings of these disadvantaged communities, for example, violence against women and children, bullying at school and gangsterism (Inspector Vorster, personal communication, April 19, 2004).

Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological-Transactional Model maintains that violence is considered to be a multilevel phenomenon. Within this ecological framework, ecological contexts interact and transact with each other to shape these adolescents' development and adaptation. Each context or level is nested within the previous level

whereby violence occurring in the community, which includes the school setting, is related to violence that occurs in the family (Litrownik et al., 2003; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1998). The sample of adolescents of the present study in the deprived communities of the Stellenbosch district are thus at risk to display relationship disturbances and aggressive behaviour in most settings. They are therefore also less likely to use prosocial behaviours such as reasoning because they do not possess or do not prefer to use the necessary constructive resolution skills to deal with conflicts.

7.4 Gender differences

The hypothesis that males will be significantly more exposed to violence than females is partially supported. The results show that males were exposed to more violence than females for most types and settings of violence especially in the school setting. Males were found to be significantly more susceptible to traumatic violence than females. This result can be ascribed to males' supportive attitude towards violence and their notions of masculinity (Jewkes et al., 2002). These males may therefore be exposed to more traumatic violence because of the reciprocal nature of violence whereby one incident of violence may escalate into further severe incidents of violence (North et al., 1964).

Gender differences were also influenced by the setting in which the violence exposure took place. Not only were males found to be exposed to significantly higher levels of traumatic violence overall but they experienced that predominantly more in the school and community settings than females.

The results are congruent with previous research, which indicates that bullying and violent peer rivalry as predominantly male phenomenon's are most rife in the school environment of male adolescents from similar communities (Barbarin & Richter,

2001; Govender & Killian, 2001; Maree, 2000). This difference can be ascribed to the value that such communities have been reported to hold for males' use of violence in social interactions and the contextualising of the school as a major source of most forms of violent social interaction (Sathisparsad, 2003; Stevens et al., 2003).

Males' positive attitudes towards violence and their notions of masculinity and toughness in the South African patriarchal society may place them at risk for subsequent exposure to traumatic violence (Collings & Magojo, 2003; Govender & Killian, 2001). Van der Merwe and Dawes (2000) postulate that boys are more likely than girls to be exposed to community violence due to the differential sex role socialisation of males and females. In many ways, males in the patriarchal South African society are encouraged to toughen up and are less protected from violence than are females. The observation of primarily male gang activities within schools could also promote violent ways of interacting whereby males are victimised more often than females. According to Luyt and Foster (2001) as well as Van Wyk (2001), the gang culture promotes strong traits of manliness. Youth involved in such a culture are encouraged to portray their toughness through physical means such as aggression and violence, which increases their likelihood of being exposed to severe violence. Teacher-on-learner violence in the school, under the pretext of punishment may also be more prevalent among males in the present sample than females as indicated in similar communities by Gaillard-Thurston (2003).

The finding of males' exposure to more traumatic violence in these communities is supported by literature demonstrating that males spend more time on the streets than females and are therefore more vulnerable to community violence exposure (Govender & Killian, 2001). Male peer interactions in disadvantaged communities also tend to involve violence, which increases their risk of being exposed to traumatic

violence (Govender & Killian, 2001; Luyt & Foster, 2001). This finding is also similar to several research studies conducted in South Africa (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000; Wynchank, 2000) and the United States of America, which show that boys are more likely than girls to be exposed to community violence (Bell & Jenkins, 1993; Farrel & Bruce, 1997; Freudenberg et al., 1999; Howard et al., 2002; Schwab-Stone et al., 1999).

Females were exposed to significantly higher levels of physical and verbal abuse at home. This is congruent with South African research by Govender and Killian (2001) and Jewkes et al. (2002) in similar communities. They indicated that girls were more prone to be victims of domestic violence due to the continued existence of strong patriarchal roles in the South African society. Due to the adherence to these different gender roles in the South African society, females spend more time at home and therefore will be more exposed to any abuse (Jewkes et al., 2002). Males are protected from this abuse because of their higher status within the family, which also allows them to exercise greater autonomy to spend more time in other contexts. Herrera and McCloskey's (2001) research in disadvantaged communities in the United States of America supports the abovementioned South African research studies. They found that girls in general are far more likely to be in conflict with a parent or sibling than males, which increases their chances of exposure to physical/verbal abuse. Males, on the other hand, were more likely to fight with peers or strangers thereby reducing their chances of being exposed to physical and verbal abuse in the home setting.

With regard to specific gender socialisation, one would expect males to report the use of more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics than females. The relatively

equal levels of aggressive and violent tactics used by both genders in the present study indicate that the expression of aggression and violence is not restricted by gender only but may also depend on other social factors. However, males tended to use significantly more severe violent conflict resolution tactics than females when faced with a conflict situation, which supports Hypothesis 5.

The finding that males express more severe violent conflict resolution tactics than females is similar to previous research studies, which related this behaviour to variables such as gender socialisation and personal attributes towards violence (De Wet, 2003; Farrel & Bruce, 1997; O'Keefe, 1997; Olivier, 2003; Salzinger et al., 2002; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

The gender role socialisation that exists within these South African communities can be attributed to social learning whereby young males identify with older males by modelling their behaviours when faced with a conflict situation (Bandura, 1973). Males thus fulfil their socialised gender role in which authority and power are displayed through more severe physical acts of aggression and violence. Berkowitz (1993) substantiates this explanation of factors pertaining to gender socialisation by indicating that males in general are rewarded for aggressive behaviour as they grow up and thus subsequently approve more readily of the use of aggression or violence during conflict situations. Females, on the other hand, are expected to be more passive in their social interactions and their expressions of overt aggression are looked on less favourably.

It was hypothesised that gender would show a mediatory role regarding the correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics (see Hypothesis 6). The results show that gender did appear to have an effect on this

relationship in many instances. When referring to gender differences it must be kept in mind that it refers to the strength of the correlations between genders and therefore it is only an indication of the differences observed and with how much certainty the gender behaviour can be predicted.

Based on the stronger positive relationships it can be expected with more confidence that the males who are exposed to more violence in general will use more reasoning tactics. Specifically more so when exposed to physical/verbal abuse in the home and indirect violence at school (see Table 11). According to Table 4, adolescents were exposed to relatively high levels of indirect violence at school such as bullying. Gang activities such as drug and alcohol dealing, which is predominantly a male phenomenon, have also found their way onto school property and through such activity have initiated some incidents of school-based violence. Males' tendency to use reasoning tactics to resolve disputes at school when exposed to indirect violence is therefore in contrast to their supportive attitude towards violence and their notions of masculinity, power and status. Adequate adult supervision within the school setting may however also be a factor to hinder males' use of aggressive and violent behaviour. Although correlational differences occur, both genders' use of reasoning tactics in the school setting when exposed to less extreme violence may be reserved for conflict arising between them and their friends (close peers).

The tendency for males to use negotiation strategies to manage problem situations when exposed to physical/verbal abuse at home can be explained by the findings of Jewkes et al. (2002). They indicate that in a patriarchal society such as South Africa, parents may be more willing to allow males to "reason" during conflict situations than females.

Due to the stronger positive relationships it can be expected with more confidence that males who experience more exposure to violence in the community especially indirect violence are more likely to display verbal aggression as a conflict resolution tactic (see Table 11). Their tendency to use more verbally aggressive conflict resolution tactics when exposed to violence in the community indicates that they may be trying to project an image of “toughness” without directly participating in violent means to resolve conflicts. Luyt and Foster (2001) contend that this image of “toughness” that males are required to show to maintain their authority in the community is attributed to their gender socialisation.

Based on the stronger positive relationships for females it can be expected with more confidence that the more they are exposed to physical/verbal abuse at school the more they will display reasoning tactics (see Table 11). Females’ display of reasoning at school when exposed to abuse is congruent with gender role socialisation practices in South Africa that expect girls to show restraint in their social interactions. It might be that females also experience abuse from educators and therefore might be afraid of the consequences of reacting in an aggressive and violent manner at school.

According to the stronger positive relationships for females it can be expected with more confidence that when they are exposed to more traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse at home they will display more violent conflict resolution skills (see Table 11). This observation is a big concern and contrary to traditional views on male-female differences with regards to the expression of aggression. Björkqvist and Niemelä (1992) as well as Geen (2001) emphasise that girls in general are more likely to display indirect forms of aggression, such as relational aggression.

These present females’ likely use of more violent tactics could be attributed to the introduction of legislation that affords women more rights in South African society

(Jordan, 1999). The female adolescents of the present study may be aware of such legislation and have thus attempted to adapt their social behaviours to these new liberating social conditions where they do not have to comply with the traditional role requirements. In this manner they may feel empowered and justified to engage in more aggressive and violent tactics during a conflict situation, especially at home. Additionally, the dysfunctional family unit may also not provide these females with the opportunity to develop appropriate schema around issues of problem solving and constructive conflict management (Osofsky, 1995). High levels of violence experienced at home by adolescent females may provide a context in which they have to use aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics in a proactive or retaliatory manner. Their expression of violence may therefore mimic the male violence they experience and observe within their households (Van der Hoven, 2003).

7.5 High exposure group

A major concern is the large number of adolescents ($N = 286$) that were exposed to high levels of violence. A total of 67.1% of adolescents reported that they are often, very often or almost always exposed to all types of violence at home, school and in the community. It was also surprising to find that almost an equal number of males ($n = 133$) and females ($n = 153$) in this group were exposed to high levels of violence. Participants who scored above what is considered to be the cut-off for the scale in each of the cases (see Table 4) were deemed the high exposure group.

7.5.1 Correlations

The expectation that exposure to different types of violence would significantly influence the conflict resolution tactics for the high exposure group was partially supported (see Hypothesis 7).

Significant positive relationships were found between exposure to indirect violence especially in the community and aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics (see Table 12). It is of great concern when youth with high exposure to witnessing or hearing of violence reacts in such a highly aggressive and violent manner. These findings are supported by Barbarin et al.'s (2001) research study in South Africa. They found that extreme exposure to community violence elicited a consequential increase in violent behaviour among young people. Osofsky (1995) emphasises that youth learn about themselves and how to negotiate their environments through social exchanges in the community. The present sample of adolescents living in such violent neighbourhoods are prone to more violent social exchanges and are thus denied the experience of normal development.

These violent exchanges may also be accounted for by the presence of gangs and their activities within these communities (Van Wyk, 2001). Patterns of possible positive socialisation acquired at home are likely to be disrupted when adolescents are inducted into violent gangsterism (Barbarin & Richter, 2001).

A significant positive correlation was presented between total exposure to violence and severe violent conflict resolution tactics. The result indicates, as mentioned previously in similar findings for the total group of learners, that exposure to violence in multiple settings appears to have an additive effect, with those who directly experience or witness high levels of violence in all three settings (home, school, and community) at highest risk for developing serious aggressive and violent acting-out behaviours (O'Keefe, 1997). Within the framework of the Social Cognitive Approach (Huesmann, 1988), adolescents who are exposed to constant extreme violence are more likely to develop and maintain cognitive scripts emphasising aggressive and violent solutions to social problems. Other South African studies support this notion

and have similarly provided a link between extreme exposure to community violence and the increased use of aggressive and violent ways of dealing with problems (Govender & Killian, 2001; Du Plooy, 2002; Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000).

Conclusively, a significant positive relationship was also found between exposure to all types of violence at home and verbal aggression as a conflict resolution tactic (see Table 12). South African research by Barbarin et al. (2001) indicates that family violence is directly correlated with different forms of physical aggression and verbal aggression. The frequent use of verbal aggression by this high exposure group when exposed to domestic violence may be an indication that these individuals mainly consist of more passive victims. Van der Hoven (2001) explains that youth finding themselves in family environments disrupted by parental substance abuse are at increased risk for experiencing or witnessing abuse and neglect, which causes them to feel fearful. Extreme domestic violence may undermine and disempower them causing a shift towards passive helplessness whereby verbal aggression is perceived as the most suitable mode of aggression.

Highly significant negative correlations were found between exposure to traumatic violence and physical and verbal abuse and verbal aggression as a conflict resolution tactic (see Table 12). These findings demonstrate that high levels of direct violence experienced by the group led to their adoption of less verbally aggressive conflict resolution tactics. According to Maughan and Cicchetti (2002), high exposure to direct forms of violence results in adolescent's decreased sense of emotional security. When feelings of emotional insecurity predominate, environmental stressors can overwhelm an individual's self-regulatory abilities, which result in dysregulation. Dysregulation hinders the development of optimal patterns of adjustment and may serve as adaptive functions in helping adolescents maintain their safety and meet their contextual

demands by withdrawing. Therefore the high levels of violence experienced by this sample in certain instances may have been severe enough to cause adolescents' hyper vigilance to potential threats and/or overregulation of distress responses thereby causing them to engage in less verbally aggressive and oppositional behaviours to reduce further victimisation.

A further significant negative correlation was found between exposure to violence especially traumatic violence at school and reasoning as a conflict resolution tactic (see Table 12). The significantly lower levels of reasoning tactics displayed by the high exposure group show that antisocial behaviours are still the favoured means with which this specific sample handles conflict situations at school. This result is supported by a number of South African research studies that indicate high levels of violence involving learners in schools (Burnett, 1998; De Wet, 2003; Eliasov & Frank, 2000; Gaillard-Thurston, 2003; Maree, 2000; Olivier, 2003; Vogel, 2003). The study by Burnett (1998) involving coloured disadvantaged adolescents from Gauteng found that the cycle of pro- and reactive violence taking place within the school, led to the acceptance of violence as an instrument of empowerment directed at fellow learners and educators. She further states that these adolescents were dehumanised and socialised to accept violence as a functional tool to obtain social control. Violence was deemed a justifiable means to dominate others in search of gratification and control in the context of their chronic poverty, which rendered them powerless. These adolescents, who already had a high level of aggression and were then exposed to constant violence at school, were more likely to develop and maintain cognitive scripts that emphasise aggressive and violent solutions to social problems (Burnett, 1998).

A big concern is that adolescents from these communities were exposed to high levels of violence. Their lack of externalising behaviours when exposed to direct forms of violence may be considered adaptive because it does not place them at higher risk for involvement in more violence and suggests a propensity to respond to adverse circumstances with minimal aggression. More specifically, according to Howard et al. (2002), as an act of problem solving, and thus coping, the high exposure group may replay the trauma experienced through exposure to direct violence and attempt, through this process, to identify ways to avoid future experiences involving violence. They therefore limit their use of aggression and violence in conflict situations. The high exposure group did however show that when they were confronted with indirect violence they do use more aggressive and violent means to resolve conflict therefore they are not overly passive.

7.5.2 Gender differences

The hypothesis indicating that gender would also show a mediatory role regarding the correlations between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics for the high exposure group was supported (see Hypothesis 8). Gender appeared to have a strong mediatory influence on this relationship in many instances.

Based on the stronger positive correlations for males it can be expected with more confidence that they were more likely to display verbal aggression and severe violence as conflict resolution tactics when exposed to more violence in the community especially indirect violence (see Table 14). The positive correlation found for males and a negative for females between exposure to all types of violence and the use of minor violence support the above findings. Huesmann (1988) found that male's frequent engagement in aggressive behaviour under conditions involving conflict or provocation in the community increase the probability of similar

engagements under those conditions in the future. Again, the present males' possible initiation of such aggressive and violent acts in the community can be attributed to the rigid gender socialisation factors that exist in South Africa, which promotes aggressive retaliation actions by boys as being synonymous with manliness (De Wet, 2003).

Due to the stronger negative correlations for males it can be predicted with more confidence that they are prone to use significantly less reasoning tactics when exposed to more violence at school. High levels of violence experienced at school by males may provide a context in which these male adolescents are forced to use more aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics in a proactive or retaliatory manner. In the school setting, as previously mentioned, gang activities may also be a contributing factor to the high exposure to violence thereby increasing the probability for males to use more antisocial behaviour to deal with conflicts. Through such gang activities at these schools, the males may feel compelled to act in aggressive and violent ways to maintain their status, especially if they are gang members themselves (Van Wyk, 2001).

Based on the stronger positive correlations for females it can be expected with more confidence that the more they are exposed to violence, especially physical/verbal abuse at home, the more they are prone to use verbal aggression as a conflict resolution tactic. A big concern is the positive correlation found for females and negative for males when exposed to traumatic violence at home and the use of severe violent tactics. Although females in the South African patriarchal society are socialised to maintain passivity in their social interactions (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2000), the high levels of violence and abuse they experience in the home (see Table 8), may provide a context in which these female adolescents are forced to resort to the

use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics in a retaliatory manner. Again, their use of such aggression and violence may be an expression of their liberated gender roles or be an imitation of the male violence they experience and observe within their households and the community (Van der Hoven, 2003).

The females also showed a strong positive relationship between exposure to all types of violence at school and the use of severe violence whereas the males showed a negative correlation. Based on this result it can be expected with more confidence that females will use more violent tactics when exposed to escalating violence at school. De Wet's (2003) South African research study on a sample of disadvantaged youth with high exposure to violence found that girls are more likely to become increasingly more physically aggressive, with some of them even going to school armed. This increased use of severe violence by girls in South African schools, as was found at home, was viewed as a means to combat against the high incidence of interpersonal criminal violence such as sexual assault and physical violence they experience from fellow male learners.

It can be expected with more confidence that females will display more minor and severe violent conflict resolution tactics when exposed to increasing traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse in the community. Hill and Madhere's (1996) research on a sample of African American disadvantaged adolescents provides a possible explanation for the present finding. They found that those females were more prone than males to use aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics when exposed to high levels of violence in the community. The high exposure to community violence for girls was associated with apprehension of violence, an increased need for retaliation, and higher rates of confrontational behaviour during conflict situations. Females' tendency to use more violent tactics than males when

exposed to traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse is an important finding because this behaviour is again in stark contrast to traditional gender roles. Bettencourt and Miller (1996) however postulate that adolescent females in general can be as aggressive as their male counterparts during situations involving severe provocation when role constraints prohibiting aggression are removed. They specifically found that exposure to high levels of insults or physical attacks can lead to relatively high aggressiveness among females.

Based on the stronger negative correlations for females it can be expected with more confidence that they are more likely to use less verbal aggression as a conflict resolution tactic when exposed to more traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse. Additionally, according to the stronger negative correlation, it can be expected that females are more likely to use less severe violent conflict tactics when exposed to more traumatic violence. The negative relationships found support the previous findings where the females use less verbal aggression but resort to more violent measures to resolve conflicts when exposed to abuse. When exposed to more traumatic violence in general they react with less severe violence.

When the results of the positive correlations for females and negative for males are compared it can be expected that females will use more violent measures to resolve conflicts at home and at school when exposed to violence, especially traumatic violence. These findings are of great concern and compliment the previous findings where females tend to use more violent tactics when exposed to direct victimisation. The extreme trauma experienced through high exposure to traumatic violence coupled with the empowerment felt by females might contribute to their violent retaliatory means to resolve conflict situations.

The results for the high exposure group showed that gender had a significant mediatory influence on the relationship between exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Findings

It was encouraging to observe that the present sample was actually exposed to relatively low levels of traumatic violence and physical/verbal abuse. There was however indications of high exposure to indirect violence especially in the community where they witnessed or heard of violence occurring around them. It is evident that these participants are living in disadvantaged environments characterised by several forms of serious and often chronic violence. This violence has serious detrimental consequences for their behavioural adjustment, as evidenced by their high use of aggressive and violent conflict tactics during a conflict situation. The reported low level of reasoning used to cope with conflict at school is an area that needs prioritised intervention.

Much remains to be learned about the findings with regard to gender differences on exposure to violence in different settings and their subsequent use of conflict resolution tactics. Given that both male and female adolescents were exposed to direct forms of violence more regularly than indirect ones, they appeared to have adopted these overt forms in their own behaviour. Interestingly, females displayed stronger positive correlations between exposure to violence and the use of more violent tactics than males to manage conflict. These findings are in stark contrast to traditional gender roles, which emphasise males' aggression and females' passivity and restraint.

It is of great concern to observe that 67.1% of the total sample was exposed to high levels of violence. Exposure to chronic violence holds negative implications as it affects the healthy functioning and well being of these adolescents and communities.

Directly experiencing or witnessing violence frequently in these communities may thus be part of the intergenerational cycle of violence whereby these adolescents learn to be violent by modelling aggression. Males in this group displayed stronger positive relationships between exposure to indirect violence, especially in the community and the use of aggressive and violent conflict resolution skills. It is of great concern that the females of this group showed stronger positive relationships between exposure to all types of violence and the use of violent tactics, especially at home and the school.

8.2 Limitations

It is important to acknowledge several limitations of the present study. First, self-report data must be viewed with caution, particularly when they are the only source of data. It is possible that the high school learners were biased in reporting their conflict resolution tactics or accurately recalling the amount of violence exposure. For example, in some classrooms, pupils were compelled to share a desk thus decreasing the level of privacy and confidentiality of the material. They could therefore have exaggerated their experiences with violence exposure and the use of certain types of conflict tactics as a way of gaining status in their own eyes or in the eyes of their peers. It would enhance the effectiveness of a study if more objective reports on exposure to violence and conflict resolution tactics used could be collected from multiple sources such as parents, peers and/or teachers.

Second, the present study did not highlight the causative link between exposure to violence and conflict tactics used. Although the theories suggest that the relationship between the variables is a causal one, follow-up studies are required to thoroughly examine socio-cultural factors in these communities that relate to aggressive and violent behaviour.

Third, the Reasoning subscale of the CTS produced a low Cronbach's alpha as well as exhibiting questionable discriminatory power within this particular sample. As previously stated, it may be that this subscale contained too few items in relation to the other subscales and therefore the sample may not have understood the significance of these few items within the context of the overall questionnaire (Dr M. Kidd, personal communication, August 18, 2004). The CTS could be further refined to be more appropriate for future use with similar samples.

8.3 Recommendations

The relationship between conflict and violence is apparent if one considers that violence is a consequence of the inability to resolve conflict effectively. Marginalised South African children and adolescents such as those residing in the coloured communities of the Western Cape are not born to be violent. They have been systematically socialised by society to perceive violence as the only means of resolving conflict (Sathiparsad, 2003). With this in mind, national tolerance of violence as a socially sanctioned form of interaction needs to be addressed. More effective policing, stricter legislation regarding firearms and restriction of violence in the media (especially television) need to be focused on in order to curb the consequences of exposure to violence and youths' socialisation into violent lifestyles.

Research examining protective and vulnerability factors in all the settings (home, school and community) may provide a means of understanding why adolescents in the high exposure group mostly use aggressive and violent conflict resolution tactics when exposed to indirect violence. Specifically, an examination of the interaction of violence exposure and other stressors in the lives of these adolescents in the high

exposure group may highlight possible protective factors that may attenuate its impact.

The present study emphasises the need for more research on the prevalence of socio-demographic factors such as other socio-economic settings (middle class), which may give a clearer indication of the effect of violence taking place in the disadvantaged communities of the Western Cape. The prevalence and influence of violence exposure in other age groups should be investigated in the future. Further, sexual violence experienced by youth, a type of violence not investigated in the present study, is such an important phenomenon in South Africa that it should be included in future research studies.

The high levels of aggressive and violent responses on exposure to violence found in the present sample reflect the low levels of constructive conflict resolution skills and prosocial behaviour in the present sample. The results of the present research can thus contribute to interventions and programmes that address non-violent conflict management at all levels of society. Such programmes should challenge norms about aggression as the principal means of dealing with problems, increase awareness and knowledge of violence, and teach social and self-regulative skill development for dealing with conflict situations. South African schools can play an important role by supplementing their curriculum with appropriate modules that promote favourable self-appraisal and enhance adolescent's capacity for self-reflection and increased coping skills. These initiatives may offer opportunities that promote protective factors for the adolescents such as resilience to resist adverse negative conditions and build up a strong and empathic personality. For their overall development and mental health to be improved, more participatory community approaches and initiatives involving civil society and non-governmental organisations can be put into practice.

The relevance of public health interventions is thus particularly clear if one considers that young people are the future of our society. It is therefore important to focus on the dynamic, interactive process of conflict with specific reference to the causal acts or events that are utilised to resolve it when developing and initiating interventions and programmes aimed at non-violent conflict resolution skills. Such a comprehensive focus may be required to break the cycle of violence, which plagues our disadvantaged youth.

9. References

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Appendix A

01 April 2004

Dr Ronald Cornelissen
Western Cape Education Department
Private Bag X9114
CAPE TOWN
8000

Dear Sir

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ref# 24/03/04

Please find attached the information required for conducting my research on violence at schools in the Stellenbosch District.

1. Completed application to conduct research in public schools within the Western Cape.
2. My proof of registration for 2004.
3. A concise description of the research project, including the names of the schools at which research will be conducted as well as the period during which the research will take place.
4. A copy of the proposed questionnaires.
5. A letter from my supervisor, Ms W.H. Theron, advising on my status at the university.

I trust that my application is in order and that it will meet your approval at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully

.....
Sotirios Short.
Student #: 14495724

Appendix B

Navrac Dr R.S. Cornelissen
 Enquiries
 IMibuzo
 Telefoon
 Telephone (021) 467-2286
 IFoni
 Faks
 Fax (021) 425-7445
 IFeksi
 Verwysing
 Reference 20040405-0015
 ISalathiso



 Wes-Kaap Onderwysdepartement

 Western Cape Education Department

 ISebe leMfundo leNtshona Koloni

Mr Sotirios Short
 Department of Psychology
 University of Stellenbosch
 Private Bag X1
 MATIELAND
 7602

Dear Mr S. Short

RESEARCH PROPOSAL: THE RELATION BETWEEN EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE AND THE INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES AMONG HIGH SCHOOL LEARNERS IN THE STELLENBOSCH DISTRICT.

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the Western Cape has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.
2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.
3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.
4. Educators' programmes are not to be interrupted.
5. The Study is to be conducted from **15th April 2004 to 30th June 2004.**
6. No research can be conducted during the fourth term as schools are preparing and finalizing syllabi for examinations (October to December 2004).
7. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey, please contact Dr R. Cornelissen at the contact numbers above quoting the reference number.
8. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the Principal where the intended research is to be conducted.
9. Your research will be limited to the following schools: **Stellenzicht Secondary, Cloetesville Secondary and Lückhoff High School.**
10. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Education Research.
11. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to:
**The Director: Education Research
 Western Cape Education Department
 Private Bag X9114
 CAPE TOWN
 8000**

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards.

Signed: Ronald S. Cornelissen for: **HEAD EDUCATION**

DATE: 15th April 2004

Appendix C

JOU NAAM WORD NIE GEVRA NIE, WEES DUS EERLIK
NIEMAND SAL WEET DIT IS JOU ANTWOORDE NIE.
BEANTWOORD ASSEBLIEF AL DIE ITEMS.
BAIE DANKIE VIR JOU SAMEWERKING.

MERK ASSEBLIEF DIE GEPASTE ANTWOORD MET 'N X

GESLAG	Manlik		Vroulik				
GRAAD	9	10	11				
OUDERDOM	13	14	15	16	17	ouer	
BY WIE BLY JY? VOOG(DE)			Albei Ouers		Ma	Pa	Ander:
WERKSTATUS VAN? VOOG(DE)			Werk		Werkloos		
WOONPLEK:	Huis	Woonstel	Kamer	Wendyhuis		Ander:	
HOVEEL MENSE BLY IN JOU WOONPLEK? Getal:							
NEEM JY AAN BUITEMUURSE AKTIWITEITE DEEL?					Ja	Nee	
Indien Ja, noem:							

SAVE

INSTRUKSIES: Dui met 'n X aan hoeveel keer jy die volgende in die afgelope jaar ervaar het by die huis, die skool en in jou buurt. Beantwoord asseblief al die items. Kies asseblief net EEN antwoord by elke item.

	Nooit	Min kere	Dikwels	Baie keer	Amper altyd
1. Ek het iemand met 'n skietding gesien:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
2. Volwassenes skree op my:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
3. Ek het gehoor van iemand wat geskiet is:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
4. Ek het skuing gesoek toe mense begin skiet het:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
5. Ek het gesien hoe iemand geskiet word:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
6. Ek het gehoor van iemand wat sleg geslaan is:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
7. Volwassenes slaan my erg:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					

	Nooit	Min kere	Dikwels	Baie keer	Amper altyd
8. Ek het gesien hoe iemand vermoor word:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
9. Ek het gesien hoe die polisie iemand arresteer:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
10. Ek het iemand met 'n mes gesien :					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
11. Ek het gesien hoe iemand 'n ander persoon met 'n skietding dreig:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
12. Ek het gesien hoe 'n volwassene 'n kind slaan:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
13. Ek is erg beseer:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
14. Ek het gehoor van iemand wat vermoor is:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
15. Ek het gesien hoe iemand erg beseer word:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					

	Nooit	Min kere	Dikwels	Baie keer	Amper altyd
16. Ek het gehoor van iemand met 'n skietding:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
17. Ek is raakgeskiet:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
18. Iemand van my ouderdom slaan my:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
19. Ek het gesien hoe mense op mekaar skree:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
20. Ek het gehoor van iemand wat met 'n mes aangeval is:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
21. Ek is met 'n mes aangeval:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
22. Ek het gesien hoe 'n kind 'n volwassene slaan:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
23. Ek het gesien hoe iemand sleg geslaan word:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					

	Nooit	Min kere	Dikwels	Baie keer	Amper altyd
24. Iemand het 'n skietding op my gerig:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
25. Volwassenes slaan my:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
26. Ek het gesien hoe iemand met 'n mes aangeval word:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
27. Ek hoor geweeskote ("gunshots"):					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
28. Iemand het met 'n mes na my gemik:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
29. Volwassenes het gedreig om my sleg te slaan:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
30. Ek het gesien hoe iemand 'n ander persoon met 'n mes dreig:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
31. Daar is na my geskiet:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					
32. Iemand van my ouderdom het gedreig om my sleg te slaan:					
By die huis					
By die skool					
In die buurt					

CTS

INSTRUKSIES: Hier volg 'n lys van dinge wat jy dalk die afgelope jaar gedoen het, toe jy in 'n konfliktsituasie met iemand anders was (was woedend). Dui met 'n X aan hoeveel keer jy toe die volgende gedoen het. Beantwoord asseblief al die items. Kies asseblief net EEN antwoord by elke item.

	Nooit	Partykeer	Baie keer	Altyd
1. Hom/ haar geklap.				
2. Bewyse gekry om my kant van die saak te ondersteun.				
3. Hom/haar geskiet of met 'n mes gesteek.				
4. Iets gedoen of gesê om hom/ haar te vermaak ("spite").				
5. Hom/ haar met iets geslaan of probeer slaan.				
6. Hom/ haar beledig of gevloek.				
7. Hom/ haar met iets gegooi.				
8. Iemand anders betrek of probeer betrek om die saak op te los.				
9. Gedreig om hom/ haar te slaan of met iets te gooi.				
10. Dikbek geword of geweier om oor die probleem te praat.				
11. Hom/ haar gewurg.				
12. Hom/ haar gestoot, gegryp, of gestamp.				
13. Gehuil.				
14. Iets gegooi, gebreek, geslaan of geskop.				
15. Die probleem kalm bespreek.				
16. Hom/ haar geskop, gebyt, of met die vuig geslaan.				
17. Uit die kamer, huis of werf ("yard") gestorm.				
18. Hom/ haar met 'n mes of skietding gedreig.				
19. Hom/ haar sleg geslaan ("beat up").				